Peregrine

ServiceCenter

Forms Designer best practices

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Forms Designer best practices

ServiceCenter 6 has a new Windows and Web client. It also supports running a ServiceCenter 6 server with ServiceCenter 5.1 Windows or Java clients. Forms Designer can produce portable forms that render successfully in the Windows and Web clients if you follow a few design suggestions. To ensure all forms are portable, test each new or upgraded form with both clients.

Forms Designer version recommendations

To ensure cross-version portability, use the ServiceCenter 5.1 Forms Designer for all modifications as long as you must support version 5.1 clients. If you deploy only ServiceCenter 6 clients, use the version 6 Forms Designer for all form modifications. The version 6 Forms Designer offers new objects that are not available in earlier versions. Therefore, you should not modify version 6 forms created with the Forms Designer with version 5.1 Forms Designer, or display version 6 forms with a version 5.1 client.

Web client forms

The ServiceCenter Web tier offers automatic support for exiting applications and their forms. The Web tier generates dynamic HTML that approximates the exact layout of forms as you define them with Forms Designer. The out-of-box application forms are portable from the Windows client to the Web client with no required modification.

If you upgrade an existing system, you will find that ServiceCenter 6 clients automatically support and display your customized forms. However, there may be cases when further form modification is necessary to correct cosmetic issues that appear when you view the form with the Web client. The following sections describe common form revisions that might be required.

Overlapped objects

Ensure that form objects do not overlap each other. The Windows client makes slight adjustments to correct for overlapped objects, but these design issues are exposed on a web browser. Figure 1-1 shows an example where a text area overlaps a border frame.

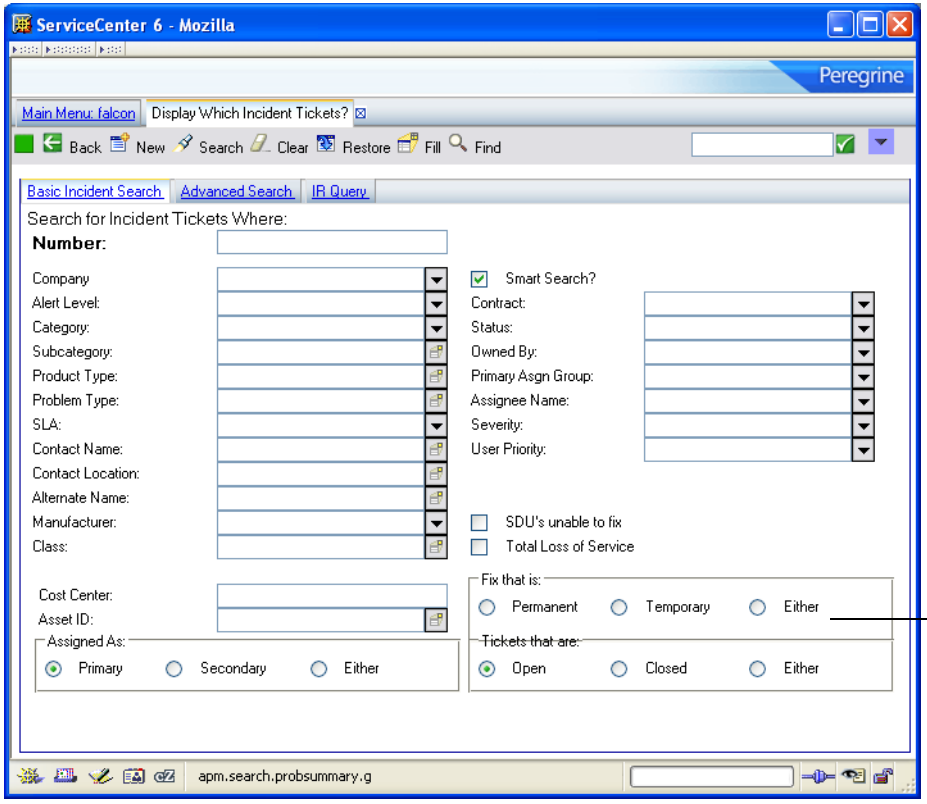

Figure 1-1: Overlapped frame

Dynamic resizing

The Windows client dynamically resizes objects such as text areas and notebooks when you resize the window. The Web client does not resize most objects and does not support elastic properties as you resize the browser window. Therefore, ensure that you assign a default initial size. Figure 1-2 shows a notebook and enclosed objects that have fixed sizes defined with Forms Designer.

