Developing a Web Site with the Ektron CMS400.NET Content Management Solution and Dreamweaver Extension

Ektron's line of Web authoring tools and Web content management solutions have evolved over the years becoming the ideal choice for organizations who want their everyday business users to manage content on their Web site. Ektron continues to rise to the demands of the marketplace by making Web content management more powerful and robust, yet keeping the process easy-to-use.

Ektron has revolutionized the way Web site authors make changes on the Web by giving them the tools that they need to create HTML, without knowing HTML, using Ektron's Web-based WYSIWYG editor, eWebEditPro. Built around eWebEditPro is Ektron's award-winning content management solution, Ektron CMS400.NET. CMS400.NET extends the capabilities of just authoring Web content by incorporating functionality like workflows, approval chains, audit trails, and HTML form building.

The content of a Web site isn't the only thing distinguishes a good web site from a great Web site. Several elements are also required including the overall look and feel of the Web site. Where does content management end and design begin? Why do these aspects need to be separated? The answer is...they don't. Ektron has pondered this question and delivered quite possibly the greatest development tool specifically for Macromedia Dreamweaver developers, the Ektron CMS400.NET Dreamweaver Extension.

Ektron Focuses on 80% of Web Developers

According to Macromedia, 80% of professional Web developers use Dreamweaver for developing Web sites due to its ease of use and flexibility.

Similar to Macromedia's approach, Ektron provides an intuitive and easy-to-use content management solution to create and mange Web site content, documents, navigation, forms, and calendars on the Web.

More and more, Ektron is becoming the ideal solutions for Web site content authors, Web site administrators, Webmasters, and Web developers because of it's easy of use, integration, and low price point.

Several content management vendors depend on web developers to learn new languages and environments to deploy a Web site using their product. Ektron on the other hand, empowers these same developers by offering a wide array of choices allowing the developer to develop a Web site in the language, and environment, that they are most comfortable with whether it be ColdFusion, ASP, ASP.NET, PHP, or JSP.

As an added bonus, since the pages that you create are in these commonly used languages, all the custom code that you have written, like e-commerce code, can still be used on the same page that content managed by Ektron CMS400.NET is displayed.

Ektron's Dreamweaver Extension installs in minutes, and the benefits are unbeatable. Best of all, developers can keep using Dreamweaver, the product that they are most skilled with and most proficient with.

Ektron CMS Web site Development: The Basics

Every Web site needs to have at least two elements…content and navigation. Among many other things, content and navigation just so happen to be two components of a Web site that users can manage with an Ektron CMS.

Several other elements are commonly used and seen in many Web sites like forms, calendars, metadata, search functionality, and RSS feeds. These elements can enhance your visitor experience, however, the core and beginning of any Web site is to get your content and navigation established, and then begin with the additional elements.

In this tutorial, we will explore the most basic functionality of an Ektron CMS400.NET driven Web site including:

- Content Blocks
- Login Button
- Dynamic Summary Lists
- DHTML Menus

Other tutorials will follow showing additional functionality of Ektron CMS400.NET and how these elements can easily be added to your templates using the Macromedia Dreamweaver extension.

Getting Started

Supplied with a download of Ektron CMS400.NET is the Dreamweaver Extension. Installation of the extension is the same as any other extension, and the configuration inside Dreamweaver is minimal, simply provide the URL for a special file in your Ektron CMS400.NET Web site on your Web server (Figure 1). Once this path is correct, you can connect to your CMS400.NET Web site and pull data directly out of the database to be displayed on the Web page.
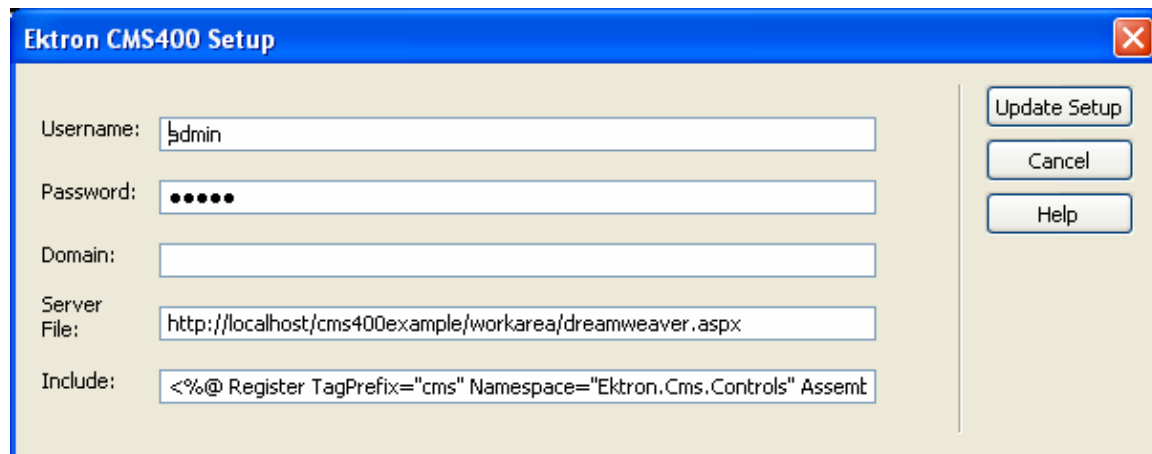
Figure 1 –
CMS400.NET Dreamweaver Configuration Dialog

Start Your Development

Just like any Web site development project, the first steps include planning and conceptualizing the actual Web site. Once those tasks are complete, development - including graphics, layout, and coding - begin.

