

Zak Ruvalcaba

Adobe®
Dreamweaver®
CS4

UNLEASHED

SAMS



Adobe® Dreamweaver® CS4 Unleashed

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Introduction

Over a decade ago—when I used Dreamweaver 1.0 for the first time, I was amazed at how far ahead of its time it was. The capability to incorporate JavaScript Behaviors, styles, and pinpoint accurate designs truly amazed me. I was a skeptic when it came to visual editors and preferred Notepad whenever possible. Dreamweaver changed that for me and made me look at web development in a whole new light.

Dreamweaver has become the industry’s leading web development environment, far surpassing any other. Still, many consider Dreamweaver a simple visual editor that accomplishes little more than aiding in the development of static web pages. The mindset is that visual editors lack the true complexity that it takes to create rich and powerful web applications that encompass client-side technologies such as HTML, CSS, and JavaScript while leveraging server-side technologies like ASP, PHP, and ColdFusion. Dreamweaver obliterates the stigma by captivating the developer in a vast, intuitive, and feature-rich environment.

If you’ve picked up this book, chances are you’re interested in the world of web design and development and, more specifically, how Dreamweaver can help you succeed in these endeavors. Whether you’re a seasoned developer, a print designer looking to expand your base of knowledge to the Web, or a home user who wants to create a family website, Dreamweaver offers the features and flexibility to get you on your way quickly and effortlessly. This book introduces you to the many features available through Dreamweaver using a fun, yet concise, approach.

What’s Inside, Part by Part

Part I, “Getting Up to Speed with Dreamweaver CS4”—Starting off gently, this part introduces you to Dreamweaver CS4. Moving from Chapter 1, “The Dreamweaver CS4 Interface,” to Chapter 3, “Dreamweaver Site Management,” you’ll learn about the many panels, inspectors, and windows that Dreamweaver reveals within its development environment. You’ll also learn about defining and managing a site, building a simple web page, and finally, defining Dreamweaver preferences for customizing how you work with Dreamweaver.

Part II, “Static Web Page Development”—Generally considered the heart of the book, this part covers topics related to static web page development. You’ll learn about web page structuring using tables, advanced page formatting and structuring using cascading style sheets, designing forms with form elements, and incorporating behaviors into your web pages.

Part III, “Team Collaboration and Task Automation”—Although most consider Dreamweaver a great tool for building web pages, the truth is that Dreamweaver provides many tools for working with web pages within teams. In this part you’ll learn about the many aspects in Dreamweaver that facilitate the collaborative process, such as file check in and check out, Design Notes, and integration with Contribute. You’ll also learn about the many components, such as templates and library items, built in to Dreamweaver for enhancing the workflow process.

Part IV, “Incorporating Multimedia and Animation”—Developers and designers who are building media-rich sites should concentrate on this part. The chapters in this part of the book cover integration with Flash, Fireworks, and Photoshop, as well as video and audio.

Part V, “Building Dynamic Web Pages”—The chapters in this part prepare you for working with dynamic web pages. As you’ll see, the chapters in this part cover an introduction to web applications, server-side technologies, databases, the language used to extract, insert, delete, and update data within databases in SQL, and retrieving data from, inserting data into, deleting data from, and updating data within databases. You’ll also learn how to build search functionality, secure your web pages, work with XML web services and ColdFusion components, and even learn to use Adobe’s Spry framework for Ajax.

Part VI, “Online Appendixes”—This part consists of various detailed appendixes on accessibility, extensibility, working with frames and framesets, and how to define preferences within Dreamweaver. These items are available free from www.informit.com/title/9780672330391.

What’s Inside, Chapter by Chapter

Chapter 1, “The Dreamweaver CS4 Interface,” covers the Dreamweaver interface: document views, toolbars, inspectors, panels, and status bars. By the end of the chapter, you should feel fairly comfortable with the Dreamweaver CS4 development environment.

Chapter 2, “Building a Web Page,” covers the essentials of building a web page within Dreamweaver. By the end of this chapter, you’ll understand how to use page properties, various HTML elements, and graphics to create your first web page in Dreamweaver.

Chapter 3, “Dreamweaver Site Management,” covers site management, including defining a site, file check in and check out, working with site maps, and defining local and remote folders.

Chapter 4, “Web Page Structuring Using Tables,” covers traditional methods for structuring web pages using tables. In this chapter, you’ll learn about tables, rows, columns, nested tables, and more.

Chapter 5, “Page Formatting Using Cascading Style Sheets,” covers the types of style sheets, how to apply them, and the various properties for text, backgrounds, borders, lists, positioning, and more.

Chapter 6, “Page Structuring Using Cascading Style Sheets,” defines AP <div>s, the cornerstones for pinpoint accurate positioning of elements in Dreamweaver. Ever wonder how to make a web page look like a printed brochure? AP <div>s are your answer.

Chapter 7, “HTML Forms,” covers HTML forms, which are the front-ends to web applications. eBay, E*TRADE, and AutoBytel, among other high visibility sites, use forms in their applications to facilitate data collection from the user. In this chapter, you’ll learn how these types of forms are constructed. We’ll discuss forms and the various types of form elements used within forms.

Chapter 8, “Using Behaviors,” covers Dreamweaver’s JavaScript Behaviors. In this chapter, you’ll learn the basics of JavaScript, including events, actions, and more.

Chapter 9, “Building Dreamweaver Websites Within Teams,” covers features within Dreamweaver that facilitate integration and collaboration within teams. Topics such as file check-in and check-out, file column sharing, and Design Notes are covered in this chapter.

Chapter 10, “Managing Website Content Using Contribute,” covers integration with Adobe’s content management and sharing program, Contribute. In this chapter, you’ll learn about users and roles, applying user settings, and even editing web page content using Contribute.

Chapter 11, “Enhancing Workflow,” covers potentially overlooked features within Dreamweaver that might help you do your job faster and more efficiently. Features such as the Results panel, Find and Replace, various commands, and the Assets panel, are covered here.

Chapter 12, “Working with Templates and Library Items,” covers Dreamweaver templates in depth. A good understanding of templates and the workflow surrounding them can make you more efficient. This chapter also covers library items that, like templates, provide greater efficiency and global content editing from a centralized location. In this chapter, you’ll learn how to convert features (such as navigation menus) of your website to library items, which ultimately makes your navigation menus reusable and global to your website as a whole.

Chapter 13, “Incorporating Video and Audio,” covers important features for linking and embedding video and audio files in your web pages.

Chapter 14, “Integrating with Fireworks, Photoshop, and Flash,” covers integration with Adobe’s popular image-editing programs: Fireworks, Photoshop, and Flash. In this chapter, you’ll learn about round-trip graphics editing, creating web-based photo albums, and optimizing images. It also covers Dreamweaver’s integration with Flash—round-trip Flash editing, what parameters Flash movies accept, and how to trigger different Flash movie properties using Behaviors.

Chapter 15, “Introduction to Web Applications,” effectively makes the transition from static web page development to server-side web page development. You’ll learn about web architecture, server-side technologies, and database options.

Chapter 16, “Working with Server-Side Technologies,” begins to dig deeper into the world of server-side web development. In this chapter, you’ll learn about the various server-side technologies, including ASP, ASP.NET, ColdFusion, and PHP.

Chapter 17, “A Database Primer,” covers the basics (tables, rows, columns) and more advanced topics such as stored procedures, triggers, views, keys, and normalization. The chapter concludes with the development of the book’s project database.

Chapter 18, “A SQL Primer,” covers selecting, inserting, updating, and deleting data. It also breaks down SQL into the different clauses and covers joins and sub queries.

Chapters 19 through 23 contain an in-depth tutorial on building a web store application with ASP, PHP, and ColdFusion. The chapters include real-life detailed code for catalogs, user registration, personalization, search functionality, and security.

Chapter 24, “Working with the Spry Framework for Ajax,” discusses Adobe’s newest framework for Ajax. You’ll learn how to create Spry Datasets for creating performance-minded web pages that are fed in from XML files. Additionally, you’ll see how to incorporate Spry widgets and effects for creating engaging and eye-catching web pages.

The free online appendixes cover other important information:

Appendix A, “Accessibility,” covers the standards and how to apply them. It also touches on the impact of accessibility on design and development efforts.

Appendix B, “Extending Dreamweaver,” covers extending Dreamweaver with objects and behaviors. It also covers sharing those extensions with others.

Appendix C, “Defining Preferences,” covers every customizable feature for improving how you work with Dreamweaver. Everything from customizing code coloring to setting keyboard shortcuts is outlined in this appendix.

Appendix D, “Working with Frames and Framesets,” covers frames and framesets, including advantages and disadvantages to using them and why.

As you can see—and as you will read—I’ve covered just about every aspect of web development using Dreamweaver CS4. While reading, you can follow along with the step-by-step projects by downloading the support files from www.informit.com/register or from this book’s companion website located at www.dreamweaverunleashed.com. Thank you for picking up a copy of this book—and enjoy!

—Zak Ruvalcaba

CHAPTER 4

Web Page Structuring Using Tables

One of the biggest complaints print designers have when moving from print design to web design is the fact that HTML is so finicky. More specifically, the placement of elements within your web pages is limited because of the lack of support (within browsers) to control the organization of text, images, and media within the page. Although this might be true to a certain extent, HTML is, in fact, extremely flexible and offers many rich elements that can be used to control the organization of components. As the book unfolds, you'll learn about various elements and technologies Dreamweaver offers to control the pinpoint accurate placement of elements on your page. Technologies such as CSS and options such as AP Elements and tables can be used by web developers who strive for the fluid look print design programs have offered for years. The trick is learning the intricacies of the elements and how Dreamweaver allows you to work with them within its framework.

In this chapter, we'll begin to move from the simplicities of inserting and modifying elements on the page to a richer topic that involves structuring and placing elements on the page using HTML tables. As you'll begin to see, tables offer a flexible and simple alternative to the basic formatting techniques we've covered thus far for controlling the placement of elements within your web pages.

To work with the examples in this chapter, visit the book's website to download the exercises files used in this and other chapters. You'll want to replace the files for Chapter 3, "Dreamweaver Site Management," in your working VectaCorp folder with the files for Chapter 4, "Web Page Structuring Using Tables." Again, I'll place mine in `C:\VectaCorp\`.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- ▶ Inserting and Working with Tables
- ▶ Selecting Table Elements
- ▶ Modifying Table Properties Using the Property Inspector
- ▶ Modifying Cell Properties Using the Property Inspector
- ▶ Working with Tables in Expanded Tables Mode
- ▶ Importing Tabular Data

Inserting and Working with Tables

If you remember, in Chapter 2, “Building a Web Page,” the development of our Vecta Corp web page was severely limited to inserting text and images in a vertical, linear fashion. Elements on the page were organized so that we inserted text and images, followed by a line break, then either more text or another image, and then repeated the process until the page looked somewhat presentable. Although this process might work for simple web pages, it reveals drawbacks that become immediately obvious when large amounts of text are added to the page. As you can see from Figure 4.1, the background image that we added to the page begins to repeat itself near the bottom of the `companydirectory.html` page.

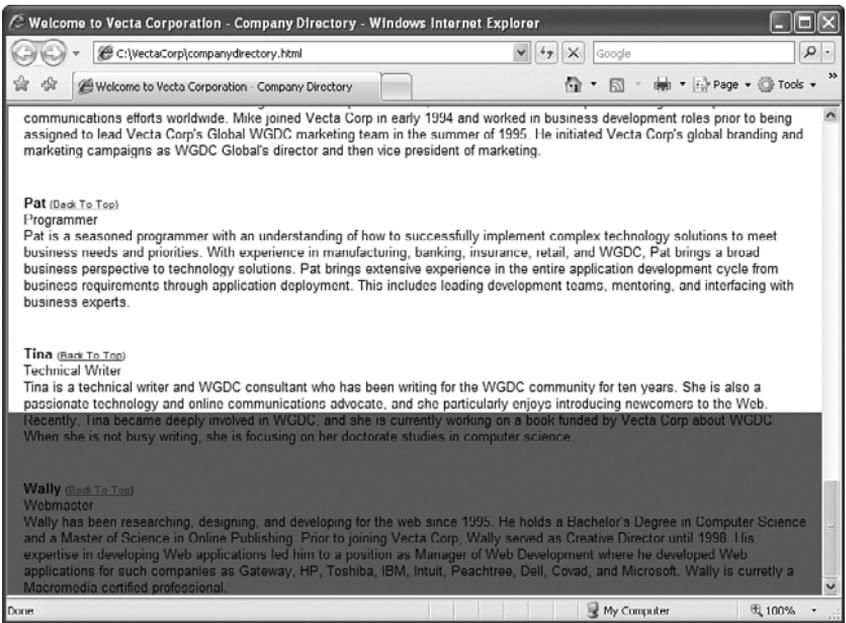


FIGURE 4.1 The background image begins to repeat itself near the bottom when there's too much text on the page.

