

Native Forms in PowerShell?

You can create custom dialog windows natively within PowerShell

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While VBScript is by far the most popular scripting language on the street—it is arguably not the best or most capable of the languages out there. I’m going to take a couple of columns here to discuss alternative languages to provide a brief overview of what they have to offer you. Namely: AutoIt, KiXtart and PowerShell. I’ll start with AutoIt...

AutoIt has been around since 1999 and has grown a dedicated following of users over these many years. Written by Jonathan Bennett and a handful of other valued contributors, AutoIt has evolved into a very capable scripting language. As you might expect AutoIt is freeware. For some reason I’ve heard it misstated that AutoIt is open source more than once, but it is not. It is however regularly updated and supported by a dedicated community of users.

A “basic-like” scripting language, the focus of AutoIt is on the automating the Windows GUI. Though it was initially designed for PC roll outs and the automation of software installations, it has evolved far beyond its specialty—particularly with the latest v3 release. It requires only a small executable to process scripts (so no real “installation” is necessary) and it supports systems back to Windows 95. While some who may not have seen it in some time may still think of it as a more capable SendKeys replacement, there really is not much you cannot do with it today.

With AutoIt you can address most any form control (like text boxes, labels, buttons, listviews, treeviews, etc.). AutoIt lets you grab hold of these form elements and do things such as select, click, enable, disable, read, modify, etc. This really gives you some powerful control not found in any other scripting language. You can simulate keystrokes and mouse movements to automate most anything you might do manually. One thing that had been lacking from AutoIt for some time now is support for COM, but this too has been recently added which makes it a very good contender for an all-purpose language.


As a scripting language it offers a very long list of built in functions and naturally you can write your own custom functions as well. A very cool thing about AutoIt is that if you think this all sounds great, but you don’t want to lean a new scripting language (though it is very simple to learn, similar to KiXtart) it also offers a DLL version of its functions that may be used with any scripting language that supports COM. This means that you may use its many cool functions for automation and manipulation of windows from within the language you are currently familiar like VBScript or KiXtart.

For example, AutoIt lets you move the mouse pointer to a desired X/Y coordinate with its MouseMove function like so:

```
MouseMove(1,1)
```

If you register the AutoItX DLL that comes with AutoIt on your computer (on any computer you intend to run the script), you can make use of this same function within VBScript like so:

```
Set oAutoIt = WScript.CreateObject("AutoItX3.Control")
oAutoIt.MouseMove 1, 1
```

For more information on AutoIt, including some great documentation and sample scripts to show off its capabilities, visit <http://www.autoitscript.com/autoit3> or <http://www.adminscripteditor.com/langhome.asp?l=a>. Have something good or bad to say about AutoIt? Please comment on this article and share your views! 

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