Typically, a graphic designer begins the process by creating a large graphic that represents the look and feel of the Web site, typically called "comps." These comps can show a wide array of Web site elements like showing where a DHTML menu, calendar, or content block *should* be and what it *should* look like. It's then up to the developers to turn that graphic into a workable Web site.

Figure 2 represents the initial transition of this comp from a graphic to a Web site template.
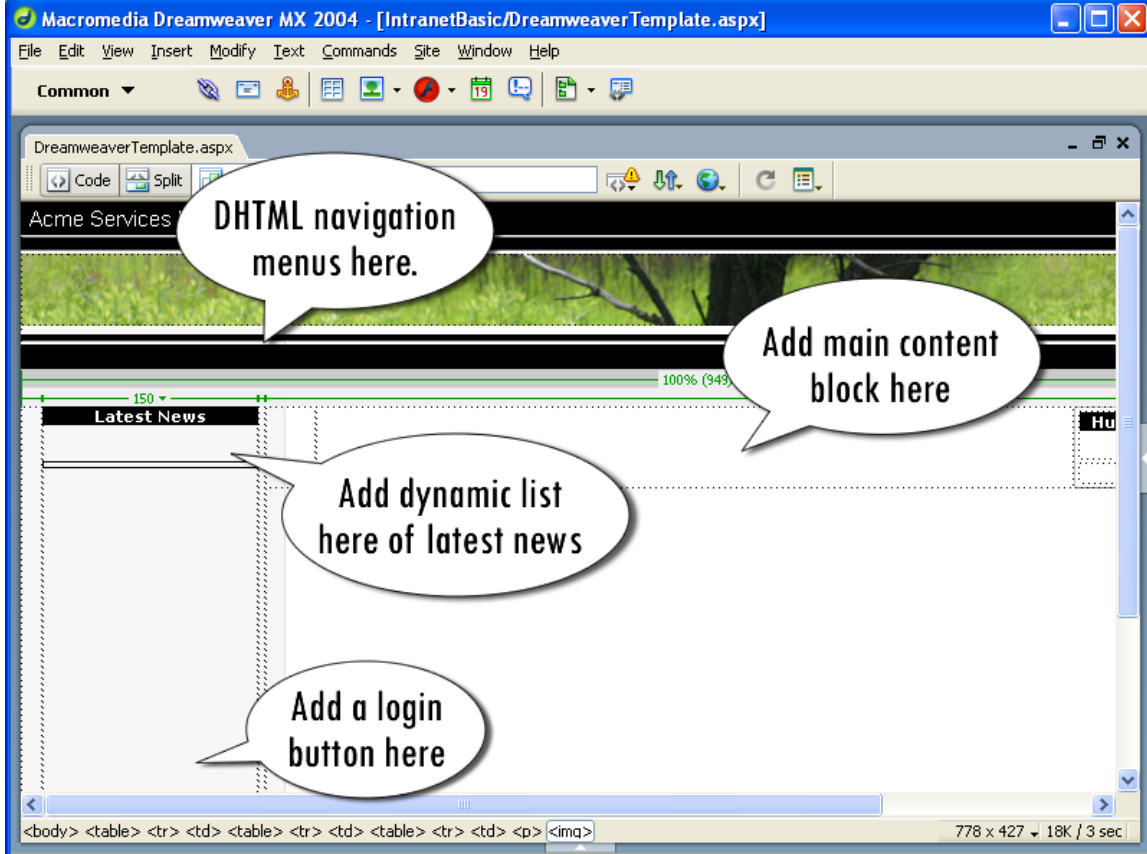

Figure 2

Each of the balloons notifies the developer to add a unique element to complete the Web page. Each of these elements can be added via the CMS400.NET Dreamweaver extension by simply clicking on the function type in the Dreamweaver commands menu (Figure 3).
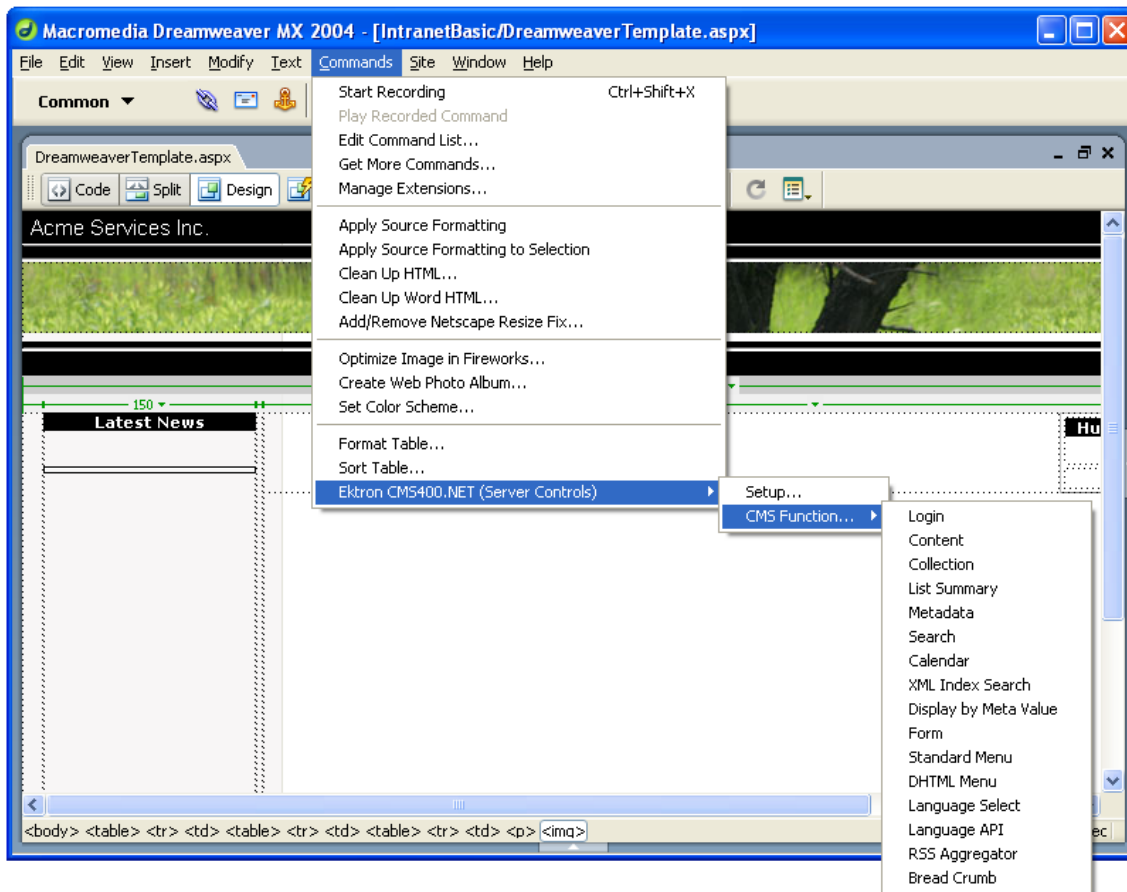
Figure 3 – List of Ektron CMS400.NET Functions

