

---

## [Delphi "Greed" Edition \(http://www.sandon.it/node/46\)](http://www.sandon.it/node/46)

**Posted on:** Wed, 09/23/2009 - 22:06 **By:** ldsandon

In the last year often pop up articles, blog or forum posts (like [this](http://www.deltics.co.nz/blog/?p=533) (<http://www.deltics.co.nz/blog/?p=533>)), asking for a very low cost of free edition of Delphi. Most of them build up a business case for the use they would made of it, although noone tries to build a business case for Embarcadero to demonstrate releasing a free edition is sustainable and won't impact revenues, or increases them. Let's analyze the motivations most advocates of a free release bring.

1. Delphi needs more users. That's true. But Embarcadero, like any company, would like more *paying* users - if users of a free edition don't become full customers, and if the free edition subtract paying customers that's not what Embarcadero - nor Delphi - needs. A gazillion users more who do not pay for Delphi development are useless. And a free edition in my humble opinion won't bring more customers, I'll explain later why. And, anyway, why do people choose a development tool over another? Because it's free or because its technology is regarded appealing, or at least fashionable? Is only price the reason Delphi don't attract new users?
2. There are hobbyists and students who can't pay current prices. If we talk about students, I may agree - although when I was a student I saved up lira after lira (if was before the euro!) to be able to buy Turbo Pascal - TP7 costed me the equivalent of 150 euro - and it was 1993. But AFAIK Embarcadero still offers academic licenses. They have restrictions, of course, but students are going to use them only for learning purposes, right?  
Hobbyists are another category. I saw many spend hundreds, if not thousand of euros for their hobby - ranging from expensive motorbikes to telescopes, cameras, musical instruments, sport apparel, travels, mobile phones and so on. There are people who don't mind to spend 600 euro for an iPhone but think 400 for Delphi is "expensive"...  
Why a programming hobby should be different and require no money is something I do not understand. Unless the reason is that "I pay only those things I can't easily steal and duplicate". And there's written nowhere hobbyists and students must use the latest release each year.
3. Microsoft gives Visual Studio Express away for free. True, Microsoft like IBM or Oracle can afford to give its development tools away for free. As far as I know, before the PC era development tools always came free with the expensive computers and the operating systems they run. The money were made selling the hardware and the expensive applications. Exactly what Microsoft - and the others - can still do - use the free version to sell more of their expensive platforms - Windows Server, SQL Server, Exchange, Office, Oracle, WebSphere, etc. etc. The question is: could Embarcadero follow the same way? What revenues would bring a free Delphi? Why Microsoft does not give Office away for free, although free alternatives like Open Office exists? Moreover VS has the advantage that its architecture makes easier to release a version that does not allow to be "upgraded" to a much more powerful one easily, without breaking the license - there's a lot you can't do with the Express edition - and there's no 64 bit express edition.

---

4. And we are at the "free alternatives". Delphi should be free because beyond VS Express there are several free alternatives. Well, the better. Student and hobbyists should be happy. There are many things I can't afford, and have to use cheaper ones. I'd really like an Hasselblad H3DII-50... but it's a bit too much for a hobby. The question is: why aren't they already using them, and want a free Delphi release? Because Delphi is better? And why is it better? Because it has a dedicated team taking care of its development? How much this team cost? Could be Delphi still be developed and hopefully improved much more it has been in the past five years, if not enough money come from the sales?

Why do they want Delphi to be free, and are not satisfied by say Free Pascal/Lazarus, or any other development tool? I guess the answer is simple. Greed. Look at what they would like:

- A barebone Delphi, but with the full IDE/compiler and some basic controls
- But it should not put any nag screen or other visible information into the executable
- But it has to be able to install third party controls, at least the free ones.
- But it should be usable for commercial development (although someone would accept it couldn't, but how Embarcadero could enforce it is a mystery).

See the trick? With such a product and some free libraries, say JCL/JVCL, Indy and Zeos or the like, add Firebird/PostGres/MySQL and you can easily build a **full professional development tool for free** - or almost. The very architecture of Delphi allows this.

That would be not as powerful as the full Enterprise version maybe, but perfectly able to compete with the Pro version (which I believe is too little for its price), and perfectly able to build the average Delphi applications many Delphi little shops live upon - allowing them to maximize their revenues and exploit the latest Delphi technology without spending a dime, many don't take advantage of Delphi more advanced components anyway.

I am sure many advocates of a free/cheap Delphi version strive for this. And they don't give a damn about the feasibility of it, and the impact it would have on actual sales and prices - and if it would doom Delphi because dwindling sales may mean to shut down the whole business. They are shortsighted as those who have been managing Delphi in these years - they can't look beyond their nose, and are ready to send everything to hell just to be able to take some advantages in the nearest future.

Does Delphi need some changes? Sure. The actual SKUs are a nonsense. They are the same of 1995, but the development landscape changed a lot. Probably the Pro could be made a little cheaper, or should be made more appealing - IMHO having just local database connectivity is very stupid in that price range. The Enterprise one needs more and better enterprise-level features and libraries, the "new" Datasnap looks a very primitive RPC technology and don't justify its price, nor a couple of dbExpress driver more. Maybe there could be space for a stripped down version, but how and how much is not easy to tell - it should bring new sales, not erode the actual ones.

We must accept that Turbo Pascal days are over. It is true it was at \$49, but it was TP 1. TP7 and BP7 were already much more complex and expensive. Many Turbo Pascal hobbyists became professional developers, as I did. And what I need now is not a cheap Delphi, I need a powerful Delphi allowing me to cope with today application needs. I know I have to invest money in the tools I need, be them hardware or software. I am not afraid to pay for Delphi, I only wish I could pay a favourable price/features ratio, not throw money away in another Delphi 2005 - or found one day that there would be no Delphi anymore because the free editions was the only one most developers got.

- [Log in \(http://www.sandon.it/user/login?destination=/comment/reply/node/46/comment\\_node\\_blog%23comment-form\)](http://www.sandon.it/user/login?destination=/comment/reply/node/46/comment_node_blog%23comment-form) to post comments

---

**Source URL:** *http://www.sandon.it/node/46*