The reason for this flaw might not seem immediately clear, but it begins to reveal itself with some explanation. The image we used for the background (`header_bg.gif`) is 1 pixel wide by 2,000 pixels high. The positive side is that the image always tiles horizontally no matter how wide we make the page. The downside is that the image is 2,000 pixels high, and because the natural viewing of pages is such that users navigate up and down, if the page exceeds that 2,000 pixel height, the image will tile vertically as it does horizontally. Another problem, visible in Figure 4.2, is that no definitive break exists between paragraphs. Depending on how the page's width is resized, the text and images might run together.

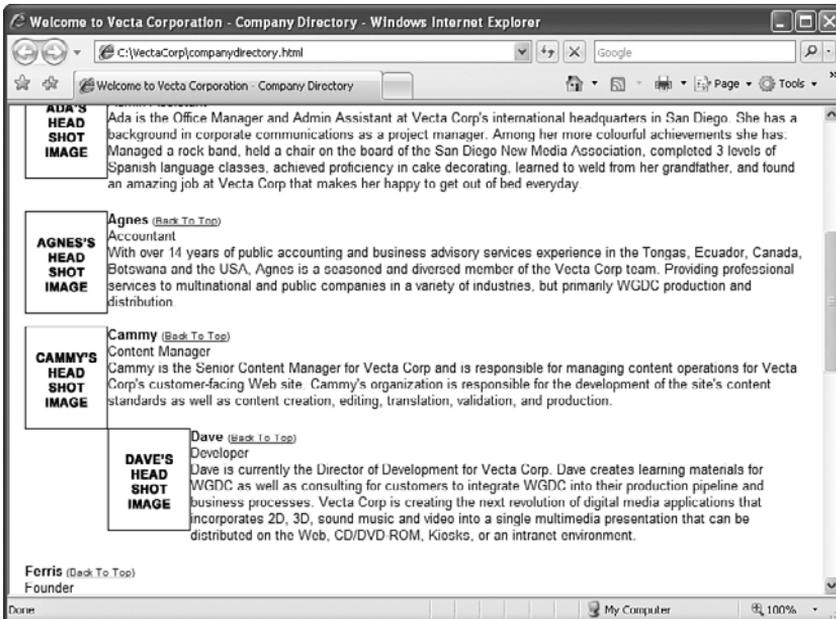


FIGURE 4.2 Because there's no definitive break between paragraphs, text and images might run together.

Although these design flaws are minor, they begin to demonstrate the complexity that our designs could potentially hold. As your web pages become more intricate and complex, structuring your web pages using elements such as tables becomes a viable alternative.

Working with tables in Dreamweaver can be a complex process depending on how intricate your design becomes. To walk you through all the table-based features exposed by Dreamweaver, we'll rebuild our Vecta Corp website from scratch. Not only will this help you understand all the features available for working with tables in Dreamweaver, but it will also show you how the small design flaws mentioned previously can be avoided by using tables to structure your pages instead. To insert a new table, create a new blank HTML page and then choose Insert, Table. The Table dialog box appears similar to Figure 4.3.

The features outlined within the Table dialog box should start looking relatively familiar. If you've used word-processing, database, or spreadsheet programs, the concept of rows, columns, and headers should be recognizable.



FIGURE 4.3 Insert and format basic properties for a table from the Table dialog box.

NOTE

Tables were never meant to be a way to lay out and position HTML elements on the page; they were meant to be a means of structuring large amounts of tabular data in a well-formed and ordered format. Over time, web designers realized that the concept of rows and columns could easily structure images, text, and media elements within a page. Although this method has stood the test of time and still remains the most consistent and backward-compatible format, newer methods in CSS have become more prominent and are slowly becoming the new standard for structuring elements within your web pages. We'll cover using CSS to structure web pages in the next chapter.

The features provided for working with tables in HTML go far beyond the simplicities of rows and columns. The Table dialog box displays a few options, separated into three parts: Table Size, Header, and Accessibility. A detailed list of the features outlined within these three parts is given next:

- ▶ **Rows**—Enter a number within this text box to set the number of rows the table will contain.
- ▶ **Columns**—Enter a number within this text box to set the number of columns (cells within a row) the table will have.
- ▶ **Table width**—Enter a number within this text box to set the width, in either pixels or a percentage, a table will have.
- ▶ **Border thickness**—Enter a number within this text box to set the thickness of the border in pixels that the borders will have. If you don't enter a value here, browsers will interpret the border thickness as 1. To avoid this problem, either enter a numeric value greater than 0, or if you don't want a border, enter 0.

- ▶ **Cell padding**—Enter a number within this text box to set the padding value between the contents of a cell and the cell border. If you don't enter a value here, browsers will interpret the cell padding as 1. To avoid this problem, either enter a numeric value greater than 0, or if you don't want cell padding, enter 0.
- ▶ **Cell spacing**—Enter a number within this text box to set the spacing between cells. If you don't enter a value here, browsers will interpret the cell spacing as 2. To avoid this problem, either enter a numeric value greater than 0, or if you don't want cell spacing, enter 0.
- ▶ **Header**—Headers are a quick way of formatting rows within a table so that the contents within the header are centered and boldface. Four options exist when working with Headers. Choose None (the default) if you don't want a header within your table. Choose Left if you'd like to have the left column of the table designated as a header, choose Top if you'd like to designate the top row of the table as a header, and choose Both if you'd like to designate both the top and left portions of the table as headers.
- ▶ **Caption**—Enter a value within this text box to have text appear outside of the table describing contents within it. More on this feature can be found in the online Appendix A, "Accessibility."
- ▶ **Align caption**—Choose an option from this menu to set the alignment of the caption in relation to the table. Five options exist within this list, including Default (Center), Top, Bottom, Left, and Right. More on this feature can be found in Appendix A.
- ▶ **Summary**—An important accessibility option is the summary attribute of the table. Because screen readers cannot decipher the contents within a table accurately, entering a brief description here ensures that users with screen readers can get a clear portrayal of the contents of your table. More on this feature can be found in Appendix A.

Accepting the default properties already in the Insert Tables dialog box, go ahead and click OK now to insert the new table into the page. The new table should resemble Figure 4.4 within the Document window.

Selecting Table Elements

Before we begin formatting the page using a table, it's important to touch on some important concepts, including a topic as simple as selecting the table and elements such as rows and cells within the table. As your designs become more and more complex, you'll begin to work with numerous tables within a page, including tables within table cells, also known as *nested tables*. When that time comes, the skills you learn within this section will become invaluable.

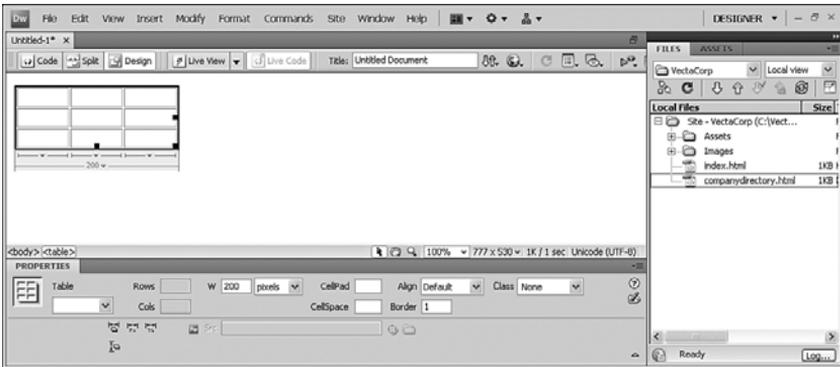


FIGURE 4.4 The new table is inserted into the page.

There are numerous ways to select a table:

- ▶ You can select the table by clicking, holding the cursor on the page, and then dragging it into the table.
- ▶ You can place your cursor into any cell within the table, at which point the Table Widths Visual Aid appears. From the Table Widths Visual Aid's menu, you can choose the Select Table as shown in Figure 4.5.

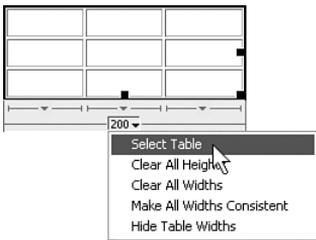


FIGURE 4.5 Choose the Select Table option from the Table Widths Visual Aid's list.

TIP

You can hide the Table Widths Visual Aid by selecting View, Visual Aids, Table Widths or by clicking Visual Aids on the Document toolbar and selecting the Table Widths option from the list.

- ▶ You can place your cursor within a cell and choose the <table> tag from the Tag Selector within the Document window's status bar.
- ▶ You can right-click (Control-click) within a cell to access the context menu and then choose the Select Table option from the Table submenu shown in Figure 4.6.

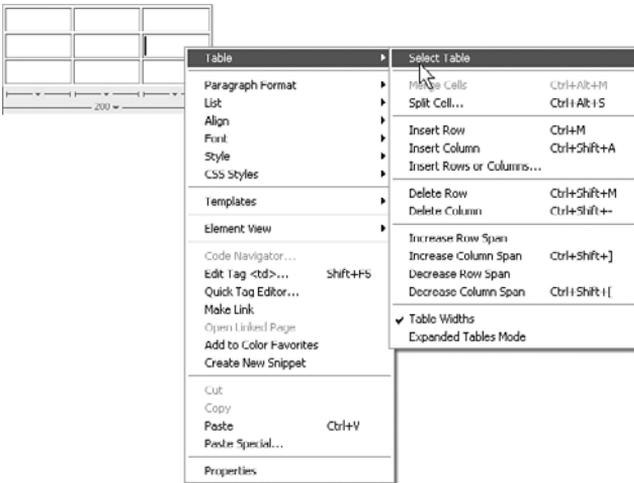


FIGURE 4.6 You can select a table by choosing Table, Select Table option from the contextual menu.

- ▶ You can choose Modify, Table, Select Table.
- ▶ You can hold down the Ctrl (⌘) key and select the outer border of the table. You'll notice that as you roll over the outer border of the table, it highlights red. Clicking after you've rolled over it will select the table.

Whatever method you choose from the preceding list, the result is the same—the table is selected. This is obvious because of the black border that is placed around the table. You can also select individual rows and columns by choosing from one of the following methods:

- ▶ By placing your cursor either just to the left of the table row or just above the table column, you can select a row or column, respectively. Doing so changes the cursor to a black arrow and also highlights the row or column in red. A column has been selected in Figure 4.7. Clicking the mouse will select the row or column and highlight the element(s) with the same black border you saw when you selected the table.



FIGURE 4.7 Place your cursor just to the left of the row to select a row or just above the column to select a column. The cursor will change to an arrow, and the row or column will be highlighted.

- ▶ By placing your cursor within any cell and choosing the <tr> tag from the Tag Selector, you can select that row. You can also select an individual cell by placing your cursor within the cell and choosing the <td> tag from the Tag Selector.
- ▶ Hold down the Ctrl (⌘) key and select an individual cell. You'll notice that as you roll over a cell, it highlights red. Clicking the cell after you've rolled over it will select it.

It's important to note that the previous methods will also work for selecting multiple rows, columns, and cells. For instance, if you'd like to select 3 rows, you can place your cursor just to the left of the first row you want selected, click, hold, and then drag either up or down to select multiple rows. The same method works for selecting multiple columns as well. Additionally, you can select multiple cells by holding the Ctrl key and then choosing the cells that you want selected.

