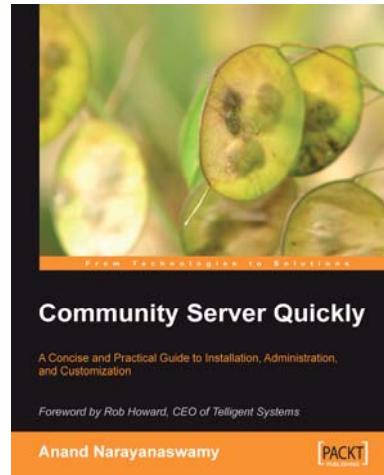




# Community Server Quickly

## A Concise and Practical Guide to Installation, Administration, and Customization

Anand Narayanaswamy



## Chapter 8

### "Customizing Community Server"

## In this package, you will find:

- A Biography of the authors of the book
- A preview chapter from the book, Chapter 8 “Customizing Community Server”
- A synopsis of the book’s content
- Information on where to buy this book

## About the Author

### Anand Narayanaswamy

Anand Narayanaswamy works as an independent consultant and runs NetAns Technologies (<http://www.netans.com>), which provides web hosting services and is based in Trivandrum, Kerala State, India. He is a Microsoft Most Valuable Professional (MVP) in Visual C#. He works as the full time Technical Editor lead for ASPAlliance.com (<http://aspalliance.com/author.aspx?uId=38403>) and is also a member of the ASPAlliance.com Advisory Board. He regularly contributes articles, and book and product reviews to ASPAlliance.com, C-Sharpcorner.com, Developer.com, Codeguru.com, Microsoft Academic Alliance, asp.netPRO print magazine, and asp.netNOW online magazine. Anand has worked as a Technical Editor for several popular publishers such as Sams, Addison-Wesley Professional, Wrox, and Manning. His technical editing skills helped the authors of Sams Teach Yourself the C# Language in 21 Days, Core C# and .NET, Professional ADO.NET 2, and ASP.NET 2.0 Web Parts in Action to fine tune the content. He has also contributed articles for Microsoft Knowledge Base and delivered podcast shows for Aspnetpodcast.com. He is a moderator for Windows MarketPlace Newsgroups. Anand also runs LearnXpress.com, Dotnetalbum.com, CsharpFAQ.com, Computerbookreviews.org, and DigitalGadget.Info. LearnXpress.com is a featured site at MSDN's Visual C# .NET communities section. Anand has so far won several prizes at Community-Credit.com and has been featured as "All Time" contributor at the site. He is one of the founders of Trivandrum Microsoft Usergroup. He regularly blogs under the banner "I Type What I Feel" at <http://msmvps.com/anandn> and maintains a personal website at <http://www.visualanand.net/>.

**For More Information:** <http://www.packtpub.com/community-server/book>

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**For More Information:** <http://www.packtpub.com/community-server/book>

# About the Reviewers

## **Rob Howard**

Rob Howard has the privilege of running Telligent (<http://www.telligent.com>) and working with a phenomenal team of talented individuals to build software that helps people share information. Community Server is the first product built by Telligent. Every day Community Server helps people quickly and easily build web communities. Rob's blog is <http://weblogs.asp.net/rhoward> and his email address is [rhoward@telligent.com](mailto:rhoward@telligent.com).

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Dave Stokes is a Community Server MVP and has over 20 years experience working with Microsoft products. He has worked for many of the world's leading IT companies in Europe and the United States of America, specializing in Infrastructure Design and Management, and currently spends much of his time packaging applications using Microsoft's Installer Technology. He has been using Community Server since version 1.0. He can be contacted at [dave@davestokes.net](mailto:dave@davestokes.net).

**For More Information:** <http://www.packtpub.com/community-server/book>

# Community Server Quickly

Community Server is an award-winning solution for setting up online communities. It includes a suite of integrated applications, which includes blogs, discussion forums, photo and file galleries, reader, and roller, which together can help you create your community presence. Community Server is the trusted solution for many organizations including Microsoft, Dell, Conde Nast, Match.com, and others. You can learn more about Community Server, and see it in action, at <http://www.communityserver.org>.

