NOTE: For this one talk, please note that while I'm happy to share the content, I CANNOT PROVIDE SUPPORT TO YOU FOR HELP WITH THE SQL SERVER REPORT BUILDER. I've not worked with it since soon after giving this talk in 2006 so cannot help. Ask questions at
http://social.msdn.microsoft.com/Forums/en-US/sqlreportingservices/threads

Understanding SQL Server 2005 ReportBuilder

Even For Those With:
- No Servers Yet Converted to 2005,
- No External Users Needing Reports, and
- No Prior Reporting Services Experience!

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Some Starting Questions

- How many here saw the topic description before coming? ☺
- How many would come to talk with no code or SQL?
    - Yes, this is codecamp, but tool is about NOT writing code!
- More serious questions...
    - Are using SQL 2005 yet? In prod? Exploring?
    - Have used SSRS yourselves at all? 2k? 2k5?
    - Can describe the difference between ReportBuilder and SSRS?
    - Feel they have end user ad hoc reporting needs?

- My guess is that many
    - Are not using 2k5 yet, may not have used SSRS
    - Tend to lump ReportBuilder with "that SSRS stuff"
    - Don't think they have any ad hoc reporting needs

My Goal Here

- Show you what SQL Server 2005 Report Builder is
  - How it's useful even for SQL 2000 shops
  - Why it's useful whether you have end user ad hoc reporting needs or not
  - Why it's useful whether you're a developer, DBA, or manager
- Show you how to setup a DB for reporting
  - Using the SQL 2k5 *Bus. Intelligence Dev. Studio*
  - What "report models" are and how to build them
- Share some tips, tricks, and traps
- Point you to more resources to learn on your own

About Your Speaker

- Not selling anything! ☺
  - Member of Atlanta .NET UG for about two years
    - Just sharing, to return the favor
    - Frequent speaker to user groups, conferences worldwide
- 25 Yrs IT Experience: Databases (25), Web Apps (10), SQL Server (7), .NET (3)
- Past Microsoft Presentations
  - Presented this talk to Atlanta MDF (SQL Server) group
  - 2006 Atlanta Codecamp (SQL talk)
  - MS ASP.NET 2.0 Webcast Series, Learn2asp.net
- Other upcoming MS Presentations
  - SQL Pass (SQL talk)
- Frequent writer, speaker on other web app dev topics

Basics

- **What is ReportBuilder?**
  - Web-based tool to create reports
    - Come free with SQL Server 2005
  - Alleviates end user knowing DB schema
  - Users build desired reports themselves, can export to Word, Excel, PDF, and more
  - Alleviates *developer needing to build reports*!
- **What is a Report Model?**
  - Description of DB as created in SQL 2k5 *Bus. Intelligence Dev. Studio*
  - Someone "cleans up" DB description (tables, cols, relationships) for end user
    - Automated process does substantial analysis

Demos

- ReportBuilder
- ReportManager
- Business Intelligence Development Studio

Some points covered

- Some points covered in demos:
  - About ReportBuilder:
    - Drag/drop columns, or double-click entity
    - Can format report columns (right-click)
    - Many available filter options
      - Can set to prompt user before running
    - Can save report for others to view/edit later
    - Available View>Advanced Mode
      - Shows additional relationships per entity, if any
  - About Report Manager
    - Have wide range of security controls over who can view/edit reports, use report builder
    - Can use available "subscriptions" feature to send them

Some points covered

- Some points covered in demos:
  - About Report Model creation
    - Can rename tables, columns
      - Manually, or by right-clicking View and using "View Code"
    - Can view data in tables, right-click and choose "explore data"
      - And within that, can also chart and pivot data easily
    - Can view and even change table relationships
      - By right-clicking View and using "View Design"
    - Can add "folders" and "perspectives" while
    - Can add new tables or cols and have them folded into existing view
      - Open model, choose Model>autogenerate from menu
  - I've shown using localhost for Datasource and report viewing
    - but of course all this can be done via a remote server hosting either the reporting server or the database

