Microsoft's Visual Studio will gain some Expression

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(Phys.org)—This week, Microsoft design tools for Windows and Windows Phone took a surprise turn with the company's announcement that components of "Expression" were in for some big changes. Microsoft announced there will be an end of its support lifeline for some of the company's Expression design tools, in its new resolve to consolidate elements of Express with Visual Studio. This is not a total phaseout but a consolidation move where some parts of the collection are marked for retirement.

Microsoft Expression was first introduced for designers in 2005 as a collection of tools that enabled its users to design web applications. At the time, software industry watchers saw the arrival of Expression as Microsoft's attempt to attract design-suite customers with this new bundle of four applications. As Adobe was considered to be the company offering the ultimate tools for professional design and web development, questions were even raised if Adobe should be worried about a bite from these new Expression tools.

The collection has become well known for delivering design tools for activities such as creating graphical user interfaces for web and desktop applications, a video-editing program, and illustration tools for web images. The Microsoft site describing all the changes is positioning this as a drive to provide customers with a unified solution. That solution is Visual Studio, which is to integrate some parts of the Expression technology. "Microsoft is committed to providing best-in-class tools for building modern applications. In support of these industry trends

Microsoft is consolidating our lead design and development offerings—Expression and Visual Studio—to offer all of our customers a unified solution that brings together the best of Web and modern development patterns."

Microsoft said Blend, which has been part of the Expression suite, will continue to ship as a standalone tool with Visual Studio 2012, to serve as a design-centric environment for building Windows Store apps and Windows Phone apps.

Customers can no longer purchase Expression Studio 4 Ultimate and Expression Studio 4 Web Professional. For customers who previously purchased these products, components will be supported through their support lifecycle.

Expression Design 4. and Expression Web 4 are available for download free but technical support is unavailable for the free versions.

Expression Encoder 4 Pro will be available for purchase through 2013, with support available through its support lifecycle, but no new versions will be developed. Expression Encoder 4 remains available for download at no charge.

More information: www.microsoft.com/expression/

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