Click for Content

The most basic element on any CMS400.NET driven Web site is a content block. Adding an existing content block into your template is as easy as moving the cursor to the section of the page you want the content to be displayed and clicking on the **Content** function in the list of CMS400.NET functions.

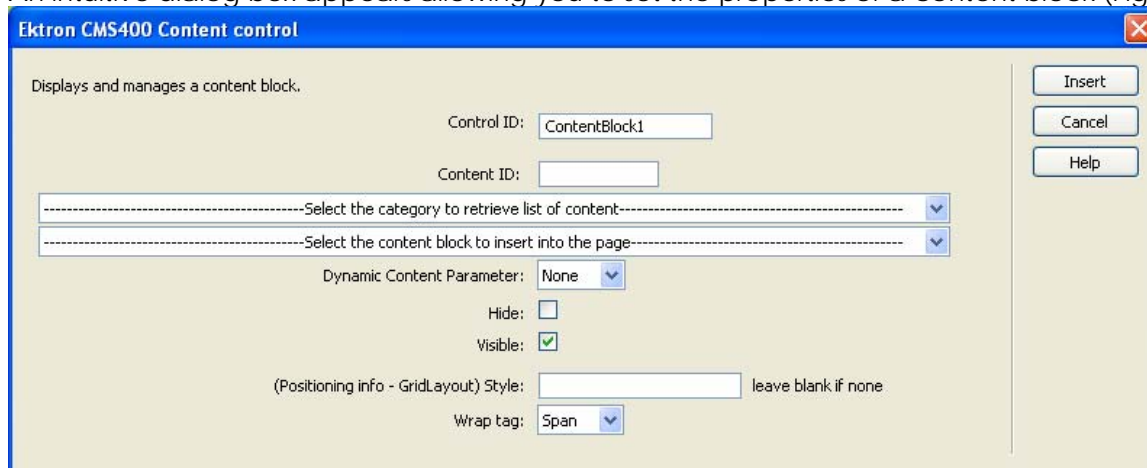An intuitive dialog box appears allowing you to set the properties of a content block (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Content block configuration dialog

There are two drop down lists that are displayed on the dialog box. One allows you to select an Ektron CMS400.NET content folder where the other allows you to select one of the content blocks within that content folder to be added (Figure 5).
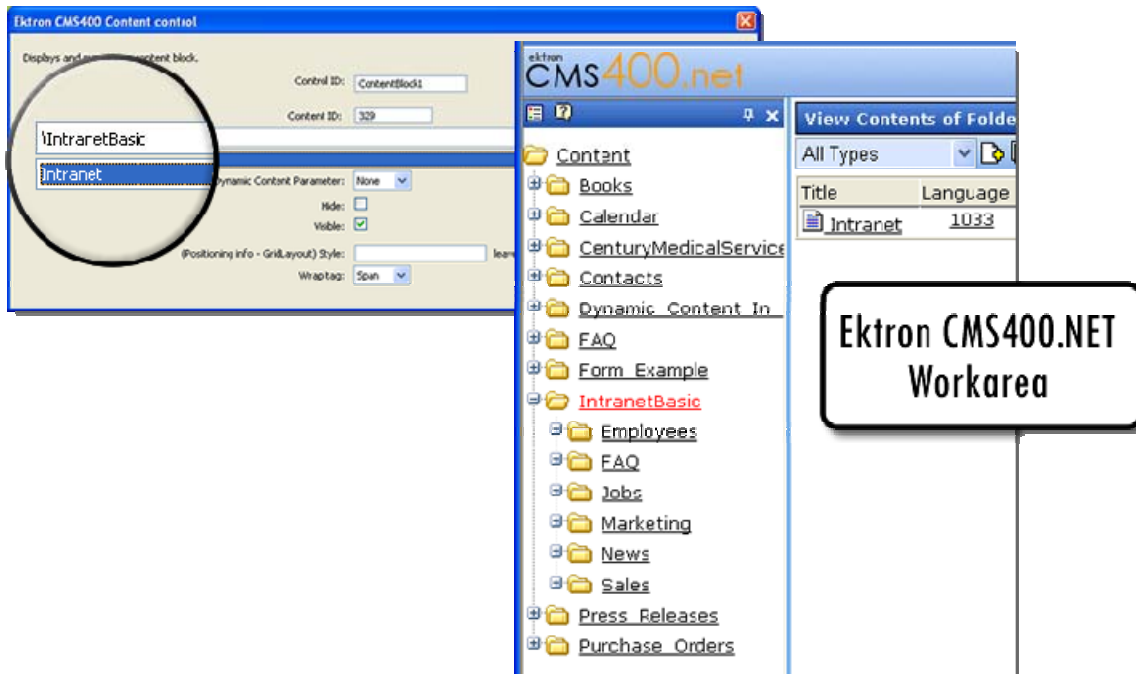