Written in a clear and concise manner, this book will guide you through the installation, administration, customization, and deployment of a Community Server solution. With the help of this book you will be able to start using your Community Server site within minutes of its installation. The book kicks off with a brief overview about the evolution of Community Server, its various editions, and installation procedures, and then delves deep into the creation and management of its integrated applications.

The later chapters of the book explore the different ways you can customize your Community Server site along with comprehensive coverage of add-ons and modules. You will also learn how to manage your Community Server license and other related settings.

## What This Book Covers

The Community Server platform is introduced in *Chapter 1* and we look into the evolution of Community Server and various applications available with it. Keeping in mind the nature of tasks that lie ahead, this chapter also discusses various editions and licensing options that will help you to choose the right Community Server platform for your use. Finally it outlines some of the key features of the upcoming Community Server 3.0.

Everything that you require to execute Community Server on a development machine is discussed in *Chapter 2*. The steps required for download and installation of Community Server are explained in depth. The chapter also lists the steps required to configure your installation and describes the various options found in the Control Panel.

One of the greatest features available with Community Server, blogs, is explored in *Chapter 3*. It examines how to create and manage blogs to publish content with the help of a sample blog. It also explains how to configure blogs for registered users.

Community Server has a fully featured discussion forum. *Chapter 4* teaches you how to create forum groups so that you can file each forum under the appropriate group so that you can file each forum under the appropriate group and create a sample forum. After creating forums the chapter covers making posts forums and also how to manage and administer these forums.

*Chapter 5* shows you how to add a gallery to your Community Server. You will learn how to create photo and file galleries and manage them with the help of sample photo and file galleries.

*Chapter 6* explains the powerful reader and roller features of Community Server. By implementing reader and roller functionality in your site, you can keep track of content of the other blogs using RSS feeds.

**For More Information:** <http://www.packtpub.com/community-server/book>

*Chapter 7* looks at management of site members, their profiles, resetting passwords, and managing roles, cookies, and avatar settings.

The standard look and feel of Community Server gets a face-lift in *Chapter 8*. It gives you a run down of how attractive Community Server can be through the use of themes and also explains how to make important modifications to your chosen theme. It also teaches you how to use add-ons and modules, and to include custom links in the navigation bar of the site.

*Chapter 9* gives you the edge when it comes to managing various Community Server settings. It explains the management of different settings associated with RSS, post, date, time, and email. At the end of the chapter you learn how to track the IP addresses of visitors to your Community Server sites.

*Chapter 10* takes you one step further by looking at the reporting functionality. This chapter shows you how an administrator can generate and view not only user, blog, and forum activity reports but also different type so of exceptions and jobs reports.

*Chapter 11* delves into monetizing your site by advertising through Google AdSense and Amazon affiliate programs. It further discusses the management of licenses, word filters, spam blocker, member points, emoticons, and IP addresses.

*Appendix A* walks through the steps followed for deploying Community Server to a hosted server. Basically it provides a sound process for taking the finished product and making it available for public consumption on your host site.

**For More Information:** <http://www.packtpub.com/community-server/book>

# 8

# Customizing Community Server

In this chapter, we will demonstrate how to modify the look and feel of your site with the help of themes. You will also learn how to customize themes with the help of Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) files. We will go one step further ahead and examine the implementation of the FreeTextBoxWrapper add-on and calendar module into Community Server site. Towards the end of the chapter, you will learn how to create custom links on the navigation bar.

## Customizing the Home Page

In order to customize the home page, you should first log in as a user with site administration privileges. Firstly, we will examine how to modify the header area, which includes the headings and logo. We will also examine how to modify the default content on the home page.

## Modifying Headings and Logos

You can modify the top heading and its sub-heading by clicking on the respective content and entering new text. However, you can also modify them by clicking the **Site Name & Description** link located inside the **Settings** panel on the **Site Administration** page.

The site logo can be modified by replacing the image titled `title.gif` located under the `Themes\default\images\Common` folder with a new image. We would suggest you to create a new image and give its name as `title.gif`. You can then rename the original image with any other name and place the new image inside the above-mentioned folder. You need to refresh the site for the new logo to appear on the site.