Modifying Table Properties Using the Property Inspector

For precise formatting of tables, it's essential that you become familiar with the options revealed by the Table Property inspector. Shown in Figure 4.8, this Property inspector becomes available when the table is selected (for more on selecting tables, see the previous section).

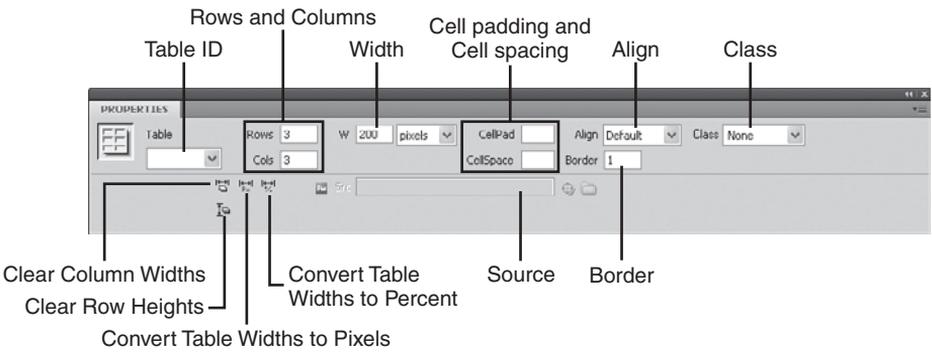


FIGURE 4.8 Format table attributes from within the Table Property inspector.

As you can see from the callouts in Figure 4.8, the Table Property inspector allows you to set/customize the following attributes (moving from left to right):

- ▶ ID
- ▶ Rows and Columns
- ▶ Width
- ▶ Cell Padding and Cell Spacing

- ▶ Alignment
- ▶ Border
- ▶ CSS Class
- ▶ Clear Column Widths or Heights
- ▶ Convert Table Widths to Pixels
- ▶ Convert Table Widths to Percent
- ▶ Source

To demonstrate the use and functionality of these attributes and formatting options, let's rebuild the main page (`index.html`) of the Vecta Corp site.

If you open the `index.html` file for this chapter, it'll appear to be a blank document, but a couple of minor changes have been made. First, the title and background color have been preset for you. Second, the `header_bg.gif` image isn't included. As a matter of fact, this clunky (1 pixel by 2,000 pixels) image is no longer needed; it's being replaced altogether by a centered, cleaner design.

To begin this exercise, insert a new table into the Document window by selecting Insert, Table. When the Table dialog box opens, format the options in the table dialog box so that it contains one row, one column, has a width of 100%, contains no border, no cell padding, and no cell spacing. The configured Table dialog box will look like Figure 4.9.



FIGURE 4.9 Format the new table so that it contains one row, one column, has a width of 100%, contains no border, no cell padding, and no cell spacing.

Click OK to insert the new table into the Document window. With the table now in the Document window, you'll notice a few details. First and the most obvious is that the table

spans the entire width of the Document window. Remember, this table is set to 100%. What that means is that no matter how I stretch the Files panel group on the right, the table will always automatically adjust to accommodate the width of the Document window—as it will do in the browser window as well. Second, you'll notice that the Table Widths Visual Aid displays the width of the table as a percentage, but just to the right of that figure displays the current width in pixels within parentheses. This value is simply for your information and is useful to reference in case you ever need to convert the table's percentage to a pixel value instead. Finally, you'll notice that even though we didn't specify a border, the table appears to contain a dotted border surrounding the perimeter of the table. This is actually a visual aid and not a border. This visual aid, which can be disabled by clicking the Visual Aids button on the Document toolbar and unchecking the Table Borders option, won't show in the browser.

With the table selected, you can now begin modifying various attributes within the Property inspector. Let's begin.

The Table ID

An attribute seldom used (unless you're working with JavaScript and/or CSS), the `Table ID` attribute allows you to uniquely identify the table so that it can be referenced from scripting languages. This attribute is entirely optional and will have no effect on the table if left empty. We'll use the Table ID as a simple way of identifying the tables throughout the chapter. If I say *select the content table*, you'll know what table to select. If I indicate *select the header table*, again, you'll know what table to select. With our existing table selected, enter the value **header** into the Table ID text box and press Enter (Return).

Adding and Removing Rows and Columns

As you might expect, there are numerous ways for adding and removing rows and columns after you've inserted a table. You could delete the table and reinsert it if you really wanted to, but there are simpler methods. For instance, to add a row, you could place your cursor within the last cell of the last row and press the Tab key. Doing this adds a new row. Alternatively, you could use the Insert Row option (press `Ctrl+M/⌘-M`) available from the Table submenu within both the context menu, invoked by right-clicking (Control-clicking) the table, and the Modify menu. After the new row has been inserted, you can easily remove it by accessing the Delete Row option (press `Ctrl+Shift+M/⌘-Shift-M`) from the Table submenu within either the context menu or the Modify menu. Another, more flexible, alternative for inserting rows is to use the Insert Rows or Columns dialog box available from the Table submenu in both the context menu and the Modify menu. Choosing this option opens the Insert Rows or Columns dialog box (see Figure 4.10).

With the dialog box open, you'll immediately notice that you can not only insert a new row below the existing row, but can also insert a new row above the existing row. Even

better, you have the option of inserting new columns before or after the column where your cursor is currently focused. Try entering the number **5** within the Number of Rows text box and click OK. As you can see from Figure 4.11, the rows are added to the table.

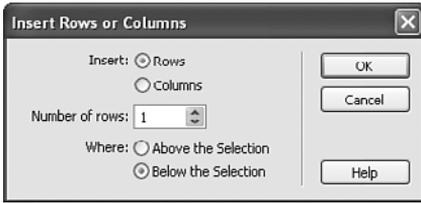


FIGURE 4.10 Use the Insert Rows or Columns dialog box as an alternative method to insert rows or columns within your table.

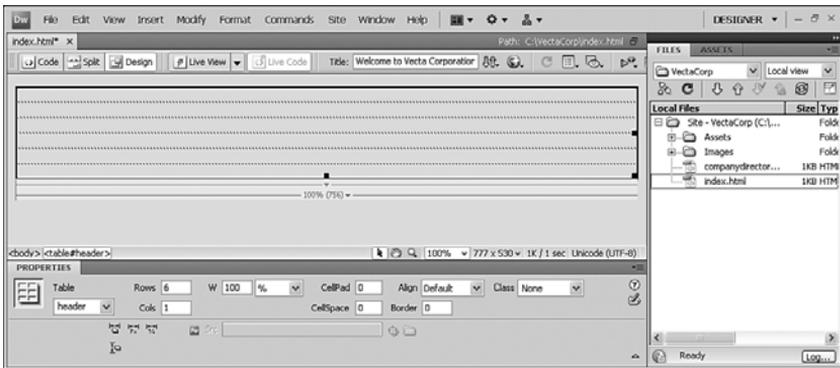


FIGURE 4.11 New rows are added to the table using the Insert Rows or Columns dialog box.

It's important to note that the previous methods work only when your cursor is focused within a cell. You can change the overall count of rows and columns for the table from the Property inspector by selecting the table and changing the text box values for Rows and Cols. To return my table back to its original state, I'll enter **1** within the Rows text box and press Enter (Return). The table will return to its original state.

Changing Table Sizes

Aside from adding and removing rows and columns, you also have the capability to change the width of the table directly from the Property inspector. You already saw how you can use the Table dialog box to initially set the width of the table (we set it to 100%); alternatively, you can set the width of the table directly within the Property inspector. Because I know that the image header .gif will reside within this table, and I know that

the width of the image is 697 pixels, I'll change the width of the table now to this number by placing my cursor within the W text box, typing **697**, making sure *pixels* is selected from the menu, and pressing Enter. As you can see from Figure 4.12, the width of the table is affected.

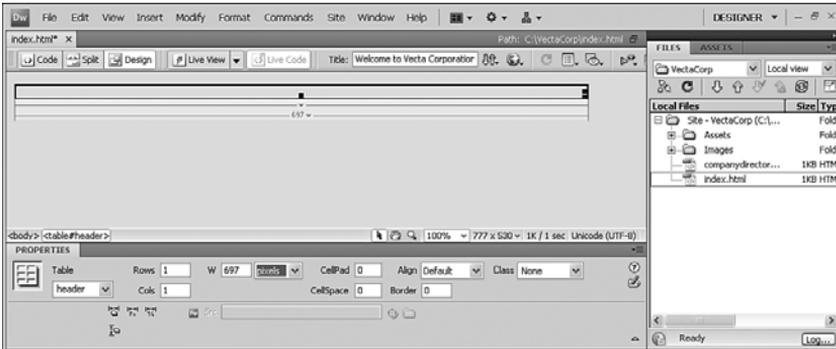


FIGURE 4.12 Change the width of the table to 697 pixels from within the Property inspector.

NOTE

You'll notice that there isn't an option for setting the height of the table. Whereas previous versions of Dreamweaver supported a height text box just underneath the width text box, newer versions of Dreamweaver exclude it. The height attribute is considered a deprecated property and is no longer supported in browsers other than Internet Explorer.

NOTE

Even though you can't set the height of the table, you'll notice that the table's height never fully collapses to nothing. By default, Dreamweaver inserts a nonbreaking space () (visible only in Code view or the Code inspector) character into each cell to make it easier for you to place your cursor into the cell and begin working. If that nonbreaking space wasn't there, the table's height would collapse and make it impossible for you to place your cursor within the cell to work.

As your web pages become increasingly complex, you'll begin to realize that keeping track of your table's dimensions can get out of hand. If you ever feel like starting over, you can clear all widths and heights from both the table and cells within the table using the Clear All Widths and Clear All Heights options. You can access these options in one of three

ways: First, you can choose these options from the Table Widths Visual Aid’s list, as shown in Figure 4.13.

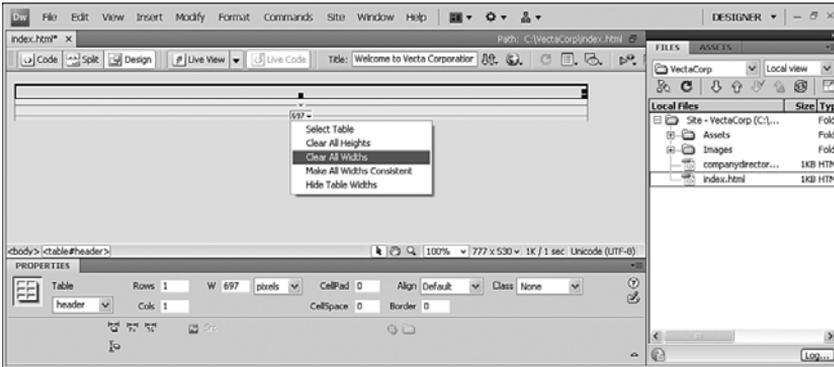


FIGURE 4.13 Select the Clear All Widths or Clear All Heights options to clear table or cell widths, respectively.

Second, you can clear column widths and column heights by clicking the Clear Column Widths and Clear Column Heights buttons located just below and to the right of the Table ID field on the Property inspector. Finally, you can perform the same operation by choosing the Clear Cell Heights and Clear Cell Widths options located in the Modify, Table submenu. Whichever method you choose results in the same action: either the height (for cells) or width is removed.

NOTE

Unlike other table options such as cell padding, cell spacing, and border, leaving the W text box empty in the Property inspector results in the browser interpreting the value as 0.

Modifying Cell Padding and Cell Spacing

Although it might not seem like it, the structure of our new Vecta Corp page is coming along nicely. As I’m sure you can tell, we’re outlining the various properties outlined by the Table Property inspector while at the same time designing the header for our table-based page. And while there’s still a lot to be done, let’s move forward by adding the main header image to the cell within the header table. This can be done by locating the header .gif image within the Images folder of our defined site, selecting it, and dragging it over and into our table’s cell. The result will appear similar to Figure 4.14.

