

SageKey MSI Wizard for Access

or

Can I make an .Exe out of Access?

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Cost: \$480

My Rating: B+

Where to buy: <http://www.sagekey.com/>

As the president of the Access SIG and someone who is very active in the Access/Computing community, I often get the question "How do I make an .exe out of Access?". The answer is "you can't". But I have something that is the next best thing, that's the Access Run Time engine and SageKey's MSI Wizard. With this package you can create a CD for installation of your Access application that will install on a computer whether they have Access installed or not. The brand new SageKey MSI Wizards for Access are a programmers come true. I'll tell you a little about my involvement in the past SageKey products, and then all about the new product.

Past Products I have used:

My interest in SageKey software <http://www.sagekey.com> started back in Access 97. I bought the Access Developer edition so that I could install applications written in Access for people who didn't have Access on their machine. Included in the package is what Microsoft calls the Run Time engine. It's exactly the same as the full version of Access with the exception that the user can't see the database window, view Access menus, view code, and other miscellaneous items not necessary in running properly written Access applications.

After investigating the process, I discovered nothing but problems with the Access Run Time. Some simple problems like causing the machine to not allow the user to open their real copy of Access to horror stories of not allowing the machine to boot. For some reason I figured the Access Run Time with the Microsoft installer was not something I wanted to sell to my customers. I read about SageKey in Smart Access magazine. I realized I had a very difficult situation because I wanted to

- * Install my Access Front End on their machine
- * Install my Access Back End on their Network if more than one person in the organization was using the application, or on their machine if they were the only ones using the application.
- * Use Web Services to communicate with a website
- * Install Microsoft Data Access Components (MDAC)
- * Install MS Soap
- * Install MS XML

After investigating it, I bought the Access 97, Access 2000, and eventually the Access 2003 version of SageKey scripts for Wise Installer. I currently use it to make Installation CDs for my customer's customers. I have had zero problems in the last 4 years with my installs on computers all over the United States. This has been a lifesaver to have installs on all types of systems and no problems with the installs. Just a note here, I personally don't use the Access Run Time on these particular installs because I want the user to be aware that they can link to their data from any program they have, I want them to see the data as theirs and not someone else's. However, it would work just as well with the Access Run Time.

To make the above work, I had to buy the SageKey scripts for Wise Installer and Wise Installer. An investment of about \$1,600. (a little over \$400 for each version of SageKey scripts and a copy of Wise for Windows Installer about \$400) . You can buy a copy of SageKey MSI Wizard for Access for only \$480 per version of Access, and in most cases one version will do the job. \$480 and you are ready to go!

Let's Talk About the New Product: (I am reviewing the 2003 Wizard)

The new product, SageKey's MSI Wizard for Access allows you to build a Windows installer .msi file with everything you need from your front end, back end, icon file, security file, License Agreement, Access Run Time, MDAC, and any other components you need without buying another installer product. All you need is SageKey's MSI Wizard for Access. They have a version for Access 97, 2000, XP, and 2003, but you probably only need to buy one. The reason is that it will install the Microsoft Run Time engine, which is free to distribute if you buy the right version of Office. So you can develop in any version of Access you choose and it will make no difference if they have Access installed on their computer or not. You will have a trouble free installation and not worry about what version of Access your customer has or even if they change version after they install your application. Note: Remember you can only install Access 2003 on machines with Windows 2000 with Service Pack 3 (SP3), Windows XP, or later. See complete requirements for Access 2003 at <http://www.microsoft.com/office/access/prodinfo/sysreq.mspx>

Your Access application will not need a digital certificate when you use the SageKey Wizard to install your application. It will make Access doesn't ask your user if they are sure they want to open your database.

How it works:

There are 7 screens where you fill out data, push a button, and your ready to copy the install files over to your CD. The help file takes you through each step. I do have a complaint here in they need documentation that gives more information on each screen. I had a number of questions of "Can I do this" which could not be answered by their help file or their knowledge-base on line. They tell me this will change in the future.

Step #1 -Fill out Names, Version, and Installation directories, etc.



Step #2 -Where the FrontEnd and BackEnd Database are located on your computer.