Reminders

- Not limited to SQL Server 2005
  - Can report against SQL Server 2000 (and MSDE)
  - While SSRS can query other DBs, RB for now cannot
- Useful for developers and DBAs
  - No coding required
  - Someone runs report model wizard, perhaps tweaks model
- No prior SSRS experience required
  - Indeed, no real knowledge of SSRS needed
- Useful whether you have end user ad hoc reporting needs, or just for internal use
  - Perhaps devs need to create PDFs or spreadsheets, one-off
  - Easier for most than creating reports in Visual Studio
  - And you can edit existing reports
- Not just reports but matrices and charts, also
  - And can report against not just DB but also MDX Cubes

Other Points

- Some end users will use ReportBuilder, others just view reports
  - And report once built can be edited by another user
- Don't need to use ReportManager interface
  - Can launch URLs directly
    - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms159221.aspx
    - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms345245.aspx
    - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms155362.aspx
    - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms153586.aspx
  - And browse/serve using web services
    - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms152787.aspx
    - http://[yourserver]/ReportServer/ReportService2005.asmx
  - Can also programmatically use the ReportViewer Control
    - See gotreportviewer.com

Other Points

- Software required
  - Person running reports: nothing: IE, FF
  - Person building reports: .NET 2.0
    - Report builder is a "click once" app
    - Downloaded/installed from RS on each use
  - Report Model Designer: SQL 2005
- All this is free with SQL Server 2005
  - But not in free Express edition

Gotchas

- **Report Model Generation**
  - Tables without primary keys
    - Will not create entity in model, at all
  - Errors that occur during model generation
  - Tables without relationships
    - Will not enable drill downs/lookups (roles)
    - Can either fix DB
      - or can just add relationships in report model!
- **Report Builder**
  - No preview feature in ReportBuilder
    - Need to run report to see how it will really look
    - For instance, if column header too narrow
  - Running report withing ReportBuilder, no menu command to export: use "save" (diskette) icon
- Others, from experience of others here?

Resources

- Google "SQL Server" "Report Builder"
- BOL Tutorial: "Refining a Report Model in Model Designer "
  - 13 step walkthrough of creating a report model
  - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms345303.aspx
- Part of larger BOL "Tutorials for Ad Hoc Reporting"
  - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa337436.aspx
  - Which is inside of a larger " Reporting Services Tutorials"
    - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms170246.aspx
- "Configuring a Report Server for Report Builder Access" (security)
  - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms143761.aspx
- "Tutorial: Customizing Report Builder Clickthrough Reports"
  - http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms365324.aspx
- MS Webcast
  - http://msevents.microsoft.com/cui/WebCastEventDetails.aspx?EventID=1032259394&EventCategory=5&culture=en-US&CountryCode=US

Resources

- MS Virtual Lab
    - http://msevents.microsoft.com/CUI/WebCastEventDetails.aspx?EventID=1032291311&EventCategory=3&culture=en-US&CountryCode=US
- MS ReportBuilder Bloggers
    - http://blogs.msdn.com/bimusings/default.aspx
    - http://blogs.msdn.com/bobmeyers/
- Don't forget GotReportViewer.com
- I have obtained domain gotreportbuilder.com
    - hope to evolve it
- No books devoted to it yet, but MS Press best so far:
    - *SQL Server 2005 Reporting Services Step by Step*
- Not many good forums/lists devoted solely to it, but see:
    - Technet Forum for SQL Server Reporting Services
        - http://forums.microsoft.com/TechNet/ShowForum.aspx?ForumID=82&SiteID=17

Conclusion

- Hope this has compelled you to consider Report Builder
- Useful for a wide range of audiences
    - Again, do not need to convert databases to SQL Server 2005
    - Clearly, no prior Reporting Services experience required
    - Useful even if you have no end-users needing reports (developers, internal use)
- Learned about key components
    - Report Model design and ReportBuilder itself

Conclusion

- I'd really appreciate your feedback
  - http://carehart.org/feedback/