**For More Information:** <http://www.packtpub.com/community-server/book>

## Editing Content

By default, a welcome message is displayed along with a short introduction about Community Server on the home page of the site. The page also features images of showcased sites and also some relevant links for obtaining documentation and support. In order to modify this content, you just need to place your mouse cursor over it and double-click on it. As soon as you double-click, a text editor opens up populated with the home page content. You can then format the content by inserting images, hyperlinks, and emoticons, and using the various options available in the editor. Finally, click on the **Save Changes** button to save and return to the home page. Your new content will automatically appear on the home page.

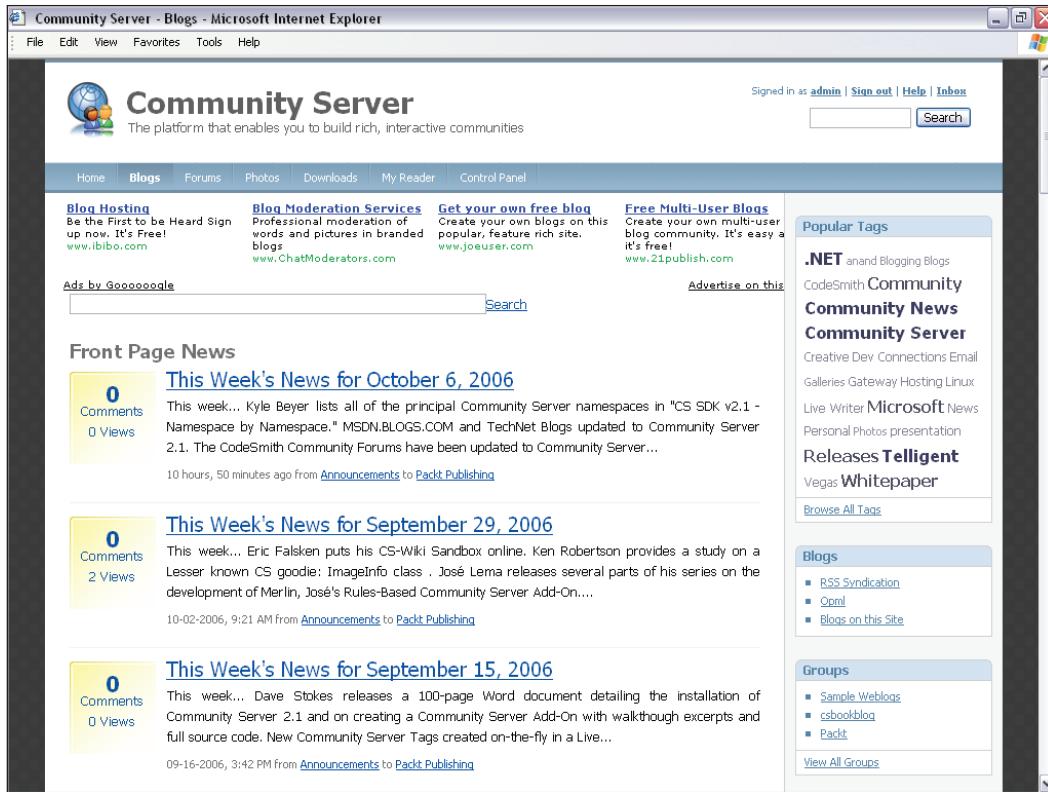
## Modifying the Theme of your Site

You can change the look and feel of your site with the help of various themes included with Community Server. Each theme consists of several individual skin files, which consist of related user controls and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). With the release of Community Server 2.1, themes are controlled by style sheet rather than user controls as was the case in previous versions. We will discuss how to modify themes using CSS files in the *Modifying Themes* section.

In this section, we will examine how to modify the appearance of your site using the themes included with Community Server. By default, Community Server includes three themes, which you can use to change the look and feel of your site.

 You can separately download and install themes available either at the official site at [http://communityserver.org/files/folders/themes\\_and\\_skins/default.aspx](http://communityserver.org/files/folders/themes_and_skins/default.aspx) or from third-party vendors and developers. You should only install those themes that are designed for Community Server 2.1. However, you can convert themes meant for Community Server 2.0 and implement them for your Community Server 2.1 installation by following the steps mentioned at <http://getben.com/archive/2006/08/08/Updating-CS2.0-Themes-for-CS2.1.aspx>.