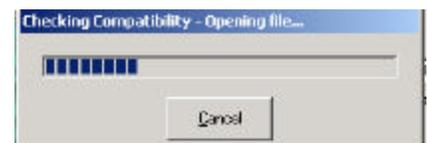
- Create Client/Server Install Yes/No

*By client Server they don't mean SQL Server, they are asking if you want to install the BackEnd on the server and the FrontEnd on the local machine. If you want to install the entire application on the local machine, don't check the field.

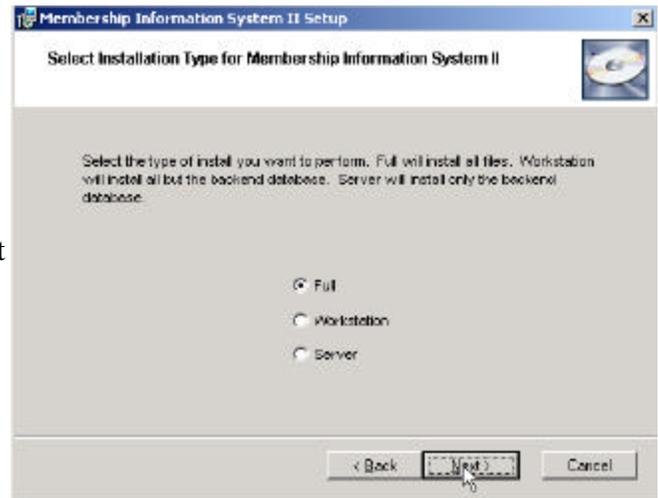


*If you check the field, when your user installs your application they will have the option to install the FrontEnd on their machine and the BackEnd on the network, however they will need to do two installs, one for the workstation and one for the server. I recommend that you document the install procedure similar to the documentation on the next page.

* Note: SageKey does sell scripts to install an Microsoft Date Engine (MSDE) which is basically the SQL Server engine.



- I document the installation in the following manner when I want the backend to be installed on the server.
- We all know all users read the documentation.



Recommended Installation Documentation:

X Before you start the installation, you need to decide what type of Installation you want:

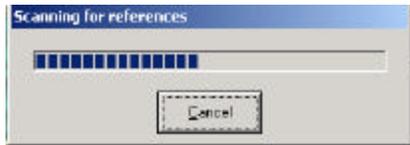
- **A Single User Install - Option = Full:** This is the option you should pick if you will be the only person in your company using the program. This option loads a stand alone installation, loading both the Application and the Data on the destination directory of your computer.
- **B Multi-user Workstation Install- Option = Workstation:** Are you one of a number of people using this program for your company? If this is the case, you will need the program on your computer and the data on your network. This option installs the application without the data into the destination directory. The application will read the data from the network. If the above is true you will use this option to install the program the first time on your computer, and then do a second install using the Multi-User Data Install below. Everyone else in your company will use this option only when they install the program.
- **C -Multi-user Data Install (on Network)- Option = Server:** installs the Data Files only into the destination directory (on your Network). With the data being on your network (where everyone using the program can read the location on your network), many people can use the program. (You may want to contact your network technical support person for help with this option.)

Step #3 -Your Icon for the application.

