

Why Crabby seems smarter than she is: Meet your Office MVPs



[Print](#)

Crabby Office Lady

When it comes to troubleshooting customers' problems, our Office experts do a lot of it from within the various program discussion groups. Don't be a misanthrope; share your problems, get solutions, and rejoice in Office love.

[Crabby Office Lady columns](#)

[Crabby's blog](#)

[Crabby's podcasts](#)

When you have a problem with your Office software, you can take a variety of routes to solve it. You can:

- Press F1 and search Help for an answer.
- Visit the Office Online Web site and read an assistance article, get some training, or download a template.
- [Get help from the Community of Microsoft Users.](#)
- Ask your question of an MVP.

I hear you saying, "Wait; what is this last one?" MVP stands for "Most Valuable Professional" and an Office MVP is an expert valued for his or her participation in technical communities. These folks are not Microsoft employees, nor are they paid by Microsoft for the help they provide. MVPs come from many backgrounds and have a wide range of technical skills. Most importantly, they share a passion for technology and they have demonstrated a willingness to help others.

And how do MVPs work for you? They write books and articles, they have blogs, they participate in chats, and they spend a lot of time in newsgroups answering customer questions.

In other words, these are people you really should get to know.

Steve Anderson, a program manager in Office, works a lot with MVPs. When I talked to him about the value they provide, he had this to say:

"We love our MVPs. You can always count on them to be direct, helpful, and online more than you are. Seriously, I often ask our MVPs when they sleep. I don't think they do."

As for me, I'm not sure what keeps these people going, either; they have jobs, usually unrelated to the Office products they are experts at, but they spend an enormous amount of time trying to help out Office customers.

Today I'm going to introduce you to your Office MVPs. And I'll dispense the remainder of my crabbiness here and spare the remainder of the column, so that you can channel positive energy into your connections with our MVPs. Rather than writing to me about specific problems, I suggest you scour the loads of information these professionals have to offer; it's likely you'll find an answer to just about any question you have, while becoming a more adept Office user yourself.

So...where are my MVPs?

Where can you find your Office MVPs? When you participate in Microsoft Newsgroups, Community Web Sites, Technical Chats, or User Groups, you'll find your MVPs in there lurking, just waiting to pounce on your question and save you scads of time and trouble. Some of them even have their own Web sites designed to answer your most pressing problems.

Access

Ken Snell is an Access MVP who told me that two of the most common questions he gets are:

1. How can I limit the contents of one combo/list box based on what's selected in another combo/list box?
(The answer is [here](#).)
 2. How do I have a text box automatically fill in with a value after I select an item from a combo box on a form (for example, select a person's ID in a combo box, and have the person's last name automatically display in a text box)?
(The answer is [here](#).)
- [Ask the Access community](#).
 - Meet your [Access MVPs](#).

Excel

Excel is a much-beloved and frequently used Office program, and we have plenty of experts standing by to offer you guidance. For my money, the MVPs roaming the Excel newsgroups are the best avenue to finding quick answers to burning questions about PivotTable reports, formatting worksheets, or putting Excel data on the Web.

Remember how I mentioned that MVPs don't necessarily work in a technical or computer-related field? Ron de Bruin, an Excel MVP from Holland, works for a company that grows chrysanthemums. Talk about diverse interests! Take a look at some of [Ron's great Excel tips](#).

- [Ask the Excel community](#).
- Meet your [Excel MVPs](#).

FrontPage

FrontPage, the Office Web site development software, is used by beginners and experts alike, and our community of MVPs reflects that. For example, take a look at some [frequently asked questions answered by FrontPage experts](#) and you'll get an idea of the wide range of topics covered by our experts.

One FrontPage MVP in particular, Chris Leeds, is more than passionate about FrontPage. Chris has a page on his Web site that addresses [Top three beginners' traps in FrontPage](#), and this is just an example of how your MVPs are working hard to make sure that you get the answers you need.

- [Ask the FrontPage community](#).
- Meet your [FrontPage MVPs](#).

InfoPath

InfoPath is a fairly new Office program and you have a lot of questions about it. (Between you and me, so do I.) In case you're not familiar with InfoPath, it's a program you use to design and fill out electronic forms. Read a little bit about it [here](#).