In order to modify the theme for the whole site, click on the username link at the top of the home page and select the **Site Options** tab. Locate the **Theme** drop-down list and change its value either to **basic blue** or **alternate1**. For the purpose of our discussion we will modify its value to **basic blue** and you will be able to view the modified site immediately after clicking the **Save Changes** button. The following screenshot shows the blogs home page decorated with the basic blue theme.



If you have installed any third-party themes then they will also be populated inside the **Theme** drop-down list.

## Modifying the Theme of your Blog

Let us now examine how to modify the appearance of blogs by using various themes. As explained in Chapter 3 *Working with Blogs*, you can manage all the blogs on the site as an Administrator. For this purpose, click the **Control Panel** link and select the **My Blogs** link. You will view the **Blog Management** page. Pull the **Global Settings** panel and select the **Change How My Blog Looks** link located under it. You can modify the appearance of your blog by selecting the appropriate theme from the **Theme** drop-down box. As soon as you select a theme, its corresponding preview will be displayed as shown in the following screenshot, so that you can choose another if it doesn't suit your needs.



The appearance of your blog will be changed as soon as you click the **Save** button at the bottom of the **Blog Management** page.

As an Administrator, you can switch between blogs by clicking the **Select Blog to Manage** button and then selecting the relevant link from the **AppKey** column. You will view the **Blog Management** page for the selected blog and you can modify its theme as explained earlier.



As an Administrator, you can globally modify the theme for all blogs on the site by selecting the appropriate theme from the **Default Theme** drop-down list from the **Default Presentation** link located under the **Blogs** section inside the **Site Administration** page

Members can change the theme for their blogs by selecting the **My Blog Dashboard** page located under the **Common Tasks** section from the home page of their respective blogs. In order to access this link, members should browse their blog by using the actual Uniform Resource Locator (URL) such as <http://localhost/cs21/blogs/csbook/default.aspx>.

## Modifying Themes

In the previous sections, you have learned how to modify the look and feel of your site using themes. In this section, we will examine how to modify the themes included with Community Server.

Each theme consists of several folders, namely `images`, `Masters`, `Skins`, and `style`. The `style` folder contains several Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) files, which you need to modify in order to change the appearance of the active theme. For instance, in order to change the background color, you should modify the relevant property from the appropriate Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) file.

In order to modify the appearance of the home page, you need to open the `Common.css` file located inside `Style` folder of the corresponding theme and update the relevant property with the correct value.

For instance, if you would like to change the background color for your site, you need to open the `Common.css` file located under `Themes\default\style` folder and modify the `background-color` property located under the `body, html` section by supplying the appropriate color code as shown below:

```
body, html
{
    margin: 0px;
    padding: 0px;
    color: #000000;
    font-family: Tahoma, Arial, Helvetica;
    background-color: #999966;
}
```



You can obtain the correct color codes for each specific color from <http://html-color-codes.com/>.

We assume that you are using the theme named **default**. In the same way, you can modify the background color of other themes by opening the CSS file located inside the `style` folder of the corresponding theme.

You can also modify the background color of the page header and other adjoining areas by supplying the appropriate value for the `background-color` property located in the `#Common` class as shown below:

```
#Common
{
    background-color: #3399CC;
    border-top: solid 6px #bbde79;
}
```

If you need to change the appearance of the forum home page for the theme named **default**, then you should open the `forum.css` file located in the `Themes\default\style` folder.

## Modifying Themes Dynamically

Site Administrators will have access to the file system and hence they can directly modify the CSS files as discussed above. However, registered users do not have FTP access and hence cannot modify the theme for their blog. For the benefit of users, Community Server includes a feature to provide the required style tags from within the **Dashboard**.

In order to perform this task, click the **Control Panel** link from the home page and select the **My Blogs** link from the **Blog Management** page. Click the **Change How My Blog Looks** link located in the **Global Settings** section, select the **CSS Overrides** tab and supply the appropriate code for the corresponding style ID as shown below:

```
#Common
{
    background-color: yellow;
}
```

We have now modified the color of the header and other adjoining areas of the current blog's home page. You can view the output by clicking the link beside the **Current Blog** section from the **Blog Management** page. As you can see, we have modified the theme without opening any CSS files.

## Working with Add-ons

You can further enhance the working of your site with the help of add-on packages that are available from the official website (<http://www.communityserver.org>) of Community Server. You should note that a majority of these packages are associated with the previous versions of Community Server and you should install only those packages that are developed for Community Server 2.1.