Figure 5 – Web site content folder structure is replicated in the content block properties dialog

Once you have selected the content block that you want to be displayed, there are some additional options that you can choose including making the content block dynamic or static.

Once an Ektron CMS content block has been added to your template, the necessary code is automatically generated and an image represents where the content block will be displayed (Figure 6).
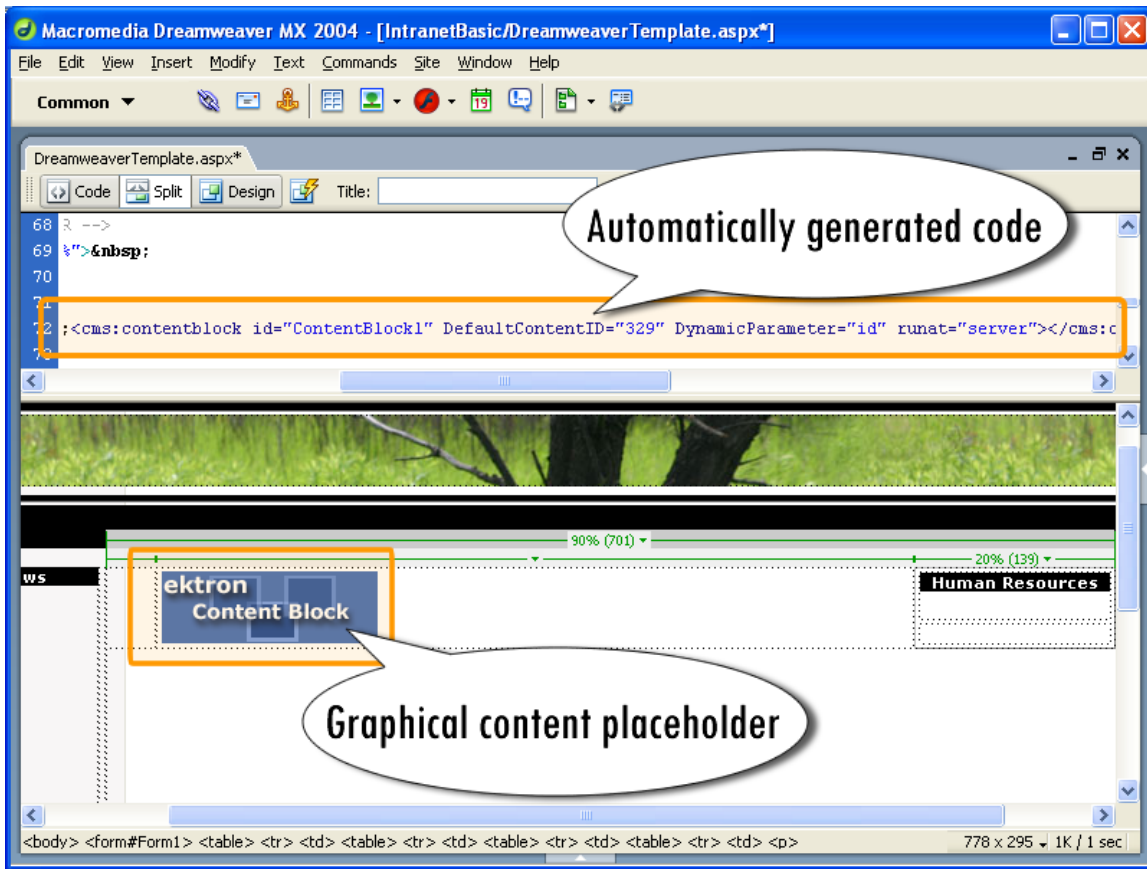
Figure 6 – Code is automatically generated and a glyph is displayed in Design view

Live Data View

An added benefit of using Dreamweaver MX is that the contents of the content block that has just been inserted can be fully rendered inside Dreamweaver allowing you to show you exactly how the combination of the template and content will appear together.