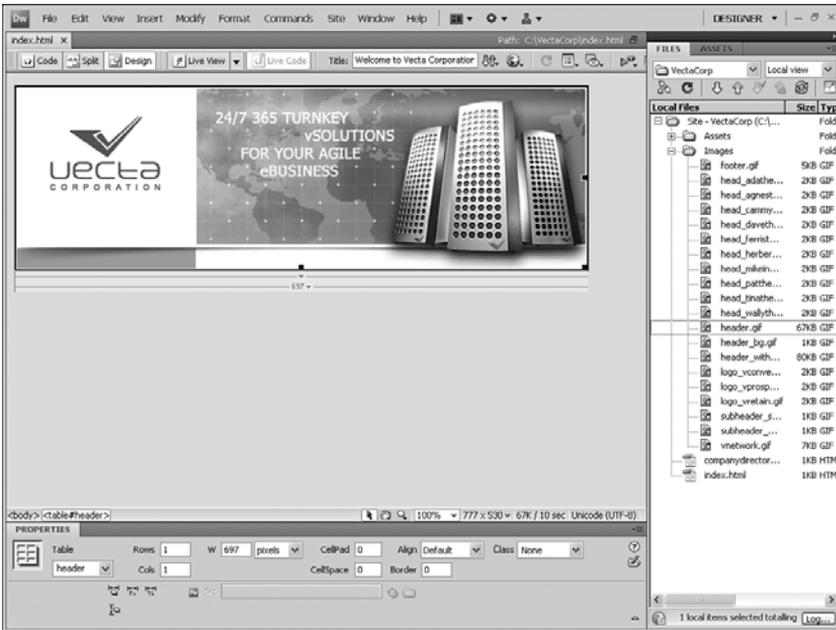


FIGURE 4.14 Drag the header graphic into the table's cell to round out the heading for our web page.

Now that you have the header of the page squared away, it's time to build the bottom portion of the site. Yes, we could insert the contents of `home.txt` (located within the Assets folder) directly underneath the existing table; unfortunately, doing this would cause the text to align flush against the edge of the Document window as our margins are currently set to 0 pixels. Although we could fix this by adding a margin width, doing that would cause our table at the top of the page to shift to the right to compensate. Instead, we could create a table below our existing table and adjust its cell spacing or cell padding to make up for the necessary spacing. To do this, we'll begin by adding a new table. Begin the process by following these steps:

1. Place your cursor just to the right of the header table.
2. Choose Insert, Table. The Table dialog box appears.
3. Give your new table 2 rows, 2 columns, a width of 697 pixels, a border thickness of 0, a cell padding of 0, and a cell spacing of 4.
4. Click OK. Your new table will be inserted into the Document window, below the header table, and will look similar to Figure 4.15.
5. Assign your table the ID content within the Table ID text box in the Property inspector (shown in Figure 4.15).

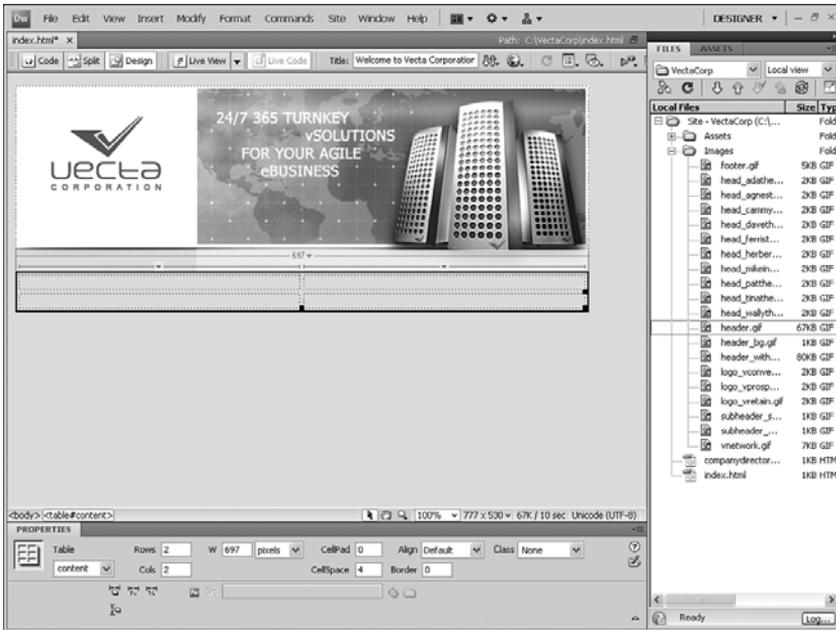


FIGURE 4.15 The new table is inserted and includes cell spacing to protect the content from the left edge of the page.

Now that the table is firmly in place, you can see that the cell spacing is available. Unlike the header table, which doesn't contain spacing around the edges of the table, our content table contains spacing around the table and between cells. This will become more obvious later, when you insert text into a cell.

TIP

As you've seen, manipulating the table's cell spacing and cell padding is easy using the Insert Table dialog box. Modifying cell spacing and cell padding using the Property inspector is also possible. Just to the right of the W text box, you'll notice text boxes for CellPad (cell padding) and CellSpace (cell spacing). The cell padding and cell spacing of a table can also be adjusted here.

Table Alignment

Now that we have both a header and a content table within our page, let's finish off the table structure by aligning both tables to the center of the page. To do this, select each table and then choose the option Center from the Align menu in the Property inspector so that each of your two tables is center-aligned on the page, similar to Figure 4.16.

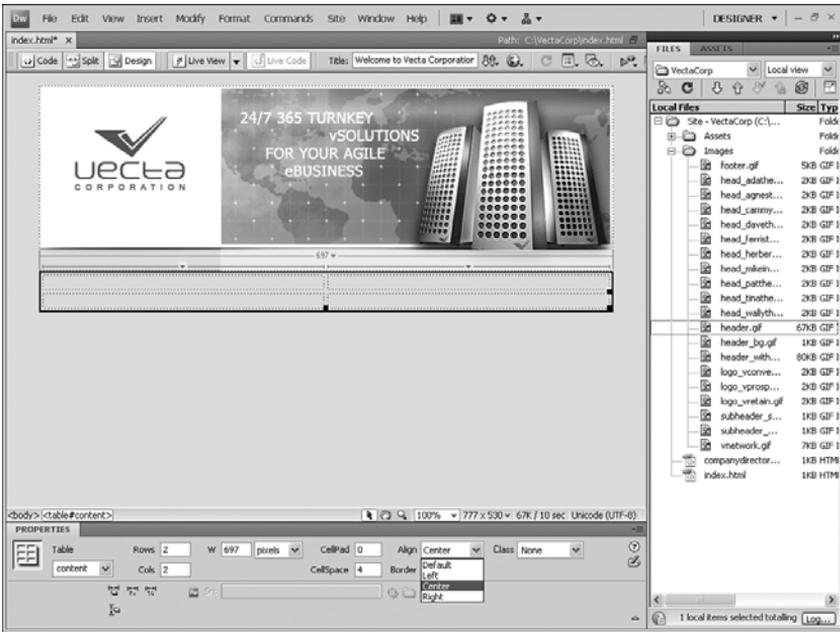


FIGURE 4.16 Select each table and center align them on the page.

It’s important to note that this option aligns only the table on the page, not the content within the table. To align the content within the table, you’ll still need to select any content that you add within the table and choose the center align option from the Text Property inspector.

Working with Table Borders

There are a couple of methods for adding borders to your existing tables, but none more obvious than the Border text box option located within the Property inspector. Selecting a table and adding a value here (other than 0) creates a traditional, ordinary looking border. Nothing fancy here! We’ll discuss a second option for adding borders in CSS in the next chapter.

Converting Table Widths to a Percentage or Pixels

Every now and then you might find the need to convert an existing table that was created using pixels into a percentage value or vice versa. For instance, our content table is displayed at the bottom of the page and has a fixed width of 697 pixels. Looking at the table and its width within the page, it appears to take up roughly 80% of the page. If I like this width, but prefer the width to be expressed in percentages as opposed to pixels, I can easily perform a conversion with a simple click of a button. To do this, I can select the table and choose Modify, Table, Convert Widths to Percent (shown in Figure 4.17).

Although you won’t notice a significant difference initially, the Table Widths Visual Aid does, in fact, display the table width as a percentage followed by the pixel width within

the parentheses. Just below that value is the width of the cell expressed as a percentage, again followed by the pixel width in parentheses.

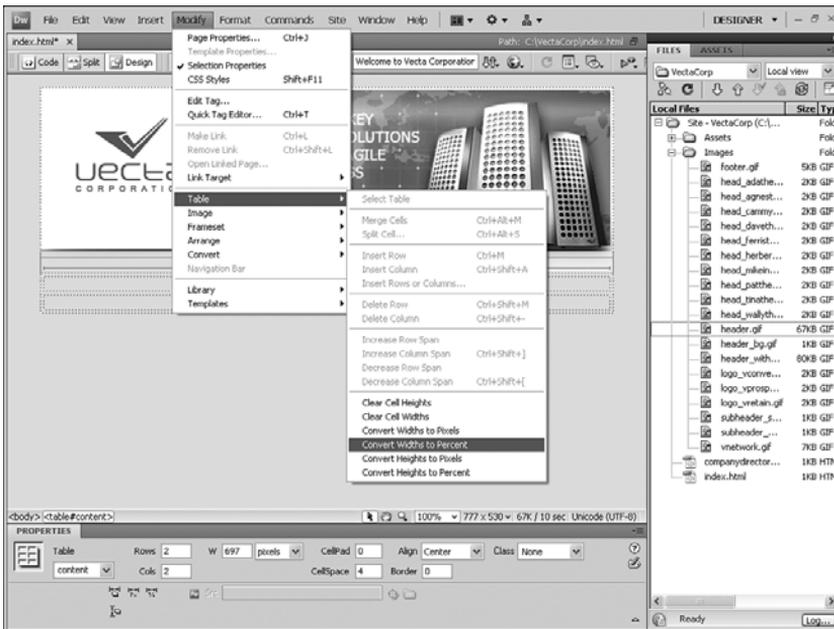


FIGURE 4.17 Convert table widths to percentages.

NOTE

While using pixel-based dimensions certainly allows you to keep your designs within a fixed width, you shouldn't discount the use of percentages for setting the dimensions of a web page. Percentages allow you to build "liquid" designs. That is, a design that constantly adjusts to the width (and sometimes height) of the user's screen resolution. Assuming you built a table that stretched 100% of the page width, the design would appear equally to users who have their screen resolutions set to 800x600 or 1024x768 for instance.

Other options exist from the same menu, including Convert Widths to Percent, Convert Heights to Pixels, and Convert Heights to Percent. Furthermore, you can access these options directly from the Property inspector by choosing the icons located to the bottom-left of the Property inspector, just underneath the Table ID text box.

Modifying Cell Properties Using the Property Inspector

As you've seen thus far, numerous options exist for modifying properties associated with a table. You've seen the basic properties that exist when a table is initially inserted from within the Table dialog. You've also seen that when you select a table, the Property inspector tailors itself to accommodate the modification of attributes associated with the table.

Just as there are many options for modifying properties associated with a table, so too are there many options for modifying the cells within that table. In fact, different properties exist for the table, as opposed to cells within the table. Cells can be merged, split, vertically-aligned, horizontally-aligned, and so on. Also, content within cells can be formatted using text formatting properties that you learned in Chapter 2. The content can also be aligned within the cells, prevented from wrapping within the cells, or even converted to a header. The table, on the other hand, doesn't support a lot of these properties. For instance, the content as a whole can't be formatted, cells can't be manipulated, and so on. In general, it's safe to say that the properties exposed by the table are broad and specific to the table as a whole, whereas properties provided for individual cells are more refined and thorough—and allow for cells to be formatted independently of one another. As you can see from Figure 4.18, you can access the Table Cell Property inspector by placing your cursor within a cell.