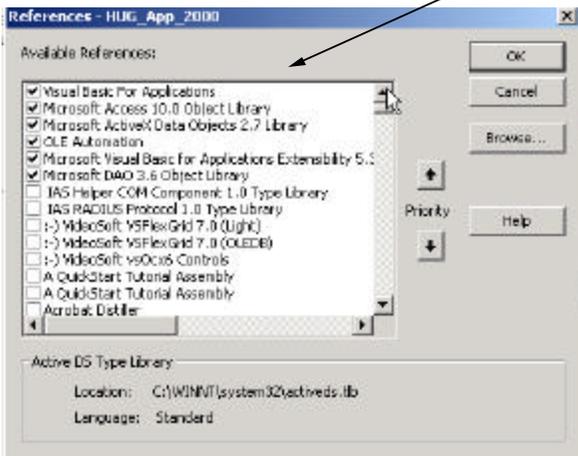
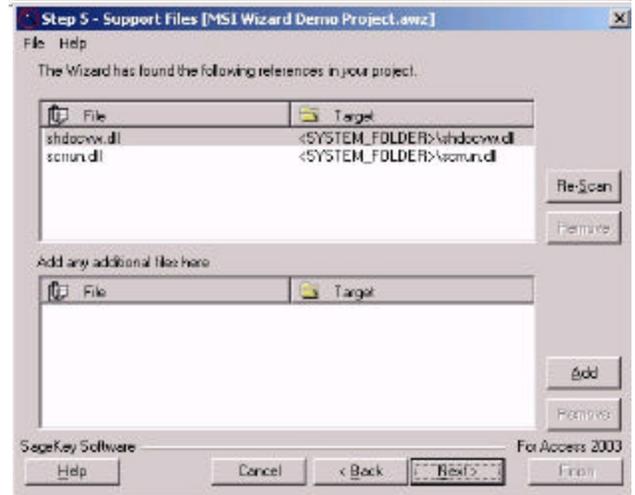
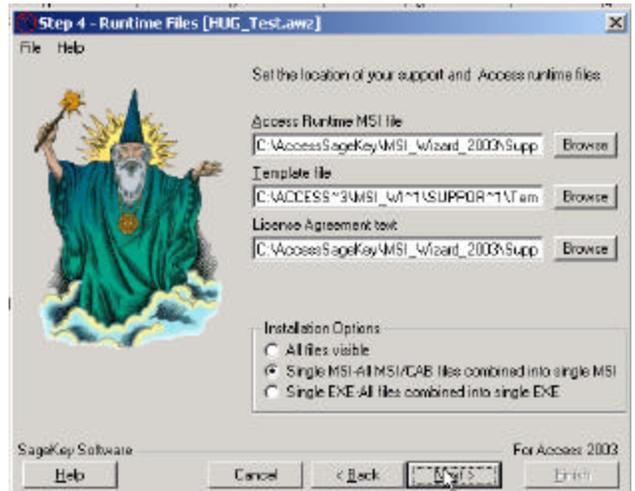
- Where you want your shortcuts
- Your workgroup (security file - .mdw) or if you want to use Access's default mdw - just put (Use Default System.mdw)
- Help file
- Command line Options
 - /excl = Have the user open the file exclusive so they can only have one copy open at a time.
 - /runtime = The application will open like Run Time even if they hook the shortcut to the full Access version.



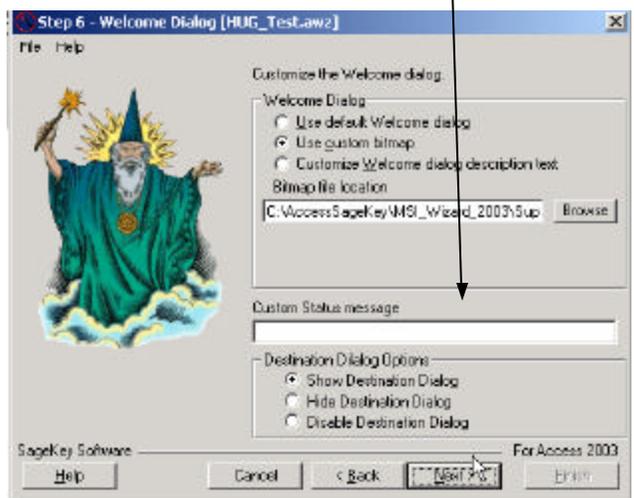
- Step #4 - Access Runtime Files the 2003 Access Runtime consists of two files Accessrt.msi and Accessrt.cab which can be found on the Office 2003 Professional CD in the path \files\accrt. Make sure you remove the Hidden and the Read only attributes.
- Template File is in the SageKey folder.
 - Your License agreement for the application.



- Step #5 - SageKey will scan your database and find any references and try to add them automatically. You can also add other references.
- Note: You will not see the standard Access References in this box.



- Step #6 - You can add your own bitmap to one of the Installation screens and even change the text. The size of the bitmap should be 501 pixels by 314 which is the size of the entire screen - Your logo should be at the bottom.
- You can have a custom status message displayed when the Run Time is installed if you want.
 - Let the user decide where the file is installed - I hope so.



Step #Last-

- Location of the Install files.
- Note #1 : Currently It makes 4 files. You need to copy all the files with the exception of the MergeLog.txt file to your installation CD.