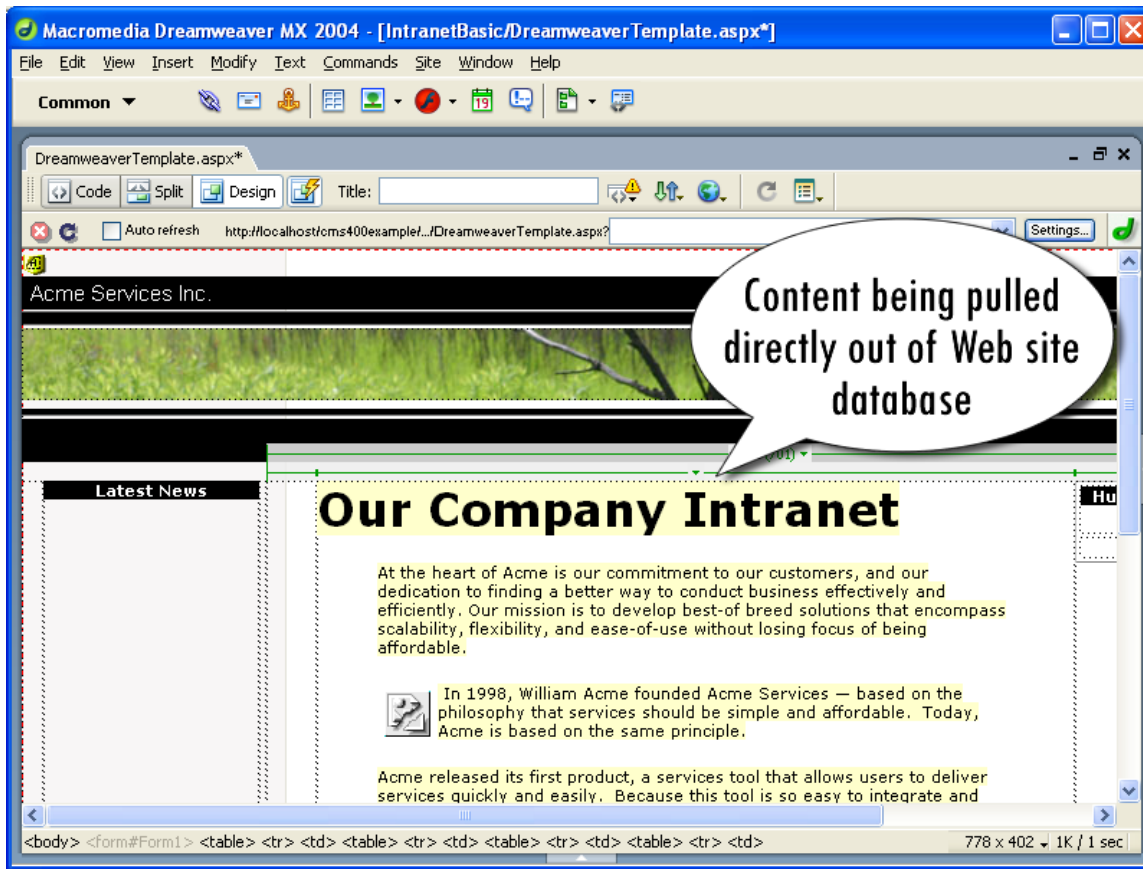This can be done simply by clicking the "Live Data View" button (Figure 7).

Figure 7 – Live data view

Login

An Ektron CMS400.NET login button is inserted into a Web site template to allow users to be authenticated by the Web site, and manage content and other related tasks online.

The process for adding a login button is the same as a content block; however, there aren't any additional options since a content block requires a unique content id (Figure 8).
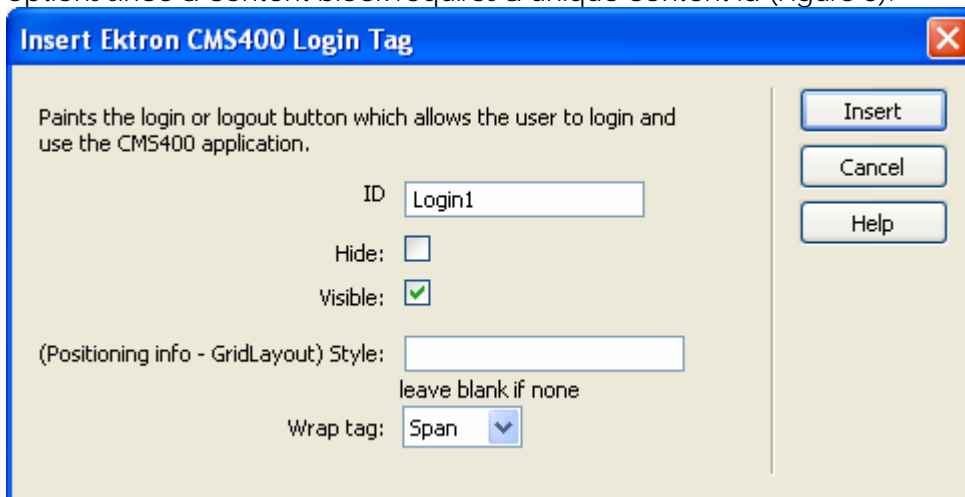