As you can see from the callouts in Figure 4.18, the upper half of the Property inspector reveals simple text-based formatting options covered in Chapter 2, but the bottom

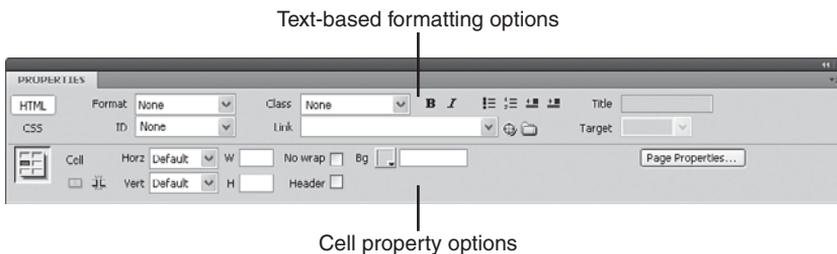


FIGURE 4.18 The Table Cell Property inspector becomes available when you place your cursor into a cell.

portion outlines key properties (moving from left to right) supported by table cells, including the following:

- ▶ Merging and Splitting Cells
- ▶ Horizontal and Vertical Alignment
- ▶ Width and Height
- ▶ No Wrap
- ▶ Header
- ▶ Background Color
- ▶ Page Properties

To demonstrate these properties, let's format the cells within the content table.

Changing Cell Widths and Heights

So far you’ve seen how to manipulate the width of the table as a whole. The cells within a table, however, function somewhat differently. If you recall, earlier in the book we selected the content table and assigned it a width of 697 pixels. The table is inserted at the 697 pixel width; however, by default the width of each cell is given a width equal to the width of the table divided by the number of cells within the specific row. So in our case, the cells appear to have a width of roughly 348–349 pixels each. Although this might have seemed to be the case, in fact, inserting the image subheader_welcome.gif into the first cell of the second column reveals otherwise. As you can see from Figure 4.19, inserting content into the cell shifts the cells out of proportion.

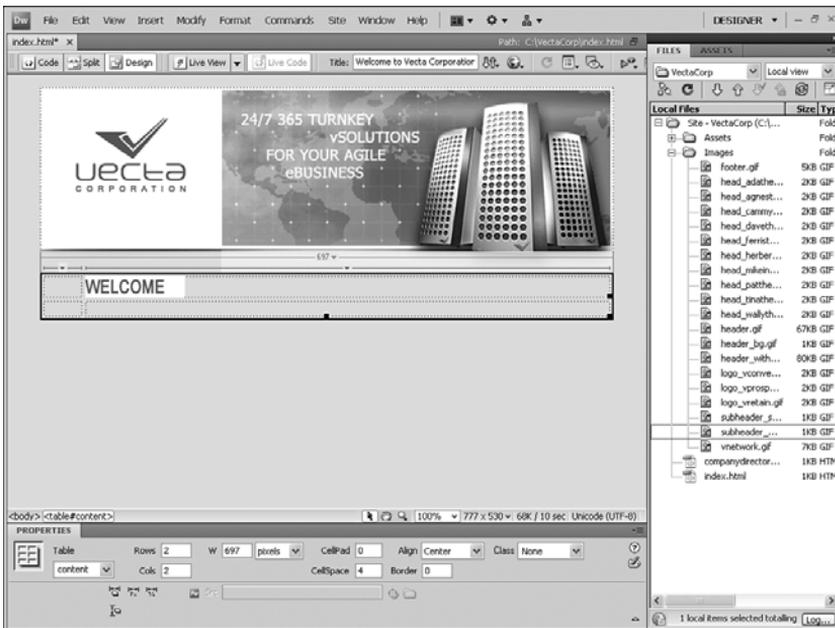


FIGURE 4.19 Insert an image into the cell to see the cells shift out of proportion.

Although Dreamweaver initially makes an attempt to proportionately size your tables, it will always rely on you to manually set the size of the cells individually. Because we didn’t set the size of each cell, Dreamweaver accommodates the addition of content within the second cell by automatically moving the cells over to the left (or right, had we inserted the image in the left column), essentially freeing up room for you to work.

The lack of cell widths is also evident from the Table Widths Visual Aid. As Figure 4.19 also indicates, although a set width exists for the table as a whole, the two individual

width values for the columns are empty. Setting the width of columns, which sets the width of each cell within the column within the Property inspector is just as simple as it was for the table. To set the widths of our two columns, follow these steps:

1. Place your cursor into the first cell within the first column. Immediately the Table Widths Visual Aid becomes available.
2. Choose the Select Column option from the cell menu, similar to Figure 4.20.

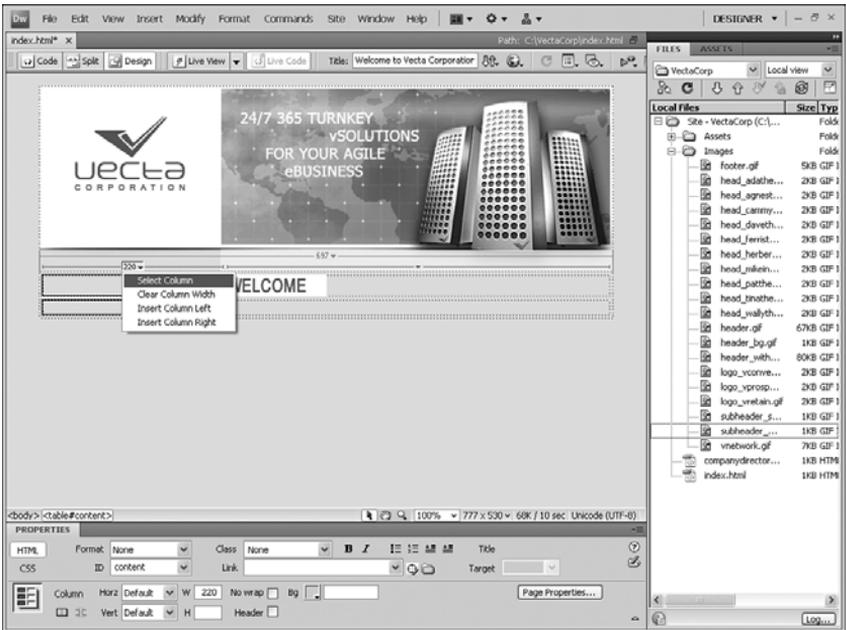


FIGURE 4.20 Choose the Select Column option from the cell menu in the Table Widths Visual Aid and then change the width of the cell to 220 pixels.

3. Within the Width (W) text box in the Property inspector, enter the value **220** and press Enter. The table's column will resize accordingly.
4. To make the table functionally correct, we'd now have to set the width on the second column. Rather than trying to figure out what 697 pixels minus 220 pixels is, we can take a shortcut. From the Table Widths Visual Aid menu, select the Make All Widths Consistent option. Immediately you'll notice that a value of 465 pixels is assigned to the second column.

When you're finished, the table will be resized proportionally, and the Table Widths Visual Aid will contain width values for the each column similar to Figure 4.21.

If you need to clear the widths for a column, you can do one of two things. First, you can select the entire column, which also selects every cell within that column, and physically remove the numeric pixel value within the Width (W) text box in the Property inspector.

Second, you can easily remove the width of a column by accessing the column-based menu from the Table Widths Visual Aid and choosing the Clear Column Width option.

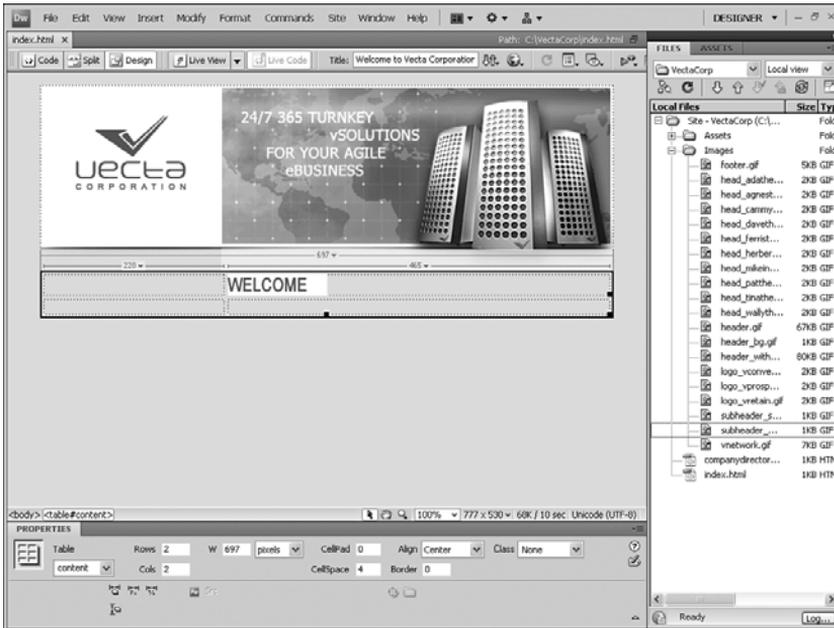


FIGURE 4.21 The cells are resized proportionally and the Table Widths Visual Aid includes cell widths as well.

TIP

You might be thinking that 697 pixels (the width of the table) minus 220 pixels (the width of the first column) doesn't equal 465 pixels, but instead 477. When sizing columns, it's important to take cell spacing and cell padding into consideration. If you have cell padding and cell spacing (as we currently do), those values must also be deducted from the total size of the table; otherwise, the dimensions will be slightly off.

Cell heights can also be modified. The reason it has not been covered with more detail is twofold. First, it's just as simple to modify a height as it is to modify the width. After you've learned how to modify the width, modifying the height on your own should be easy. Second, it's not important that you set a cell height. Generally, you'll allow the contents within the cell to govern the height for you.

Splitting and Merging Cells

After you've inserted a table onto the page, you'll often need to merge cells to create more space within the table. For instance, although you might need to work with two independent cells within a row, you might have a bigger image that needs more space than what

has been allotted for the columns. Instead of creating a whole new table, you can merge the cells within an existing row into fewer cells, essentially freeing up the needed space.

To merge two or more cells within a table, you would highlight by clicking, holding, and dragging the cells that you want to merge. With the cells highlighted, you can merge the cells by either choosing the Merge Cells icon within the Property inspector, selecting the Merge Cells option from the Table submenu within the context menu, or by choosing Modify, Table, Merge Cells. Any method you choose merges the cells.

Let's try it out on our example using one of these methods. Left-click, hold, and drag across from the first cell in the second row over to the second cell of the same row. Choose Modify, Table, Merge Cells. The cells will merge into one cell. Now find the footer .gif image located within our Images folder and drag it into the newly merged cell. The result of the merger and image addition will resemble Figure 4.22.

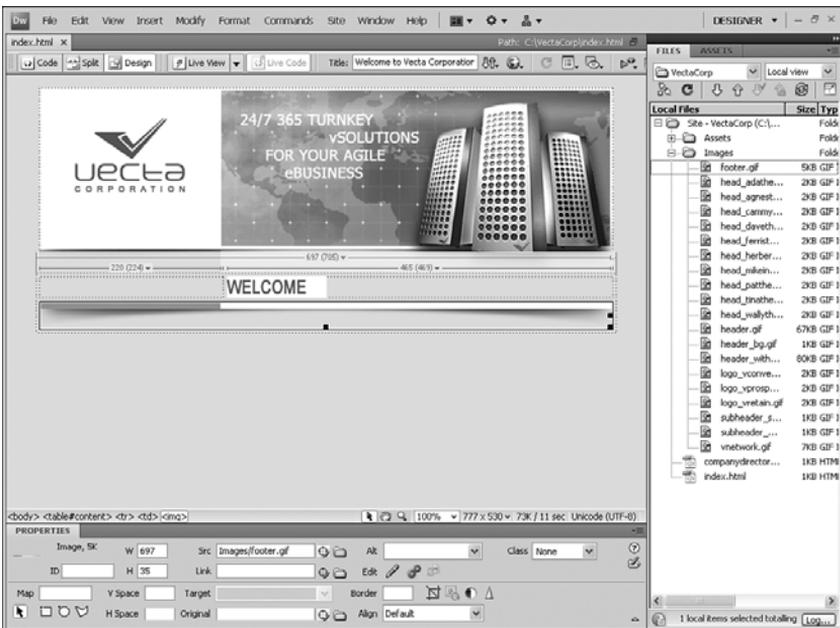


FIGURE 4.22 Highlight the cells that you want to merge by clicking, holding, and dragging over from the first cell over to the second cell.