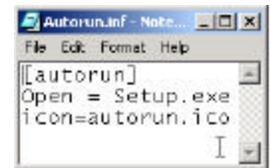
Name	Ext	Size	Type
HUG.msi	.msi	66,109,440	Windows Installer Package
Install.ini	.ini	37	Configuration Settings
MergeLog.txt	.txt	12,141	Text Document
Setup.exe	.exe	301,250	Application

Note #2 : Your user needs to start the Setup.exe, I won't get into the reason, and it will load the .msi file. This in my opinion is a defect in the program.

Note #3 : Because of #2 you should do 3 things:

- Put the msi in a subdirectory
- edit the Install.ini to point to the subdirectory.
- Add an Auto-Run file —> AutoRun.inf

See <http://autorun.moonvalley.com/autoruninf.htm> for instructions on an Auto-Run file



Original Version

```
[INSTALL]
INSTALLPROGRAM=.\HUG.msi
```

New Version

```
[INSTALL]
INSTALLPROGRAM=.\MSI\HUG.msi
```

Name	Ext	Size	Type
Autorun.inf	.inf	27	
Install.ini	.ini	41	
Setup.exe	.exe	301,250	

Name	Ext	Size
HUG.msi	.msi	66,109,440

- You will need a version of Microsoft Data Access Components (MDAC) to allow ADO to work in Access. They include version 2.8. You will be installing this on the user's computer if they don't have this version or a higher version.

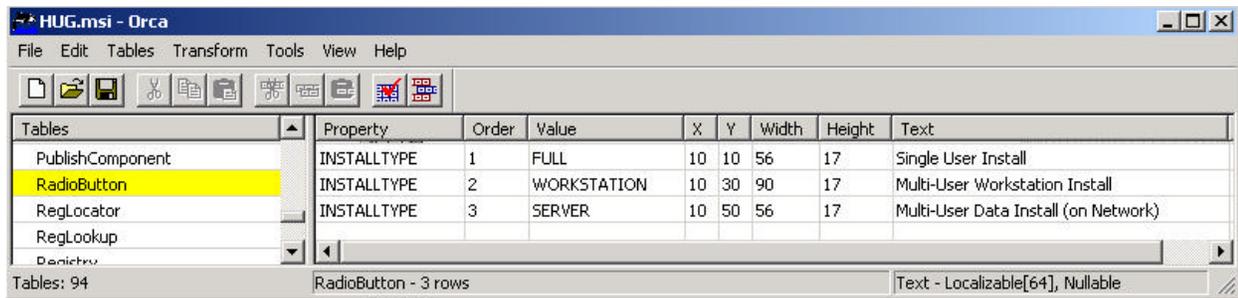
To check for MDAC version see the following Microsoft knowledgebase article:
<http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=301202>

- Next, it wants to know what version of Jet you want installed.

The Problem We have as Programmers is that we always Want More.

As you use this program you will find things that you want to do, that are not included in the Wizard.

SageKey has some knowledgebase articles that show you how to edit the .msi file. You use Microsoft's free program Orca to edit the .mis.



Here are some examples that are on SageKey's knowledgebase.

Problem	SageKey Knowledgebase Article
Creating an upgrade that detects the Original Front-End and leaves the backend alone	KB10388 KB10160
How to add additional shortcuts to the installation package. (One shortcut to open one form one to open another.)	KB10241
Make an MSI Install package without the Runtime for customers who already have Access	KB10169
Installing the back-end database in a sub-directory of the front-end.	KB10387

Conclusion:

I think that every serious Access programmer should have a copy of one of the versions of the SageKey MSI Wizard. You can use it to install all the files you need, from your front end, back end, icon files, security file, License Agreement, Access Run Time, MDAC, and any other components that need to be installed, and be assured your installation will be independent and coexist with all versions of Access without problems. You can be insured that your user has the correct version of MDAC, Jet, and Access without an involvement of your time and effort at each user's machine.

We have all been asking for this, now we can buy it if we really want it.

An Additional Resource:

You can go to my website <http://www.businessandcomputers.com> and find some of my notes of how I use the wizard along with some edits I make to the MSI file. Go to my site, click on Fellow Programmers on the left. That will take you to my Access Download page with some of my code. Go to # 220 and download "Larry's Notes - SageKey MSI Wizard for Access"