Figure 8 – Insert Ektron CMS400.NET Login Tag dialog

Once an Ektron CMS login button has been added to your template, the necessary code is automatically generated and an image represents where the login button is displayed (Figure 9).
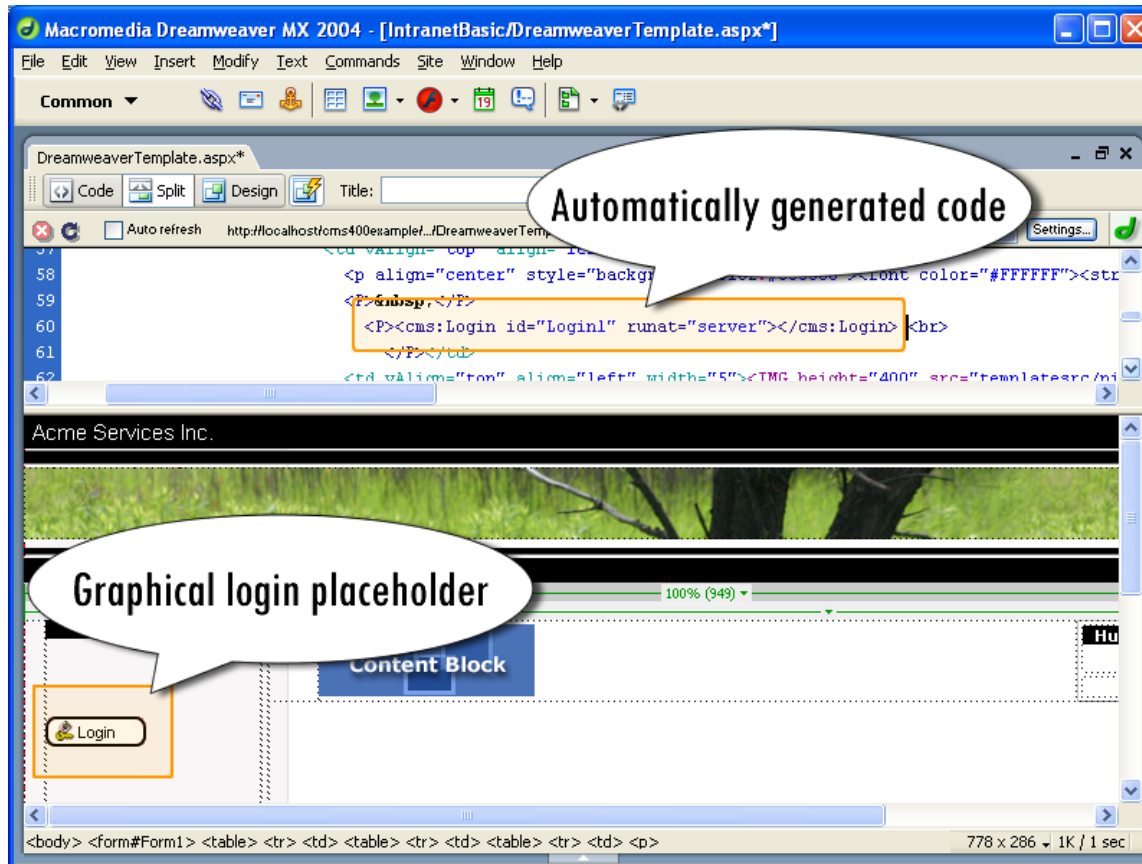

Figure 9 – Automatically generated code and Design view glyph

Dynamic List Summary

A commonly used and/or requested function of a Web site is to dynamically generate a list of the latest stories on a news web site or the most recent updates to the site. Ektron CMS400.NET includes functionality to do this right out-of-the-box. The function is called the ListSummary, which, like the name suggests, displays a list of the summaries of content blocks in the CMS. When a new content block is added, a link and description is automatically added to the list ensuring the newest articles are always displayed.

Similar to a content block, a list summary can easily be added to a template with click of the mouse and some simple configurations (Figure 10).
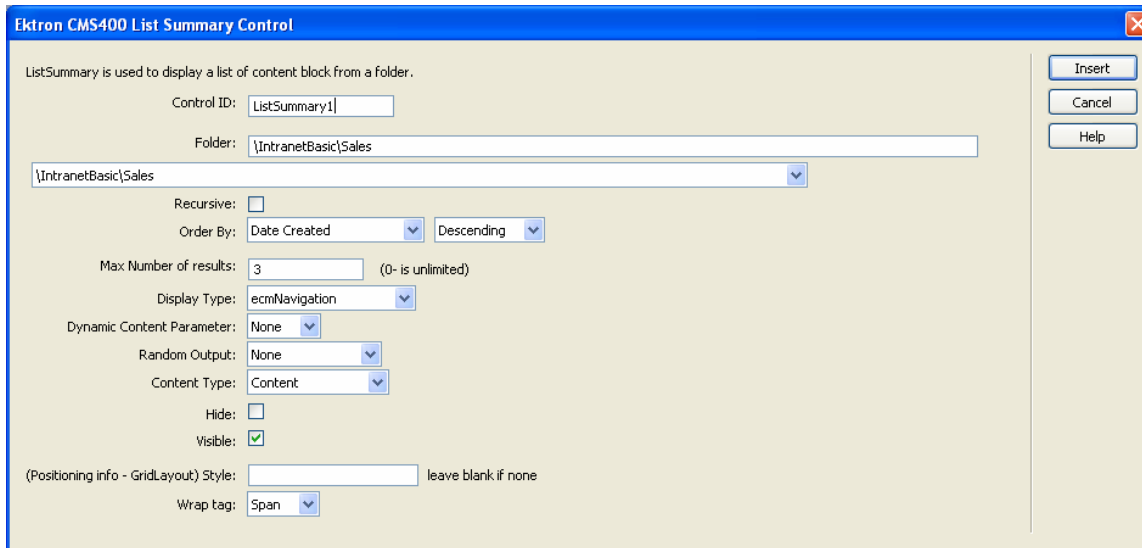
Figure 10 – Ektron CMS400.NET List Summary Control Dialog