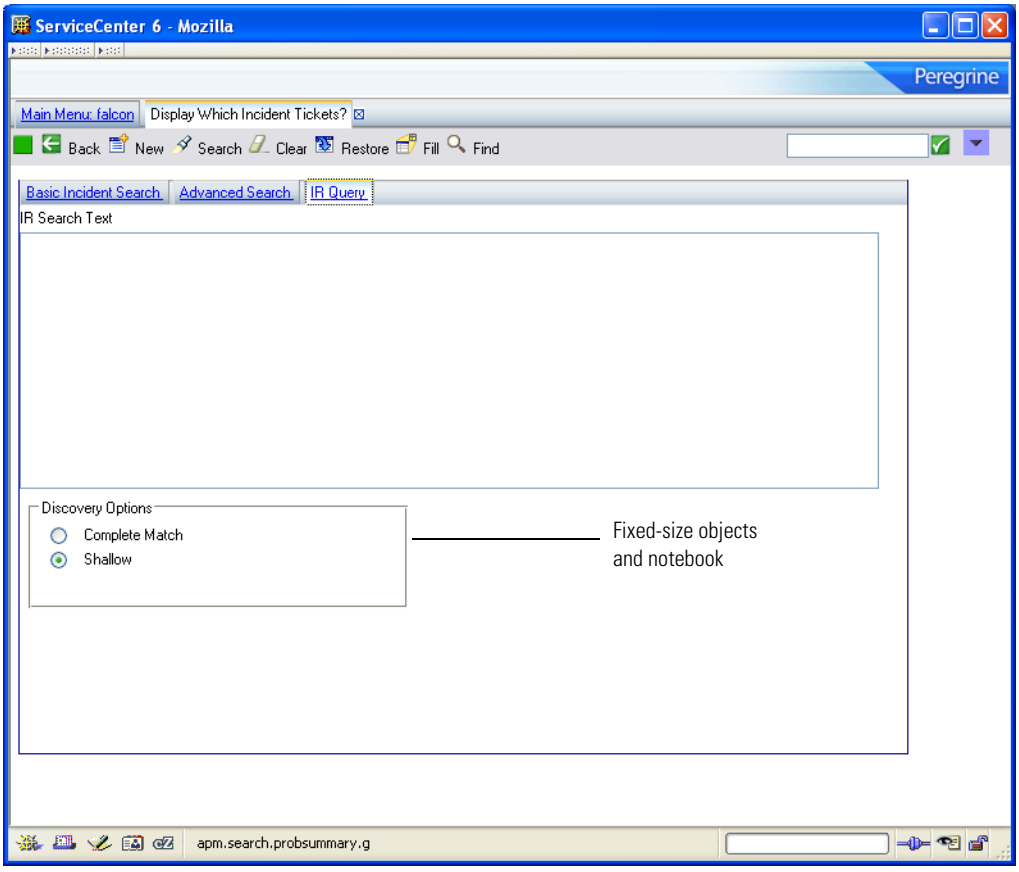

Figure 1-2: Web client form

Graphics and images

Size any graphics and images to fit conservatively in the form. The Windows client supports scaled images used as buttons. However, the Web client displays these images in their native size. The button grows to accommodate the size of the image. Figure 1-3 shows how a scalable image used as a button in the Windows client becomes an oversized button image in the Web client.