In addition to merging cells, you can also split bigger cells up into smaller cells. For instance, I can place my cursor within a recently merged cell and click the Split Cell icon from the Property inspector. Doing this opens the Split Cell dialog box, as shown in Figure 4.23.

As you can see from Figure 4.23, the dialog box defaults to the Split Cell into Columns option. You can enter a value to split the cell into columns and then click OK to commit the changes.



FIGURE 4.23 The Split Cell dialog box allows you to split cells into smaller individual cells.

NOTE

Dreamweaver's Split Cell dialog box always defaults its values to the natural development of the table. Because the table's structure appears to contain two columns overall, Dreamweaver will default to a two-column split. Also, entering a number greater than the column count of the table results in the split occurring within the left-most cell. Try it on your own to see the results.

The Split Cell option is also available from the Table submenu in both the context and Modify menus.

An alternative way of splitting and merging cells and rows is to choose Modify, Table, Increase/Decrease Row and Column Span. To use these options, place your cursor in the cell that has been merged and select Decrease Column Span. To split the same cells back up, choose the Increase Column Span option. These methods are quick alternatives to using the Split and Merge Cell features.

Setting Horizontal and Vertical Alignments

You can specify horizontal and vertical alignments for a cell by choosing from options available within the Horizontal (Horz) and Vertical (Vert) menus in the Property inspector. To demonstrate alignments, I'll add a navigation menu to the first cell. To do this, place your cursor within the first cell and enter the text **Home** followed by a line break (Shift+Enter or Shift-Return). Repeat this process, adding **About Us**, **Solutions**, **Support**, and **Contact Us** navigation items to the cell. You might also want to format the font for the navigation menu by selecting all the text, right-clicking, and then choosing Font, Arial, Helvetica, San-serif from the context menu that appears.

As you would expect, the text looks fine within the cell. The same can't be said after I insert the welcome text (available by opening home.txt, selecting all the content, copying it, and then pasting it) into the second cell (the cell next to the one that contains our navigation menu). As you can see from Figure 4.24, the navigation is shifted to the vertical center of the cell.

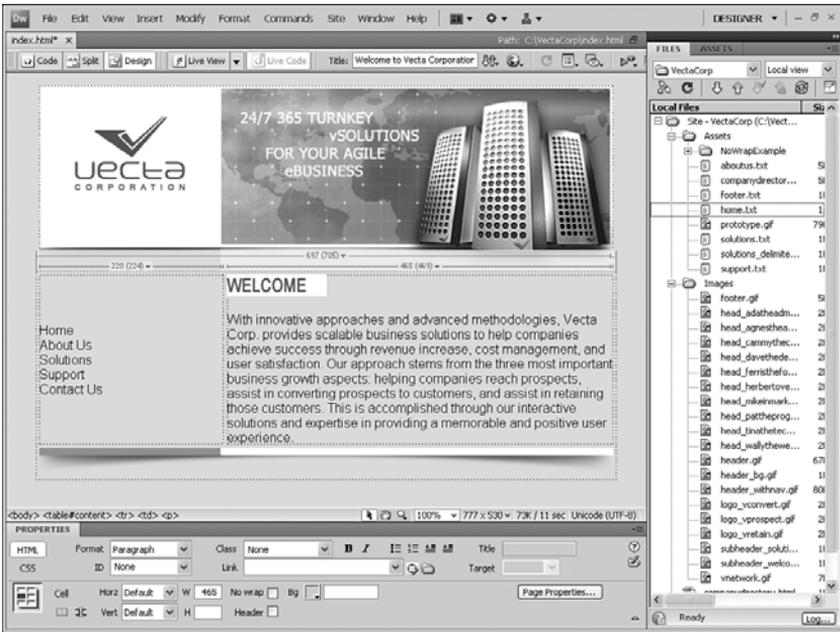


FIGURE 4.24 Inserting text into one cell causes elements within a second cell that are shorter to align to the vertical center of the cell.

Although this result is perfectly normal, it might not be what you intend. A more desirable result would be to align the navigation menu to the top of the cell so that it appears as though the welcome text and navigation menu are both aligned to the top of their respective cells. To do this, place your cursor into the cell that contains the navigation menu and select the Top option from the Vert menu (located within the bottom half of the Table Cell Property inspector just to the right of the split and merge cells icons). The navigation menu text will shift to the top of its cell. You might also want to do this for the cell that contains our welcome text. You never know when you'll have a page that contains text that results in a cell that is smaller than the navigation menu.

Of course, if you ever want to horizontally align content within the cell, you can select from one of the options in the Horz menu. To give you an idea as to how this works, place your cursor within the navigation menu's cell and choose the Center option from the Horz menu in the Cell Property inspector. Your navigation menu will immediately center itself within the cell.

You might want to round out the design by creating hyperlinks for each navigation menu item: `index.html` for the Home menu item, `aboutus.html` for About Us, `solutions.html` for Solutions, `support.html` for Support, and `contactus.html` for Contact Us.

Setting the Background Color and Cell Wrapping

Looking at the welcome text, you can see that the text is cleanly formatted with spacing and line breaks. We didn't add the spacing or the line breaks at the end of each line, Dreamweaver does it automatically for us. When a line reaches the end of the cell, the text breaks and keeps going on to the next line, as you might expect. But what if you didn't want that to happen? What if you wanted the text to keep going and automatically stretch the width of the table regardless of the pixel size we explicitly set? A good way to prevent text within a cell from wrapping is to use the No Wrap check box within the Property inspector.

The question becomes, "Why would I want to prevent the text from wrapping within the cell?" Assume for a moment that you had a website that contained a tabbed navigation bar at the top of the page. Depending on the page you happened to be on, those tabs changed and varied based on the page and the content within the page. Assuming you had a few dozen web pages within your site, your tabs could number in the hundreds. Would you want to create a few hundred different images for every tab in your website? Probably not, right? Instead, you could create dynamic tabs that stretched (using the No Wrap option) based on the content within the cell. This way, you're creating the tab structure only once, and the text within the tab is the only part that changes. Doing this would make your tabbed navigation much easier to manage. To demonstrate my point, let's do a quick example. To follow along, review these steps:

1. Create a new blank HTML page by choosing File, New. Choose HTML from the Blank Page category, choose the <none> option from the Layout category, and click Create. The new blank page appears. Immediately save your work as **nowrap.html**.
2. Create a new table by choosing Insert, Table. When the Table dialog box appears, create a table with 1 row, 3 columns, a width of 150 pixels, a border thickness of 0, cell padding of 0, and cell spacing of 0; then click OK. The new table appears within the page.
3. Resize the first column to 24 pixels and the third column to 30 pixels. Again, this can be accomplished by placing your cursor within the specific cell and adding the value to the W text box within the Table Cell Property inspector.
4. Locate the images `lefttab.gif` and `righttab.gif` located within the `Assets\NoWrapExample` folder for the exercise files that you downloaded for this chapter. Insert (by either dragging the image from the Files panel or by choosing Insert, Image) the specific image into its respective cell (`lefttab.gif` will go in the first cell and `righttab.gif` will go in the third cell.)
5. Use the Tag Editor (covered in more detail later in the book) to set the middle column's background image to `bg.gif`. You can do this by right-clicking within the middle cell and then choosing Edit Tag <td>. The Tag Editor dialog box will appear. Select the Browser Specific category and then click the Browse button located just to

the right of the Background Image text box. Find `bg.gif` located within the same folder that contained our two tab images. Click OK to close the Tag Editor. Now the table should resemble Figure 4.25.

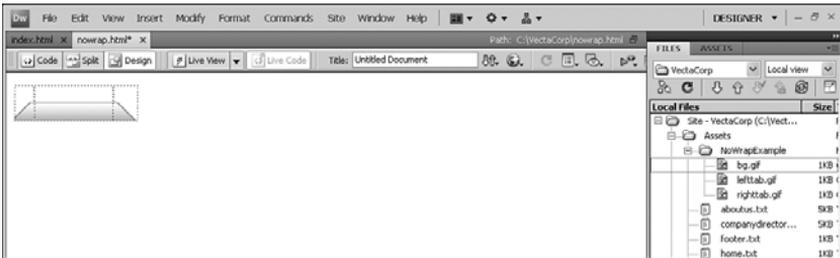


FIGURE 4.25 Create a table to resemble the functionality and look of a tab.

6. With your cursor still focused within the middle cell, choose the Center option from the Horz menu and the Bottom option from the Vert menu within the Property inspector.
7. Select the table, select the Copy option from the Edit menu, place your cursor just after the table, press Enter to create a paragraph break, and click the Paste option from the Edit menu. Now you'll have two tables that look like tabs.
8. Place your cursor in the middle cell of the first table and select Insert, Hyperlink. When the Hyperlink dialog appears, enter the text **Option 1** and type the # (to create an anchor with no link) symbol within the link text box. Click OK.
9. Place your cursor in the second cell of the second table, select Insert, Hyperlink. When the Hyperlink dialog appears, enter the text **This is a really long Option** and type the # symbol within the link text box. Click OK.

With everything done, the two tabs should resemble Figure 4.26.

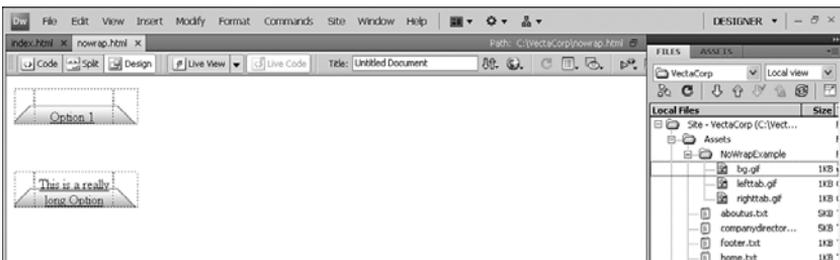


FIGURE 4.26 One tab has little text and fits perfectly in the tab. The second tab contains long text that wraps.

As you can see from Figure 4.26, because of the fixed width of the table, the second cell within the second table automatically wraps the contents within it. To allow the tab's size

to fluctuate, place your cursor within the middle cell of the second table and choose the No Wrap check box. As you can see from Figure 4.27, the tab's size automatically adjusts.

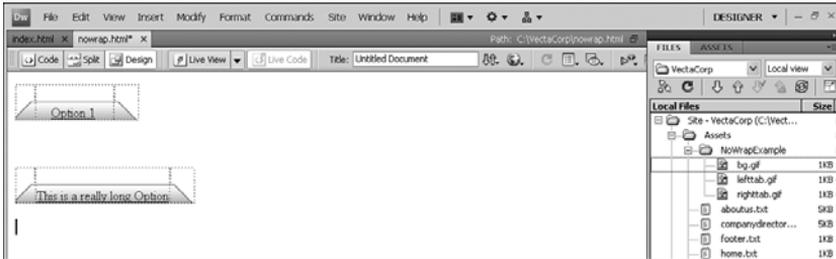


FIGURE 4.27 The No Wrap check box within the Property inspector prevents the table's cell from wrapping to the next line.

The upside to this method is that no matter how short the contents, the tabs will never be smaller than 150 pixels, and you can guarantee that only three images will be used. The contents within the cells are all that change.

Aside from setting the No Wrap option within the Property inspector, you also saw how to use the Tag Editor to set the Background Image (Bg) within a cell.

NOTE

It might not seem obvious as to why a background image property isn't available within the Property inspector. The answer is that there used to be. This is yet another property that the World Wide Web Consortium considers deprecated and should be replaced whenever possible with CSS methods. Again, because we haven't gotten to CSS just yet, we used the Tag Editor dialog box to accomplish the task. The Tag Editor dialog box is a complete resource for tag property/attribute modification. Rather than caring about best practices, it simply outlines every possible option and allows you to decide.