Once an Ektron ListSummary has been added to your template, the necessary code is automatically generated and an image represents where the ListSummary is displayed (Figure 11).
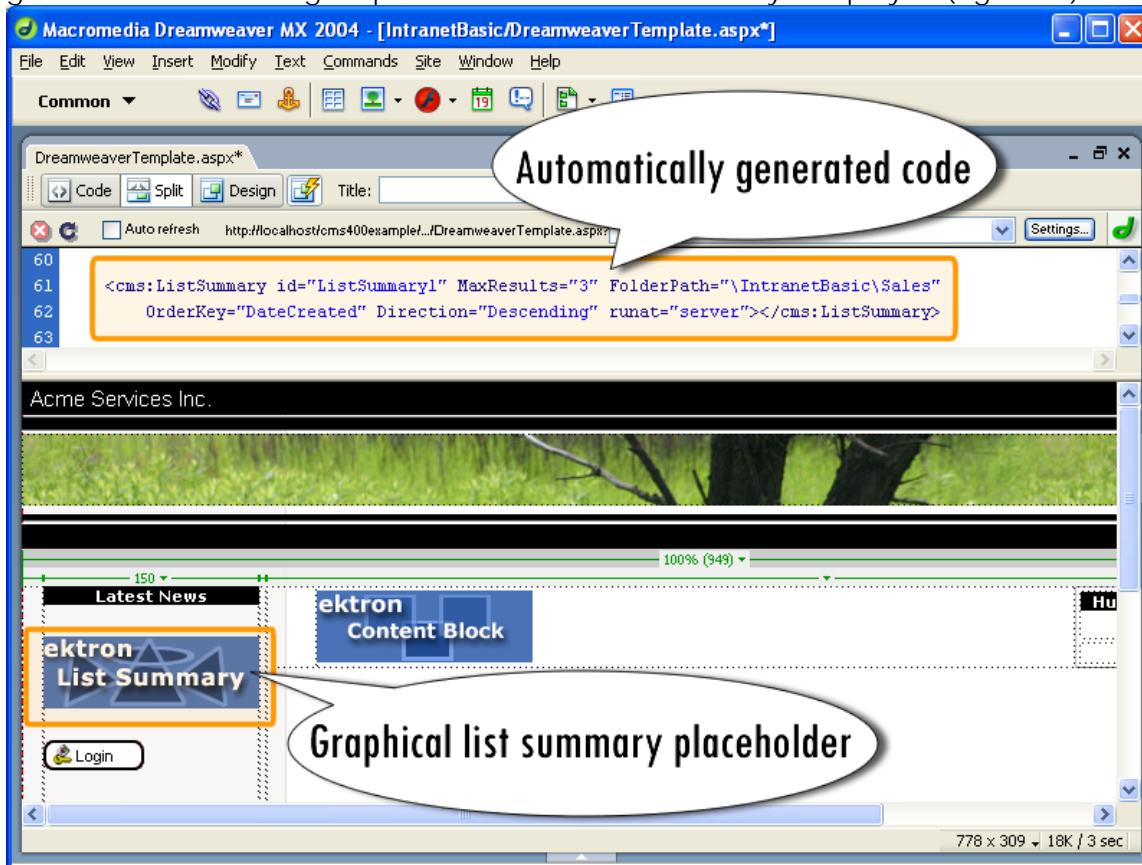

Figure 11 – Generated code for a ListSummary

DHTML Menus

Ektron CMS can generate code required for a very slick DHTML menu. Components of the menu (i.e. what are the items to be displayed) are added and managed via the Ektron CMS400.NET Workarea.

Once the menu has been constructed, a Dreamweaver Developer can insert the DHTML Menu command into the template simply by clicking and specifying the id of the menu as well as some other customizable fields (Figure 12).

Figure 12 – Ektron CMS400.NET DHTML Menu tag dialog

Once an Ektron DHTML Menu has been added to your template, the necessary code is automatically generated and an image represents where the DHTML menu button is displayed (Figure 13).
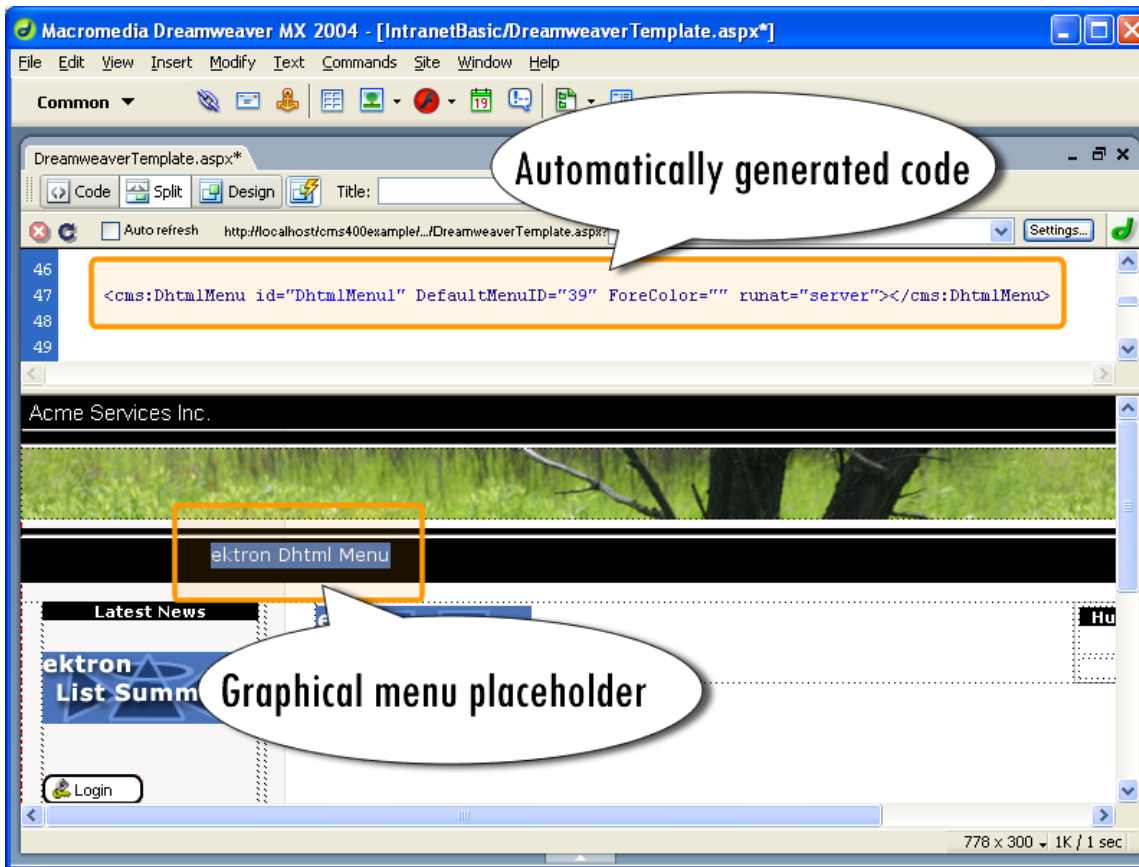
Figure 13 – Ektron CMS400.NET DHTML Menu code and placeholder