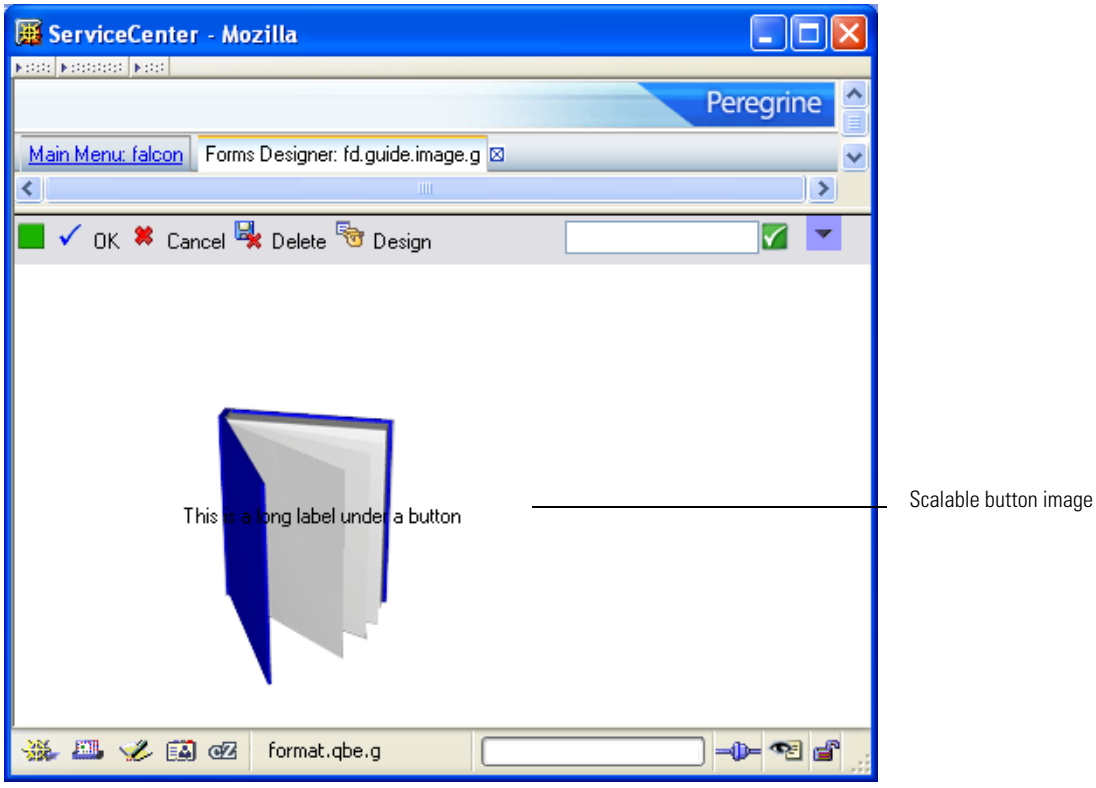

Figure 1-3: Scalable button image

DVD conditions

Hidden data with dynamic view dependency (DVD) conditions may be exposed if the form permits the user to make changes.

Known issues

ServiceCenter 6 Forms Designer has some known issues if you add notebooks, use colored text, or display record lists.

Notebooks

Do not position a notebook object next to another large form object, such as a table. The result appears in the Web client as a form that is always greater than 100% in width. Form objects to the right of the notebook scroll off the browser page. Figure 1-4 shows a resizable table next to a notebook. Browsers display resizable objects at 100% of the browser window width. Placing the table next to the notebook causes the form width to exceed the available width of the browser window. In this example, the High Priority Incidents table scrolls beyond the Web client window.

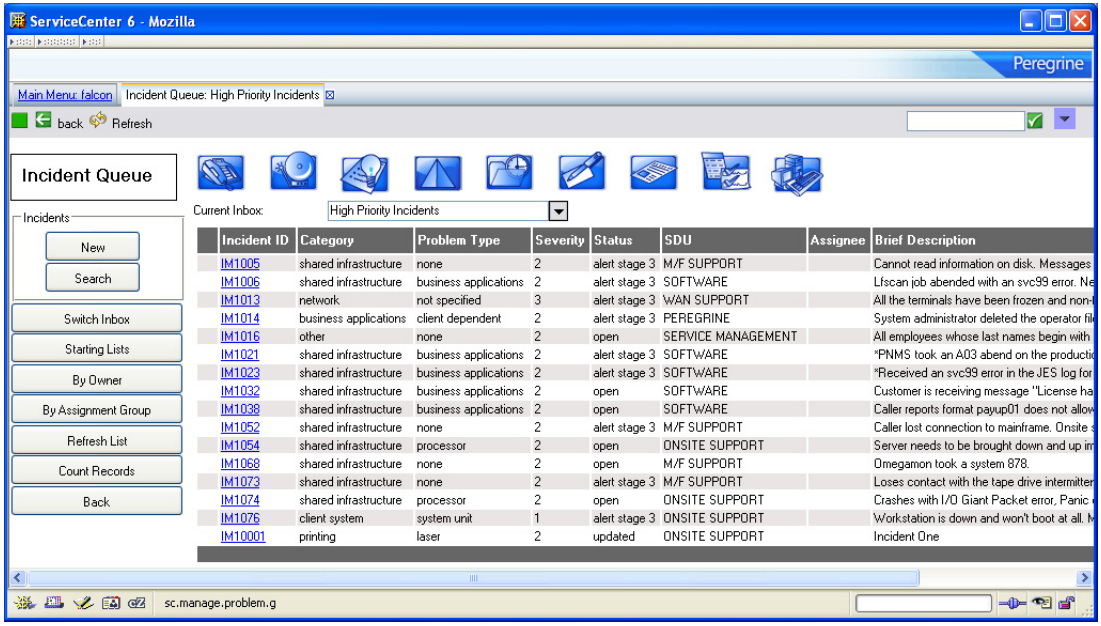

Figure 1-4: Notebook example

Colored text

The Web client does not display colored text. Therefore, text drop shadows and other text effects that rely on color do not render successfully in the Web client.