The installation instructions are provided along with each add-on package and you should refer to them to cross-check for compatibility of the add-on with the Community Server version you are using. You should always take a backup of all the existing files before installing any add-on packages so that you can restore the site if there is any problem during the installation process.



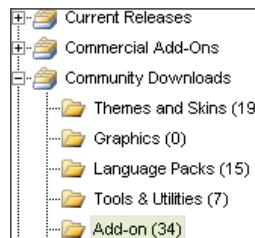
You can integrate powerful functionalities such as windows, passport, forms, and cookie authentication on your site. In addition to these, you can also implement features such as enterprise search, news gateway, and FTP server on your site using the relevant add-on packages. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine each one of these packages. You will find more information regarding the steps to be followed to work with these add-on packages at: <http://docs.communityserver.org/>

Add-on packages enhance a site with advanced functionalities such as adding an advanced textbox editor, Google Sitemap, and much more. As of writing this book, the **Downloads** section lists only two add-on packages for Community Server 2.1. The one that is commonly used is a textbox editor called **FreeTextBoxWrapper**. It is a robust, powerful, and free editor, which contains many features that are not available with the editors shipped with Community Server. Let us discuss about the installation and usage of **FreeTextBoxWrapper** control add-on.

## Using FreeTextBoxWrapper Control

Community Server contains three different content editors that let you post content to your site namely: **Plain Text**, **Standard**, and **Enhanced**. But these editors don't provide advanced functionalities such as formatting source code, managing images, etc. These features are provided by a third-party content editor called FreeTextBoxWrapper. The **FreeTextBoxWrapper** content editor is developed by George J. Capnias and is available for download at <http://communityserver.org/files/folders/add-ons/default.aspx>.

In order to download the control, you need to log in as a member and navigate to the **Downloads** section by clicking its link from the top navigation bar. Expand the tree titled **Community Downloads** and select the **Add-on** folder as shown below:



As soon as you click the link, you will see a list of all add-on files on the right-hand side of the page. You have to locate the link titled **FreeTextBoxWrapper for Community Server v2.1 series**. After locating the link, you need to select it and click the **Download** button at the top of the page to download the required file in ZIP format. The extracted file consists of different folders meant for various builds of Community Server. Each folder contains the required Dynamic Link Library (DLL) files for both .NET 1.1 and 2.0.

## Installing the FreeTextBoxWrapper Control

Before beginning to work with the control, you should install it properly. Firstly, you should find out the version of Community Server you have installed. For this purpose, click the **Control Panel** link and scroll down to the bottom of the **Dashboard** page. You will find the version number on the right-hand side of the page (2.1.60809.935, in our case).

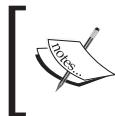
As noted earlier, the textbox control ships with DLL files for the various builds of Community Server 2.1. You should use the files available inside the v1.1.4322 folder located inside the 2.1.60809.935 folder. If you have installed Community Server on .NET Framework 2.0 then you should use the files inside the folder v2.0.50727. Follow the steps given below to install **FreeTextBoxWrapper** control:

1. Copy the DLL files located inside the folder mentioned above and paste them to the bin folder located inside your Community Server site.
2. Copy the FreeTextBox3 folder and the contents of the Themes folder from the unzipped folder, CommunityServer [1].FreetextBoxWrapper.2006-08-15, and paste them to the root of your Community Server site.
3. Finally, open the CommunityServer.txt file and copy the provided code from the <editors> section to the <editors> section of CommunityServer.config file located in the root directory of your Community Server site.

The <editors> section should finally appear as shown in the listing given below:

```
<editors>
  <editor name="FreeTextBox Standard" skinName="Skin-Editor-FTB.ascx"
    default="true" />
  <editor name="FreeTextBox Enhanced" skinName="Skin-Editor-
    FTBEnhanced.ascx" />
  <editor name="Plain Text" skinName="Skin-Editor-PlainText.ascx" />
  <editor name="Standard" skinName="Skin-Editor-Standard.ascx"/>
  <editor name="Enhanced" skinName="Skin-Editor-Enhanced.ascx" />
</editors>
```

You have successfully installed the **FreeTextBoxWrapper** control. In order to work with the editor, you should reload the site and modify the value of the **Content Editor** drop-down list located inside the **Site Options** tab from the profile page.



