

How to Find Progress Answers

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Have you ever tried to find the reason for a particular Progress error message? Or asked, “How do I do this?” by searching the web or posting on the PEG? Many of us search for answers each day and this article may help you find answers more quickly and with more success.

“What do you use?”

Progress Software is always looking for ways to market the OpenEdge® product family and the solutions its vendors provide more broadly. They have just added staff to specifically extend Progress’ web presence and marketing reach via the web. One of their planned methods is to catalog all the web resources with relevant Progress information and make that catalog available on the progress.com web site.

Michael Katz, Senior Manager of Web Marketing at Progress, discovered the PUG presidents group was a treasure trove of information to seed this catalog. He joined one of the Progress-sponsored PUG president telecons, asking them, “How do you search for Progress information on the web?” and “What resources exist about Progress do you know of?”

Answers came from 10 people whom have worked with Progress for decades and have found, collected, and often created the resources we all now use on the web.

Roadmap to answers

After compiling the list for Michael and our reference, it was obvious this was a roadmap to quickly finding answers and to a great extent, some of the secrets behind the most knowledgeable and resource Progress experts in the community.

This article will benefit everyone who might need to find answers and share a larger realm of resources and solutions.

Techniques

Error messages

When you have a specific OpenEdge® error message, people tend to look in the Progress Knowledge Base as it contains a complete listing of the error messages and often a solution to the problem. The Knowledge Base is searchable by text and has more information, but its error message list is the primary value.

<http://progress.atgnow.com/esprogress/categoryBrowse.do>

Searching via Google™ is another method for finding the cause or explanation of a given OpenEdge® error message. Since Google™ indexes most resources except the PEG, it can find listings, discussions and posting fairly well so long as you are including the actual error message text.

<http://www.google.com>

General How-To

For quite some time, the Progress Email Group (PEG) has been the most active question-and-answer resource about OpenEdge® on the web. Because of the large number of users and variety of topics, the PEG remains one of the best sources for general “How-to” questions and answers.

Several people indicated they search for answers on the PEG by using the search function rather than posting a question. Since the PEG is a mailing list, its intent is for people with questions to post a message and expect other PEG users to reply to that message. Due to the wide variety of opinions though, posting a question can turn into a “fire hose” of answers and opinion, so using just the search feature has become popular to finding answers without unleashing a torrent of replies, only some of which are on-target with actionable answers.

Note: While it is possible to participate in the PEG without becoming a paying member, it is important to remember the cost of providing the service is borne by just a few paying members. If you use the PEG regularly, you should support it by becoming a paying member.

<http://www.peg.com>

Progress itself has created huge information resource called Progress Software Developers Network (PSDN), loaded it with lots of documentation and opened it to contributions from the Progress community. Since content is added to it daily, it, too, has a certain amount of searchable “How-to” answers.

Tip: Since Progress Software uses PSDN as a library for source code, reference documentation and whitepapers, many people are specifically setting time during their working day to explore PSDN and read its content. They see this as an effective, timesaving way to keep up with what is possible with the OpenEdge® tools as well as discovering why language features or tools were built since the actual developers are writing much of the content.

<http://www.psdn.com>

As the OpenEdge® product line became more prevalent, more and more I.T. departments were being asked to stand up and support OpenEdge®-based products. Since many of these departments had no prior experience with Progress or knowledge of the PEG, they created a USENET group to support questions and answers.

USENET groups are now best known as Google™ Groups, but they remain messages and replies broadly stored and distributed in a discussion board format, accessible via old-style client software, and in new style web sites.

<http://groups.google.com/group/comp.databases.progress/topics>

Specific How-To

Quite often, the questions you're asking aren't so much about OpenEdge®, but about the application you're using which happens to be written in OpenEdge®. To search for answers and information about the applications themselves, you can look for a Knowledge Base on the vendor's support site. Some examples are:

<http://www.infor365.com>

<http://support.qad.com>

On the other hand, you may be looking for a domain-specific question such as how to best perform a task in the ERP world or what a given financial term means. Your ERP application happens to be based on OpenEdge® and therefore the knowledge is generally related.

Luckily there are some domain-specific Knowledge Bases you can search for these kinds of answers, too. Some examples are:

<http://erp.ittoolbox.com>

<http://solutionmatrix.com/financial-terms.html>

News

Quite a bit of information is now available in the form of news on various websites. While it is impractical to search hundreds of web sites with news searching for a specific answer, there are tools to look for just OpenEdge® information and filter out the rest.

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is an XML-based format for passing short descriptions of news items from a source to a reader. RSS readers are available as stand-alone programs or browser add-ons so we can quickly scan through a list of news items and choose only the ones we wish to “read more” about.

Many newsreaders offer searching or filtering features so even the list of article titles has been reduced to just those which meet your search criteria. Some examples of RSS readers:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/424>

<http://www.rssowl.org>

Other

The PUG Presidents had a few web resources that did not fit in the categories above, but were helpful in finding answer.

The OpenEdge Hive is a new web site collecting information and resources about OpenEdge with just community support. As this site grows, it should become a more and more useful site.

A very interesting service provided by OE Hive is Proogle, a custom filter for Google™ searches. When you enter search terms at Proogle, only Google searches the sites that OE Hive has selected as being Progress-relevant. Therefore, your results are already better

tuned to your desired results. You won't be getting "progress reports" from the Australian agricultural department because its website is not part of the Proogle site filter.

<http://www.oehive.org/proogle>

Google™ constantly searches the web using spider programs, which look for and index information. The spiders traverse the web and fill the Google™ database so it is ready when you perform a search at Google.com. However, they also have an alert service that tells you when the spiders find information you have selected.

Google™ Alerts are search terms you define and have stored at Google so when one of the spiders discovers a web resource with those terms, you get an email telling you where the terms were found. You could look at this as a proactive search.

<http://www.google.com/alerts>

Finding people who have particular product knowledge due to working or having worked at a particular company is possible using LinkedIn®.

LinkedIn® is a social networking site for business people. On this site, you list the companies at which you have worked, business people you know, and areas of skill and knowledge. Other LinkedIn® users can then find you by searching for this kind of information and being introduced by business people you both know.

<http://www.linkedin.com>

Comments and suggestions

Many in the Progress community have devoted time and resources to gathering and offering information to others without expecting direct payback. Progress Software has created its own resources to help us, and is going even further by publishing links to many of these resources so they are easier to find. PSC's efforts to keep the PUG presidents together have not only made the Progress User Groups (PUGs) stronger, but have given PSC a quick way to gather resources to promote Progress products and answers.

This guide is meant to help promote and distribute the resources available. It is by no means complete or absolute.

If you have additions or corrections to this guide, please send them to dlucy@allegroconsultants.com.