

# Converting Visual Studio Installation Projects to InstallShield Projects

## Why Switch from Visual Studio Installer to InstallShield?

1. Simply put, you can do far more with InstallShield:
  - Modify dialog layouts with the visual Dialog Editor
  - Manage components and features
  - Create shortcuts to files on a target system
  - Manage SQL-related tasks, IIS Web sites, and COM+ applications
  - Modify XML files at run time
2. Because your software applications deserve professional, reliable installations:
  - InstallShield is the world's most trusted installation tool, used by over 71,000 customers.
  - It is the world's most popular tool for installing on Windows, mobile devices, servers, and more.

"Microsoft is pleased to work with InstallShield to provide our mutual customers with the ability to create powerful, flexible, and reliable installations."

Nick Abbott  
.NET Developer Product  
Management Group  
– Microsoft

**Microsoft**  
GOLD CERTIFIED

Partner

Microsoft's Visual Studio® includes limited support for creating setup and merge module projects. InstallShield® from Flexera Software lets you convert these types of Visual Studio projects to InstallShield projects so that you can use the advanced features and functionality in InstallShield to create installations and merge modules.

## Benefits of Switching to an InstallShield Project

If you convert your Visual Studio setup project to an InstallShield Basic MSI project or you convert your Visual Studio merge module project to an InstallShield Merge Module project, you can use the features in InstallShield to fully customize your project.

Some of the tasks you can perform in InstallShield projects but not in Visual Studio projects include the ability to:

- Modify the layout of dialogs through a visual Dialog Editor
- Manage components and features
- Store custom actions in the Binary table of the .msi or .msm database (With Visual Studio, all custom actions must be installed with the product.)
- Create shortcuts to pre-existing files on a target system
- Manage SQL-related tasks, such as connecting to a SQL server and running SQL scripts
- Manage IIS Web sites, virtual directories, Web service extensions, and application pools
- Manage COM+ applications
- Modify XML files on the target system at run time

## Conversion Process

If you use InstallShield to convert a Visual Studio setup project, InstallShield creates an InstallShield

Basic MSI project (.ism). If you convert a Visual Studio merge module project, InstallShield creates an InstallShield Merge Module project (.ism). To convert a Visual Studio project (.vdprj) to an InstallShield project (.ism):

1. Open InstallShield.
2. On the **File** menu, click **Open**. The **Open** dialog box opens.
3. In the **Files of type** box, select **Visual Studio Setup Projects (\*.vdprj)**.
4. Browse to the location of the Visual Studio project that you want to open, and select the project file.
5. Click the **Open** button.

InstallShield creates an InstallShield project based on the settings in the Visual Studio project. InstallShield stores the .ism file in the same folder as the .vdprj file. As InstallShield creates the .ism file, it displays the status of the project conversion in the Output window. The Output window shows each step of the conversion process, and it lists any conversion errors and warnings.

Once the conversion process finishes successfully, the new InstallShield project is displayed in InstallShield.

Please note: Visual Studio lets you specify a directory path that contains multiple formatted properties, such as [ProgramFilesFolder][Manufacturer]\[ProductName], for the Application Folder. Visual Studio projects use a directory custom action to resolve the path at run time. However, InstallShield does not support this type of directory path. Therefore, InstallShield resolves the path during the conversion process and uses the INSTALLDIR property for the path.

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## Post-Conversion Tasks

The conversion process does not incorporate the dialogs from a Visual Studio project into the InstallShield project. Once you have converted your project, you can use the Dialogs view in InstallShield to add dialogs to your project, edit the dialog layout, and configure events for dialog controls.

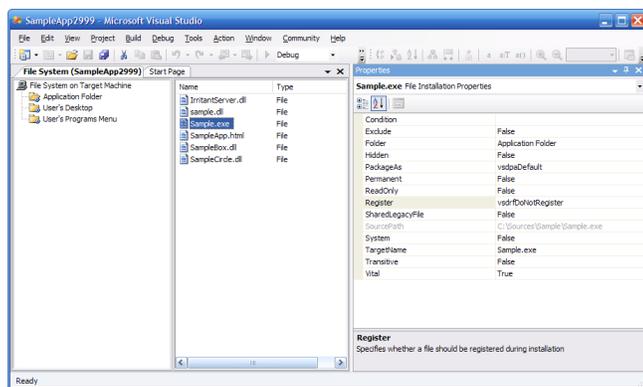
If your Visual Studio project includes a .NET installer class custom action, InstallShield configures the .NET installer class information for the .NET assembly's component during the conversion process, instead of creating a .NET installer class custom action. InstallShield does not include support for the

Condition property of a .NET installer class custom action in Visual Studio.

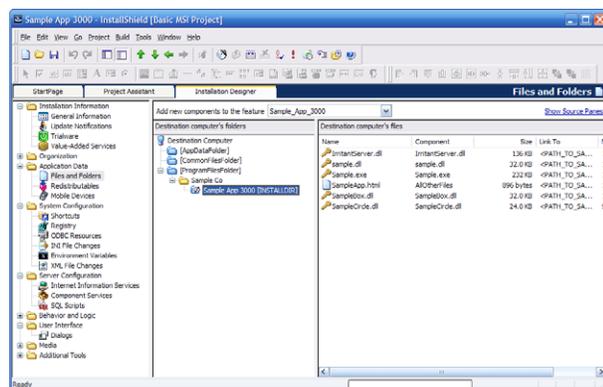
Therefore, if your Visual Studio project contains a .NET installer class custom action that has a condition, you may want to use the Components view in InstallShield to create a condition for the component that contains the .NET assembly after you have converted your project.

You can also use the other views in InstallShield to make additional changes to your project.

## Visual Studio Installer vs. InstallShield



The Visual Studio Installer has extremely limited functionality for installation editing and creating.



The InstallShield IDE gives you a powerful array of installation authoring tools, including the Dialog Editor.

## About Flexera Software

Flexera Software is the leading provider of strategic solutions for Application Usage Management; solutions delivering continuous compliance, optimized usage and maximized value to application producers and their customers. Flexera Software is trusted by more than 80,000 customers that depend on our comprehensive solutions- from installation and licensing, entitlement and compliance management to application readiness and enterprise license optimization - to strategically manage application usage and achieve breakthrough results realized only through the systems-level approach we provide. For more information, please go to: [www.flexerasoftware.com](http://www.flexerasoftware.com)

### Begin a Free Evaluation of InstallShield:

You can download a free trial version of InstallShield from the Flexera Software Web site at <http://www.flexerasoftware.com/installshield/eval>



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