In order to access the profile page, click the username link at the top of the site.



As you can see, the **FreeTextBox** control includes two different options: **FreeTextBox Standard** and **FreeTextBox Enhanced**. The **Enhanced** editor provides features such as code formatting and an image gallery, which are not available with the **Standard** editor. For the purpose of our discussion, we will select the **FreeTextBox Enhanced** option and click the **Save Changes** button located at the bottom of the page.

You have now chosen to use **FreeTextBox Enhanced** as your editor for the whole site. Hence, you can see the editor if you try to submit a post to your blog or forums, or in any other location where user input is required.

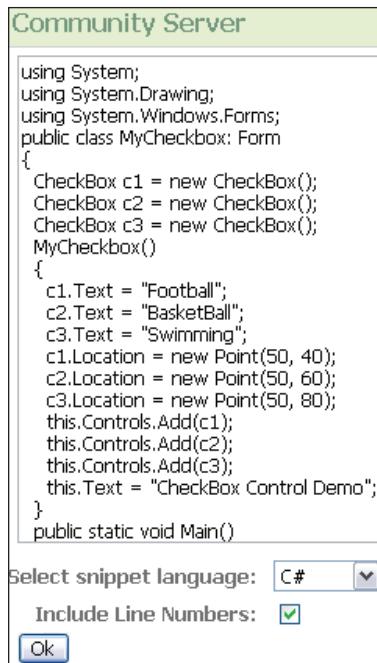
Let us now examine some of the features of the editor by submitting a post to the **ASP.NET 2.0** forum, which we created earlier. For this purpose, click the **Forums** link, select the relevant forum from the home page and click the **Write a New Post** button. You will see a blank page powered with a rich toolbar as shown below:



As you can see from the above screenshot, the editor includes more functionalities than the other editors included within Community Server.

You can insert the current time by using the yellow color clock icon. It is now possible to insert symbols by using the relevant options from the **Symbols** drop-down list. You can also insert images from the gallery included within the editor. Moreover, you can also insert content from the file and photo galleries by using the **Select Content** icon from the editor toolbar.

Let us now examine how to insert and format a sample C# code snippet. Firstly, select the **Insert Code Snippet** icon and enter or paste the required code in the pop-up window as shown in the screenshot in the next page.



As you can see from the above screenshot, we have enabled the **Include Line Numbers** checkbox. This feature inserts numbers on each line so that you can reference them while discussing the code. The final output of our sample code snippet will appear as shown in the screenshot opposite.

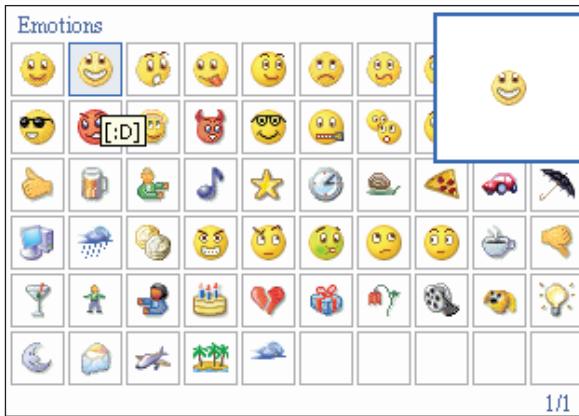
### Working with Checkboxes using C#

 Reply  Quote

```
1  using System;
2  using System.Drawing;
3  using System.Windows.Forms;
4  public class MyCheckbox: Form
5  {
6      CheckBox c1 = new CheckBox();
7      CheckBox c2 = new CheckBox();
8      CheckBox c3 = new CheckBox();
9      MyCheckbox()
10     {
11         c1.Text = "Football";
12         c2.Text = "BasketBall";
13         c3.Text = "Swimming";
14         c1.Location = new Point(50, 40);
15         c2.Location = new Point(50, 60);
16         c3.Location = new Point(50, 80);
17         this.Controls.Add(c1);
18         this.Controls.Add(c2);
19         this.Controls.Add(c3);
20         this.Text = "CheckBox Control Demo";
21     }
22     public static void Main()
23     {
24         MyCheckbox mychk = new MyCheckbox();
25         Application.Run(mychk);
26     }
27 }
```

You will observe that the code has been formatted nicely with different colors and line numbers. Similarly, you can format code snippets of other languages such as VB.NET, J#, T-SQL, and ASP.NET. You can even format Microsoft Intermediate Language (MSIL) and JavaScript code.