Putting it all Together

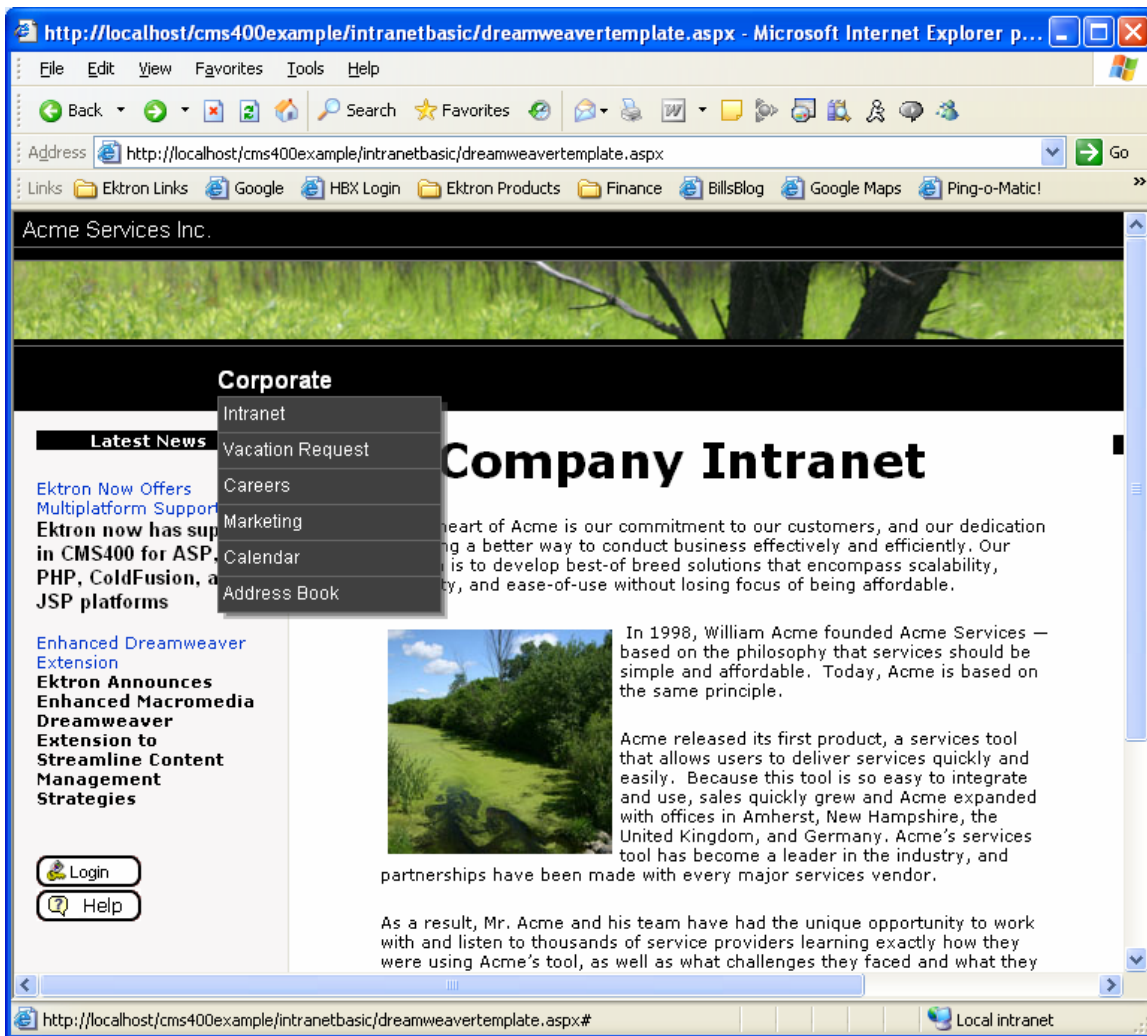With all elements added to the template, the template can be saved and viewed in a Web browser (Figure 14).

Figure 14 – Web View

Next Steps…

Look for more information about Ektron and how you can extend Dreamweaver to develop your Web site with Ektron CMS400.NET.

- Download a free, fully functional trial of Ektron CMS400.NET – which includes the Dreamweaver Extension – and see how fast and easy it is to develop your Web site with Ektron CMS400.NET.

- Ektron invites you to register for an online demonstration of Ektron CMS400.NET with one of Ektron's CMS experts for a more individualized demo.

- Learn more about Ektron CMS400.NET

- View a flash animation showing how easy it is to develop Web site templates using Ektron CMS400.NET and Macromedia Dreamweaver.