Although a cell's background image can be set from the Tag Editor dialog box, the background color for a cell can be set directly from the Cell Property inspector. To demonstrate this feature, follow these steps:

1. Select the content table and change the cell spacing from 4 pixels to 0 pixels. This will eliminate the cell spacing, as it's no longer needed. You might need to readjust the cell's columns so that the first column is set to 220 pixels and the second column is set to 477 pixels, as opposed to the 465 pixels that we set previously.
2. Place your cursor within the table's first cell and add a background color by clicking the Bg color picker option from the Cell Property inspector. When your cursor changes to an eyedropper, sample the dark gray color from either the header or the

footer images to make the navigation menu's background color appear to continue from the header down to the footer.

3. Repeat this process for the cell that contains the welcome text. Rather than sampling a color from the interface, simply select white, as this is the color that we need to make the design blend together. The result will look similar to Figure 4.28.

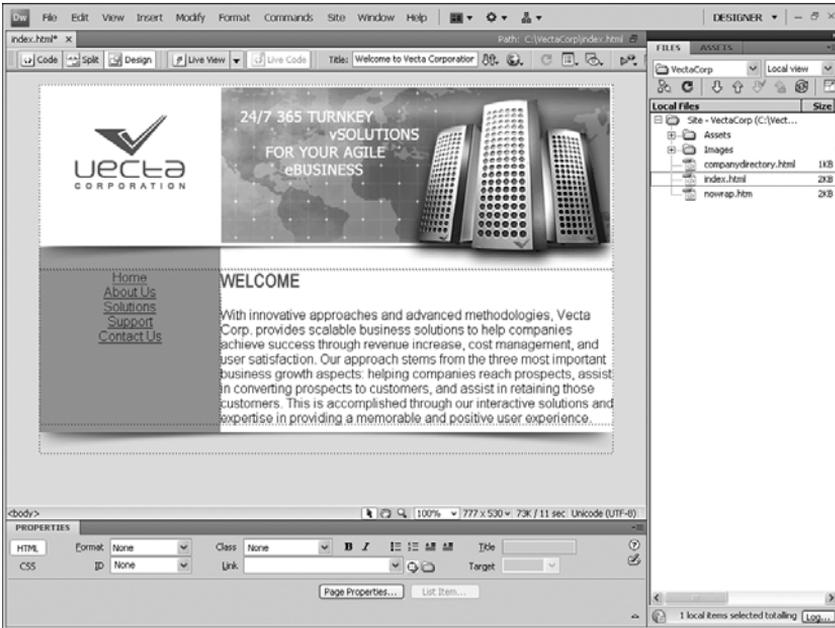


FIGURE 4.28 Add background color for both the navigation cell and the welcome text's cell.

Converting a Cell to a Header

You've already seen how to work with headers within the Table dialog box. Dreamweaver also supports the capability to convert an existing cell into a table header through the use of the Header check box within the Property inspector. To use this functionality, place your cursor within a table cell and enable the Header check box. The cursor within the cell will then be centered, and any text typed into the cell will be made bold.

Why a Separate Tag for a Table Header?

Tables without headers are inserted with the following code:

```
<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Header cell</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

```
<td>Cell 3</td>
<td colspan="2">Cell 4</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