Another interesting feature of the **FreeTextBox** control is that it has an enhanced emoticon viewer as shown overleaf.



The development of add-ons is a continuous process. More and more new add-on packages will be developed either by Telligent or by other developers and will be added to the **Downloads** section. Hence, you should check the **Downloads** area frequently for any updates regarding add-on packages.

## Working with Modules

Modules are plug-ins used to activate advanced features such as tagging events on the calendar, display of videos, and much more. You will find a list of available modules on the **Downloads** page at the official website of Community Server. In order to download the modules, you need to log in as a member at <http://www.communityserver.org> and navigate to the **Downloads** section by clicking its link from the top navigation bar. Expand the tree titled **Community Downloads** and select the **CSModules** folder.

In this chapter, we will discuss the implementation and usage of the **DanBartels.CS.Calendar** module. The main function of this module is that it lets you tag your posts so that their titles show on a community calendar for your site. This module is extremely useful if you plan to host several meetings and events either for your company or for your user group.



An add-on is a business rule or other compiled code that adds specific functionality; for example the single sign-on libraries are 'add-ons'. A module is a business rule or other compiled code that handles events raised by Community Server and implements the base class or interface derived from a Community Server module.

Firstly, download the **DanBartels.CS.Calendar** module in ZIP format by locating the **DanBartels.CS.Calendar** module. After extracting the file follow the steps given below to integrate the module into your site.

1. Add the contents of the bin, Calendar, Themes, and Utility folders into the root of your Community Server site.
2. Add the contents of the communityserver.merge.config file to the communityserver.config file located inside the root of your Community Server site.
3. Add the contents of the SiteUrls.merge.config file to the SiteUrls.config file located inside the root of your Community Server site.

We would suggest you to add the following tag as a final item inside the `<navigation>` element so that the relevant link will be placed at the end of the other links on the navigation bar.

```
<link name="calendar" resourceUrl="calendarhome" text="Calendar" />
```

Once you finish the above mentioned steps, you need to update the changes in the `web.config` file by opening it using Notepad and saving the file. You will notice that a new module named **Calendar** has been added on the navigation bar immediately after refreshing the site as shown below:



We have successfully integrated the **Calendar** module inside Community Server. The next step is to examine the usage of the module. In order to perform this task, you need to simply add the tag similar to `[cal]10-20-2006[/cal]` anywhere in the body of the editor while writing a post. The resulting link will appear on the calendar as shown in the screenshot below:



As you can observe from the above screenshot, a new link has been added with the relevant title against the date **October 20, 2006** and clicking on it will take you to the relevant post on the site. Hence, you can infer that the **Trivandrum .NET User Group Meeting** is scheduled to be held on that date. In the same way, you can add other events and each one of them will appear on the calendar according to their date of occurrence.

## Creating Custom Links

You can create your own links on the navigation bar by simply inserting the code as given below inside the `<navigation>` element in the `SiteUrls.config` file located at the root of your Community Server site.

```
<link name="Microsoft" navigateUrl="http://www.microsoft.com/"  
text="Microsoft" />  
<link name="Learnxpress" navigateUrl="http://www.learnxpress.com/"  
text="Learnxpress" />
```

After saving the `SiteUrls.config` file, open and then save the `web.config` file and navigate to your site. You will see two links captioned **Microsoft** and **Learnxpress** as shown below:

<b>Home</b>	Blogs	Forums	Photos	Downloads	Calendar	Microsoft	Learnxpress
-------------	-------	--------	--------	-----------	----------	-----------	-------------

Clicking on these links will enable you to navigate to the websites pointed to by their `navigateUrl` property.

## Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the different ways in which you can customize the appearance of your Community Server site. We have also shown you the different ways in which you can modify the appearance of your site and blog using themes including their customization aspects. Towards the end of the chapter, you learned about the implementation and usage of the **FreeTextBoxWrapper** add-on and calendar module. It is up to you to make use of all the available options for customizing Community Server so that you can effectively reap the rich benefits of this application.

## Where to buy this book

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