Greg Collins, an InfoPath MVP, knows first-hand how being a part of a community can make you a better, more efficient Office user, no matter what your level of skill:

"I have found the discussion groups to be invaluable tools in keeping my skill set sharp and relevant."

- [Ask the InfoPath community](#).
- Meet your [InfoPath MVPs](#).

OneNote

OneNote, also one of the newer Office programs, has really taken off with our customers. It's a versatile little program and is probably capable of doing more than you can imagine. One of our MVPs, Ben Schorr, has written a handy little article about [using OneNote for Web research](#).

- [Connect with the OneNote Community](#).
- Meet your [OneNote MVPs](#).

Outlook

Outlook is one of the most commonly used Office programs and probably the most invaluable for people who use e-mail a lot (which, if you're reading this column, is probably you).

- [Ask the Outlook experts](#).
- Meet your [Outlook MVPs](#).

PowerPoint

Sonia Coleman, a PowerPoint MVP, offered me this advice when I asked her about one of the thornier issues encountered when using PowerPoint: Using multimedia. Sonia said, "How PowerPoint handles multimedia is very complex and difficult to communicate to the average users. Even if they do eventually understand all of the possible issues, pinning down the cause for a specific situation is difficult or impossible." Did Sonia just end there? She did not. She pointed me toward a [comprehensive response on her Web site](#).

Sonia also mentioned that Austin Myers, who wrote the article in the above link, has developed an "amazing PowerPoint add-in that will resolve all or nearly all problems and does not require any multimedia expertise of the user." Read more about [Austin's add-in](#).

- [Ask the PowerPoint experts](#).
- Meet your [PowerPoint MVPs](#).

Project

Jan De Messemaeker, a Project MVP, explains how he became a Project expert and then an MVP: "I turned to the Project newsgroups five years ago looking for specific information, and I was surprised by the efficiency of the replies I got. Then I found out I could learn even more from troubleshooting other users' issues and answering them, and I ended up being a specialist myself."

Hey, like Jan, you just may find your inner MVP after spending some time in the discussion groups.

- [Ask the Project community](#).
- Meet your [Project MVPs](#)

Publisher

Publisher MVP David Bartosik offered me the top three issues that Publisher customers ask him about:

1. How to publish a publication to a Web server. (See the answer [here](#).)
2. How to link to a .pdf file on their site. (See the answer [here](#).)
3. How to get their form page to work. (See the answer here [here](#).)

- [Ask the Publisher community of experts](#).
- Meet your [Publisher MVPs](#).

Visio

Not only do the Visio MVPs spend an inordinate amount of time answering your question from within the discussion group, but they also manage a [Visio MVP site](#).

- [Ask the Visio community of experts](#).
- Meet your [Visio MVPs](#).

Word

Dian D. Chapman, a very busy Word MVP, runs a free online tech support magazine that contains hundreds of free tutorials. Check out Dian's Web site, [Mousetrax](#). I also want to mention that Dian and her husband Greg took part in relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina. Greg flew his own plane down to the gulf to help fly medical supplies after Katrina. You can read more about that [here](#). As well, Dian has been working with animal organizations to raise money for animals left homeless after Katrina, and you can read more about Dian's efforts [here](#). Thanks for all your work both inside and outside the realm of Office, Dian and Greg.

- [Ask the Word community of experts](#)
- Meet your [Word MVPs](#)

Tip of the week

K.H. of California sent me a Word tip that makes applying a style you create quick and easy.

1. Create the style you want.

NOTE If you're not sure how to do this, read [create a new style](#).

2. On the **Tools** menu, click **Customize**, and then click the **Commands** tab.
3. Under **Categories**, scroll down and click **Styles**.
4. In the **Commands** box, click the style you created and drag it to your toolbar.

Now you have a button for your new style, and when you want to apply it to a document you're working on, select the text you want to apply your style to and just click your new button!

"There are painters who transform the sun to a yellow spot, but there are others who, with the help of their art and their intelligence, transform a yellow spot into the sun." — Pablo Picasso

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Did this article help you?** feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

[Crabby Office Lady columns](#)
[Crabby's blog](#)
[Crabby's podcasts](#)