In this case, the table has two rows (represented by `<tr>`) and three cells (represented by `<td>`). The first cell uses the `colspan` attribute to merge the cells into one cell that spans the width of the bottom two cells. Converting a cell into a header removes the row and cell containing the `colspan` and replaces it with a `<th>` tag as follows:

```
<table>
<th>Header cell</th>
<tr>
<td>Cell 3</td>
<td colspan="2">Cell 4</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

As you can see, the addition of the table header results in cleaner and more concise code, which ultimately means faster loading of the web page by the browser. Try both code blocks in Dreamweaver on your own to see the effects.

Nesting Tables

As you can see from the design thus far, our page is becoming relatively complex in its structure. So far we have two tables: one for the header and one for the content that also contains a footer. Obviously, it doesn't have to stop there. Let's assume we wanted to add a third table to structure the company's solution offerings underneath the welcome text. If that's the case, we'll need to add a *nested* table. A nested table as the name implies, is a table that nests within a cell of an existing table. Our solutions table is a perfect example of a nested table within a cell. Because we have three solutions, complete with an icon, a title, and descriptive text, we'll need to add another table to structure that content so that its presentation is cleaner than the bulleted list we used in Chapter 2. To create the nested table, follow these steps:

1. Place your cursor after the welcome text and click Enter (Return) to insert a paragraph break. Drag the `subheader_solutions.gif` image located within the Images folder over to the cell. Now place your cursor just to the right of the solutions image and click Enter (Return) one more time to create a paragraph break.
2. Create a new table by choosing Insert, Table. When the Table dialog box appears, create a table with 5 rows, 2 columns, a width of 450 pixels, a border thickness of 0, cell padding of 0, and cell spacing of 0; click OK. The new table will appear nested within the cell.
3. Resize the first column to 70 pixels and the second column to 380 pixels.

4. Add the logo_vprospect.gif, logo_vconvert.gif, and logo_vretain.gif images to the first, third, and fifth cells of the second column.
5. Open the solutions.txt file located within the Assets folder and copy each solution's representative description and paste it into its respective cell within the nested table. When you've finished, the table should resemble Figure 4.29.

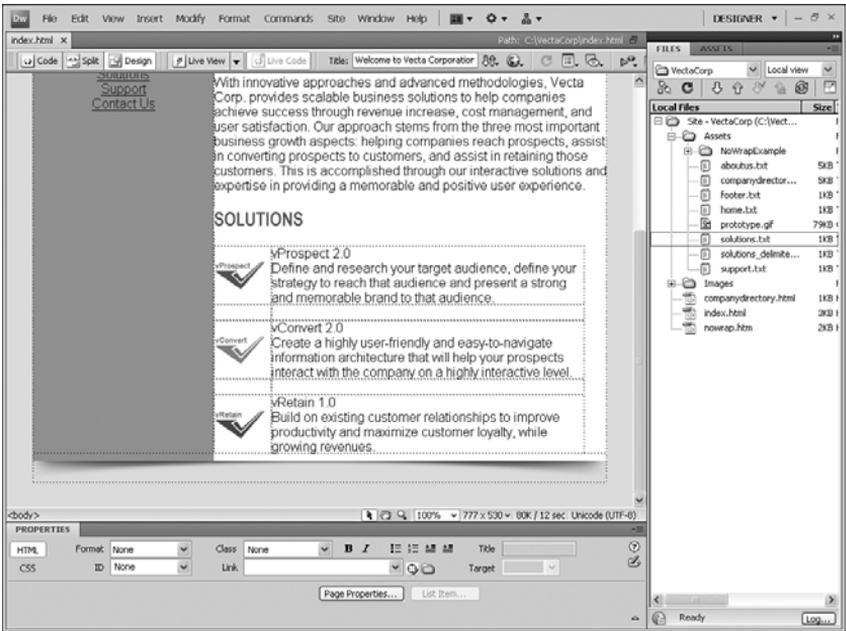


FIGURE 4.29 Add the images and respective descriptions to each cell.

As you can see, nesting tables provides us with much more flexibility in our design. Because of nesting, we're no longer limited to a stringent design. Instead we now have the opportunity to fine-tune and precisely position elements within our page.

Working with Tables in Expanded Tables Mode

Up until this point, we've focused on one mode of development: the Standard mode. The Standard mode, which is the default form of development, allows you to add and work with tables as you have done so far. It's important to note, however, that one other mode exists: the Expanded Tables mode.

As you can see, our table structure has gotten somewhat complex, especially now that we have a nested table. You've probably noticed that selecting rows, cells, and even the nested table is a bit more difficult than it was at the beginning of the chapter when we were working with just one table. Although it certainly might seem frustrating to get your

cursor in the right place in between nested tables and cells, it's important to note that there is relief via the Expanded Tables mode. The Expanded Tables mode, available from the Layout category in the Insert panel, temporarily adds cell spacing and cell padding to your cells within Design view, essentially making it easier for you to place your cursor in between and work with cells and nested tables. You can use the Expanded Tables mode by clicking the Expanded button located within the Layout category of the Insert panel. After you've clicked the button, Dreamweaver provides you with a Getting Started in Expanded Tables Mode dialog box to explain the mode. Click OK to close the dialog box and return to your page. As you can see from Figure 4.30, the Expanded Tables mode created spacing between cells, essentially allowing for the easy placement of the cursor between cells and nested tables.

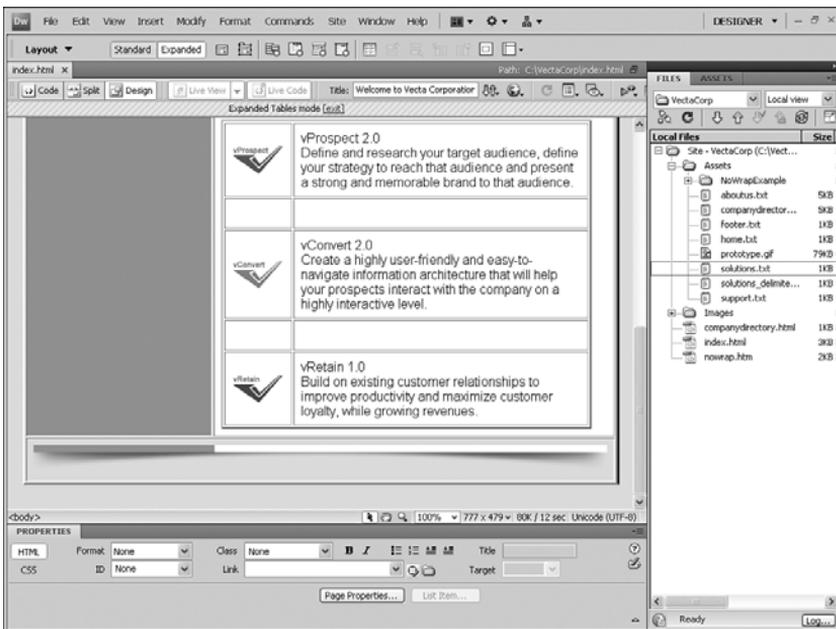


FIGURE 4.30 Expanded Tables mode creates spacing within cells.

To exit the Expanded Tables mode, click the exit link located within the temporary blue shaded menu bar located just below the Document bar. Your page will return to Standard mode. You can also click the Standard button (located to the left of the Expanded button) in the Layout category of the Insert panel to return the layout back to Standard mode.

Importing Tabular Data

Earlier in the chapter, we built a table within `index.html` to hold the company's solution offerings. Remember that we created a table with six rows and three columns and then

manually added solutions images and descriptive text. Numerous options exist for making this solution more dynamic. One solution, using a database to feed solution offerings to a table within the main page, will be discussed in Part V, “Dynamic Web Page Development.” For now, let’s discuss a simple alternative: the Import Tabular Data feature, available within Dreamweaver’s Insert menu.

The Import Tabular Data option, available by choosing Insert, Table Objects, Import Tabular Data enables you to quickly build an HTML table based on preformatted tab-, comma-, semicolon-, or colon-delimited files. This means that Mike over in Marketing can maintain a spreadsheet of the company’s solution offerings. When he’s ready to have a set of new offerings posted on the website, he can export his spreadsheet to one of the delimited options and then send it to Wally the webmaster for quick import via the Import Tabular Data feature.

For our example, we’ll use a tab-delimited file located within the Assets folder called `solutions_delimited.txt`. Opening the file reveals that the text within the file is separated by tabs similar to Figure 4.31.

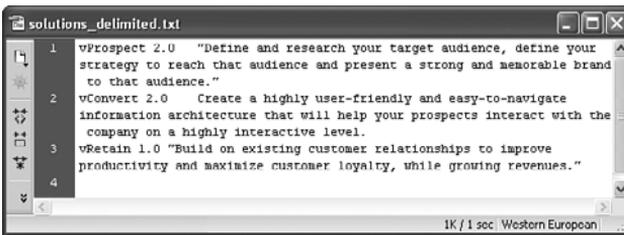


FIGURE 4.31 A tab-delimited file contains text separated by tabs.

Dreamweaver, recognizing that the file is separated by tabs, will pick apart all text elements within this file and place them into their own cells within a new table. To see this feature for yourself, first open `index.html`, remove the existing company events table, leaving your cursor within the cell, and choose Insert, Table Objects, Import Tabular Data. The Import Tabular Data dialog box will appear (see Figure 4.32).

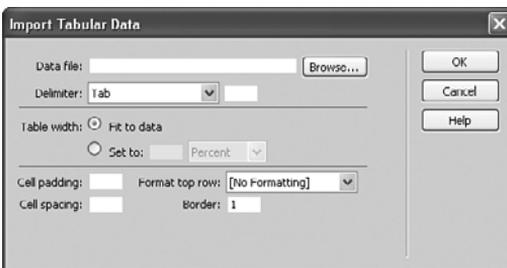


FIGURE 4.32 The Import Tabular Data dialog box allows you to import a file based on a delimiter option and then format the table that will be created for the content.

Looking at the dialog box, you'll notice that it contains options for importing the file to use, choosing a delimiter option, and then formatting the table that will be created for the content. The complete list of functionality exposed by the dialog box is outlined here:

- ▶ **Data file**—Click the Browse button from this file field to look for and select the file to use. For our example, browse to the `solutions_delimited.txt` file located within the Assets folder.
- ▶ **Delimiter**—Choose a delimiter option. Options include Tab, Comma, Semicolon, Colon, and Other. Choosing Other enables a text box allowing you to type in the delimiter symbol. For our example, choose Tab.
- ▶ **Table width**—Choose the Fit to Data option button to have the newly generated table added to the page with no widths specified. Because no widths will be specified, the table will be as wide as the longest text element within the cells. You can also choose the Set option to manually specify a width in either pixels or a percentage. For example, choose the Set to Radio button, type the value **100** into the text box, and choose the Percent option from the menu.
- ▶ **Cell padding and Cell spacing**—Assigns a cell padding or cell spacing (or both) to your table. For our example, enter **2** for cell padding and **0** for cell spacing.
- ▶ **Format top row**—Select an option from this menu to format the top row of your table if you have one. Options in this list include Bold, Italic, and Bold and Italic. For our example, leave this as is.
- ▶ **Border**—Enter a value within this text box to assign a border to your table. For our example, enter **0**.

When you've finished reviewing the options and have made the appropriate additions and selections, click OK. The new table will be added to your page. The page should look like Figure 4.33.

The final tasks are to set the font for the text in the table, add a new column in front of the existing content for the product logos, add the logos to the cells within the new column, and then set pixel widths for each of the three columns within the table. When you're finished, the table might resemble Figure 4.34.

Sorting Tables

In the previous section, we imported data that created a table with three rows of content. Imagine that instead you imported data that created hundreds of rows within a table. Even worse, imagine that all your rows were unsorted within the table. Trying to manually sort a table that contained hundreds of rows could take hours. Instead, you can use the Sort Table command to have Dreamweaver automatically sort the table based on a column that you choose. To use this feature, select the newly created solutions table and choose the Sort Table command available from the Commands menu. The Sort Table dialog box will appear similar to Figure 4.35.

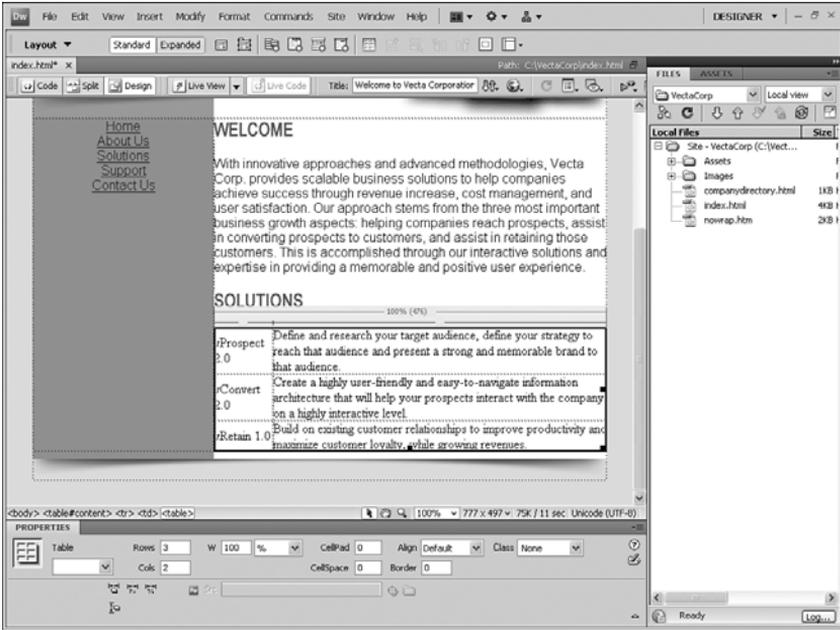


FIGURE 4.33 The new table is created based on the content within our tab-delimited file.

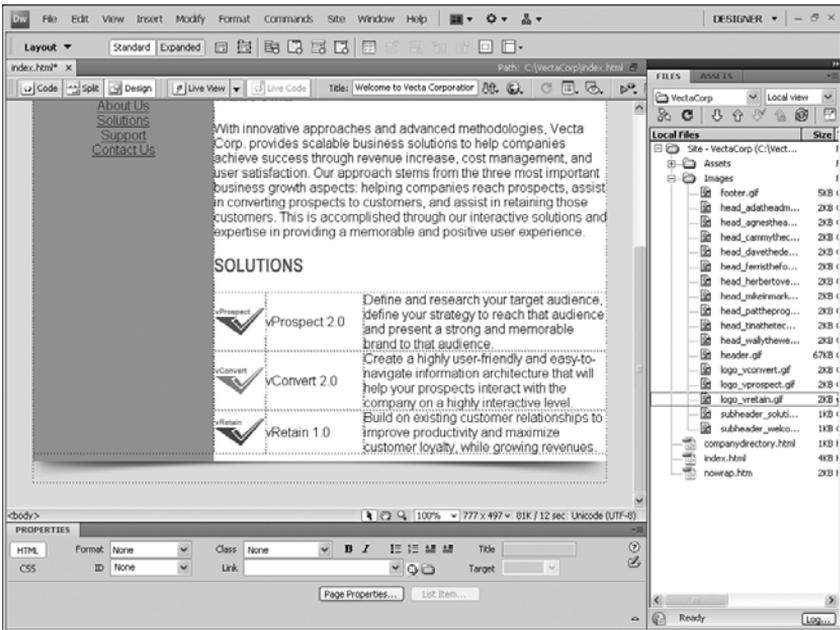


FIGURE 4.34 Format the table, add a new column before the content, and add the product icons to the cells within the new column.



FIGURE 4.35 The Sort Table command allows you to sort a table based on a prespecified column.

As you can see from Figure 4.35, the Sort Table command allows you to sort the table based on a primary and secondary column. A complete list of features is outlined here:

- ▶ **Sort by and Order**—Choose an option from the Sort list to specify which column from the table the sort will be performed on. Furthermore, you can select options from the Order menus to specify how the sort should be performed. You can perform alphabetic and numeric sorts and then choose whether to sort the values in the column in an ascending or descending order.
- ▶ **Then by and Order**—Choose a column from the Then By list when you want to perform a sort on a second column after the primary sort has been complete. Again, you can set the order of the sort on the secondary column.
- ▶ **Sort includes the first row**—Generally the first row of a table contains a header describing the content within the columns. If your table doesn't, you can include the first row in the sort by choosing this check box.
- ▶ **Sort header rows**—Check this option to sort all the rows in the table's `<thead>` section (if it exists) using the same criteria as the body rows.
- ▶ **Sort footer rows**—Check this option to sort all the rows in the table's `<tfoot>` section (if it exists) using the same criteria as the body rows.
- ▶ **Keep all row colors the same after the sort has been completed**—Check this option so that the table row attributes (such as color) remain associated with the same content after the sort. For instance, if your table rows are formatted with two alternating colors, do not select this option to ensure that the sorted table still has alternating-colored rows.

For our example, choose the Column 2 option from the Sort By list and click OK. Immediately the dialog box closes, and the table is sorted based on the solution name.

Tracing Images

Many times, our design prototypes become so complex that it becomes difficult to figure out exactly how to structure the page with tables using Dreamweaver. To aid you with this obstacle, Dreamweaver allows you to include a tracing image. *Tracing images* allow you to build your page prototype within your favorite image-editing program, save the prototype as a GIF or JPEG image, and then lay it down as a temporary background to your page so that you can build your page structure over it. To demonstrate the use of tracing images, follow these instructions:

1. Create a new blank page by choosing File, New or by pressing Ctrl+N (⌘-N). When the New Document dialog box appears, choose the HTML page type from the Blank Page category, choose the <none> option from the Layout category, and click Create. A new blank page is created. Immediately save your page as **tracingimage.html**.
2. With the page now open, select the Page Properties option from the Modify menu or by pressing Ctrl+J (⌘-J). The Page Properties dialog appears.
3. Enter 0 for each of the Left Margin, Top Margin, Margin Width, and Margin Height text boxes within the Appearance (HTML) category.
4. Switch to the Tracing Image category. As you can see, the Tracing Image category outlines two options: first, a file field that allows you to select the tracing image to use, and second, a transparency slider to select the opacity of the tracing image within the Document window.
5. In the Tracing Image text box, browse to the prototype.gif image located within the Assets folder.
6. Slide the Transparency slider to 30% and click Apply. As you can see from Figure 4.36, the prototype design is faintly visible in the background.
7. Click OK to close the Page Properties dialog box.

With the prototype faintly visible in the background, you can now add and manipulate tables to create a design using the background tracing image as a reference.

When you've finished creating the structure based on the tracing image, you can revisit the Tracing Image category within the Page Properties dialog box and remove it.

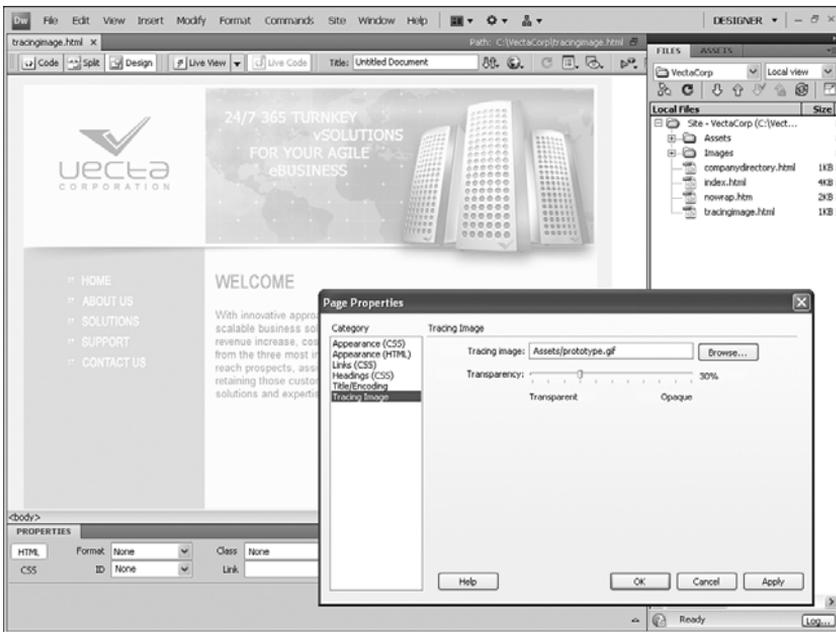


FIGURE 4.36 The tracing image is faintly visible in the background of the page.

Summary

As you have seen, tables provide flexibility when working with your page designs in Dreamweaver. In Chapter 2, we used simple page-formatting techniques such as line breaks, paragraph and heading formatting, paragraph breaks, lists, and so on to create designs that were limited in the layout and placement of elements within the page.

In this chapter, tables were introduced as an alternative and more realistic method. Tables provide a rich and welcome approach to layout design using a myriad of options available within the Property inspector. In the next chapter, we'll explore other options for structuring and formatting our designs using a more standards-compliant approach in Cascading Style Sheets, more commonly referred to by its acronym, CSS. As you will see, CSS provides tremendous flexibility for creating rich layouts and clean page designs.

Page numbers preceded by Web: indicate topics found in the online appendixes available at www.informit.com/title/9780672330391

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