Virtual joins and multiple records

If you use a virtual join to display multiple records on a form, use the table object to ensure the records display correctly. Figure 1-5 shows layers of output if you do not display the virtual join with a table.

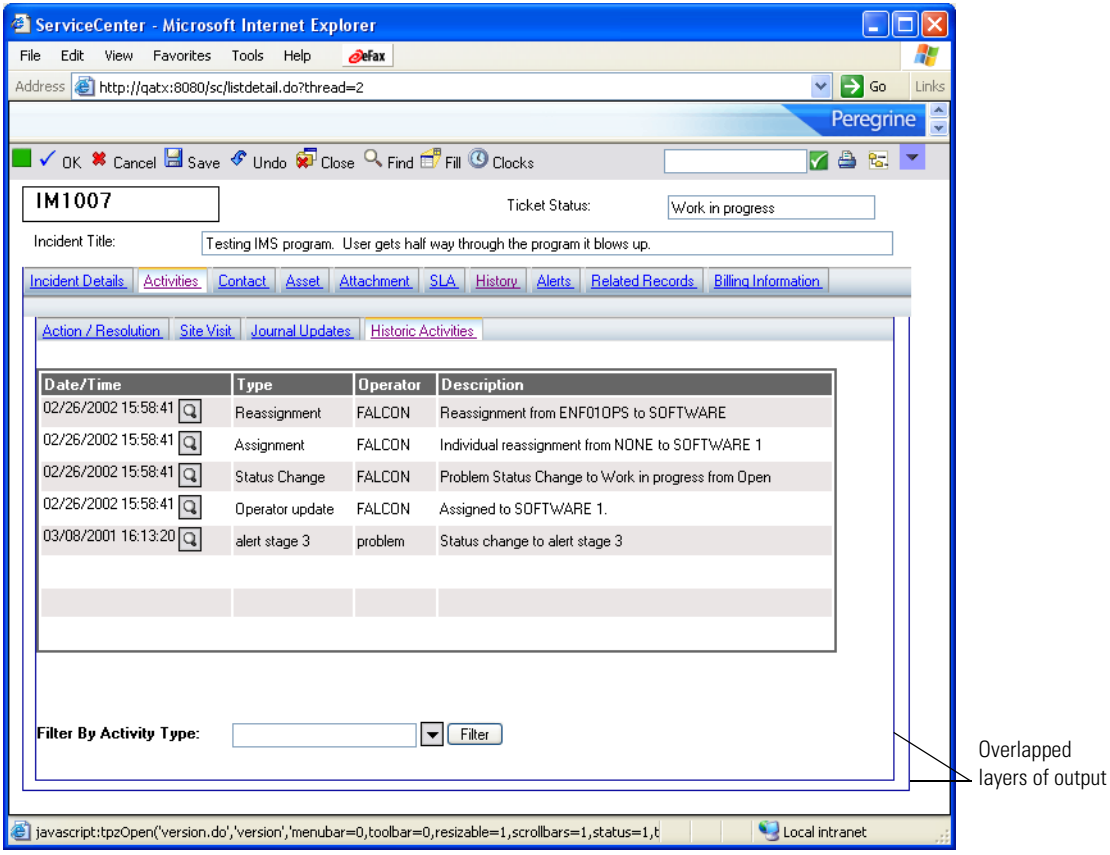

Figure 1-5: Virtual joins and table objects

Accessible Web client forms

The accessible web client simplifies the interface to enable accessible users to apply personal preferences that improve their user experience. A simple interface also enables accessibility tools, such as screen readers, to integrate with ServiceCenter successfully. The accessible Web client omits the System Navigator tree view, the graphical workflow feature, and thread navigation links, which are the tabs that identify open forms in the Windows client.

If you are designing forms for accessible users, these are the most important design requirements:

- High-contrast color graphics
- Larger default fonts
- Larger form spacing (more white space)
- Simplified navigation (fewer buttons, objects and icons)
- Browser settings must be able to control
  - Resizing fonts
  - Foreground and background color selection

A visually impaired user might want a well-designed form that reads left to right with labels announcing the name of the subsequent form object, tables with row labels that read horizontally (not by column). This user might also want to specify a black background with white text in a 14-point bold font instead of the out-of-box color and font combinations.

Assisstive technology resources

If you design forms for accessible users, you can learn more about assisstive technology from a number of resources. You can find information about popular assisstive technology tools from Freedom Scientific™ (JAWS™, Connect Outloud™), IBM™ Accessibility Center, or AI Squared™ (ZoomText™).


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