

Introduction

About the Book

This book is intended to provide experienced .NET developers, solution architects, and others, the knowledge necessary to develop and deploy Information Bridge Framework (IBF) solutions.

Each chapter delves deeper and deeper into the new framework, providing solid examples along the way.

How This Book Is Organized

The book is divided into 3 major parts

1. Installing and Deploying the Information Bridge Framework Components
2. Development of Information Bridge Framework solutions
3. Connectivity Guidance

Part I

Chapter 1: Overview and Architecture

This chapter defines the concepts surrounding IBF, as well as a solid business case for the IBF solutions.

This chapter also introduces Chesapeake Logic, a fictional company that specializes in shipping crabs from the Baltimore harbor to the surrounding cities. It explains the company's business, and how they benefited from the solution described in this book.

Chapter 2: Installation

Chapter 2 explains how to do a complete installation of the IBF server, the IBF client, and provides a short introduction to the metadata designer tool for Visual Studio.NET.

Part II

Chapter 3: Building an IBF Compliant Web Service

Chapter 3 details how to create a web service that conforms to the IBF guidelines. This will allow you to develop IBF solutions much easier that rely on these web services. The exercise at the end of the chapter involves creating a web service to expose an existing Orders database.

Chapter 4: Creating the Metadata Solution

Chapter 4 introduces the Metadata Solution template project for Visual Studio.NET. When you create metadata you're giving your web services a context that IBF will use to render content to users.

Chapter 5: Creating the User Interface

Chapter 5 builds upon the previous chapters to allow you to create the user interface for the Microsoft Office Task Pane. Two approaches are defined, including HTML Regions and .NET user controls. Both are presented as exercises at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 6: Smart Tag Development

Chapter 6 moves beyond the IBF tools and into creating Smart Tags that allow your documents to become living. The exercise at the end of the chapter will allow an e-mail in Outlook to have smart tags appear throughout the message that connect to a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) application.

Chapter 7: Creating a Word Smart Document IBF Solution

Chapter 7 introduces Smart Documents and XML schemas in Microsoft Word. When you define documents in this format you make them less flexible, however this is perfect for existing templates. The IBF can update the task pane based on the location of the user's cursor in the document. The exercise at the end of the chapter will update the task pane with related data as the user fills out a invoice template.

Chapter 8: Programming the Search Pane

Chapter 8 discusses the Search Pane and how to instruct IBF to search your back-end LOB applications from within Microsoft Office.

Chapter 9: Deploying Solutions

Chapter 9 discusses how to successfully deploy a completed IBF solution. The deployment exercise builds upon the exercises in the previous chapters. Common deployment scenarios are presented, along with recommended practices.

Part III

Chapter 10: SharePoint Connectivity Guidance

Chapter 10 presents the web services available in SharePoint Portal Server, as well as how to integrate them into IBF solutions.

Chapter 11: Great Plains Connectivity Guidance

Chapter 11 presents guidance for exposing Microsoft Great Plains data to an IBF solution.

Chapter 12: Microsoft CRM Connectivity Guidance

Chapter 12 presents guidance on exposing Microsoft CRM data to an IBF solution.

Appendix:

Who Should Read This Book?

If you're a Microsoft .NET developer interested in exposing your back-end line of business systems to users in a comfortable environment, this book is for you. In addition, this book was written to teach experienced developers how to take advantage of their existing Microsoft Office platform without writing a line of Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) code.

What You Need To Know

The primary audience for this book is the experienced developer who builds applications for businesses to increase productivity or revenue. This book will most benefit the developer who has experience with the following technologies

- Visual Basic.NET or C#
- The .NET Framework
- XML / XSD
- Web Services
- XSLT
- XPath
- The Office application suite (at a "user" level)

However the detailed examples and code explanations should also allow less experienced readers to gain invaluable insight into how such applications are built and how they should work.

How to Use This Book

I recommend using this book as a lab manual and performing the exercises at the end of each chapter. The nature of IBF demands skill with several diverse technologies, some of which not every developer may work with on a daily basis. Figure 1 describes how the exercises build upon one another.

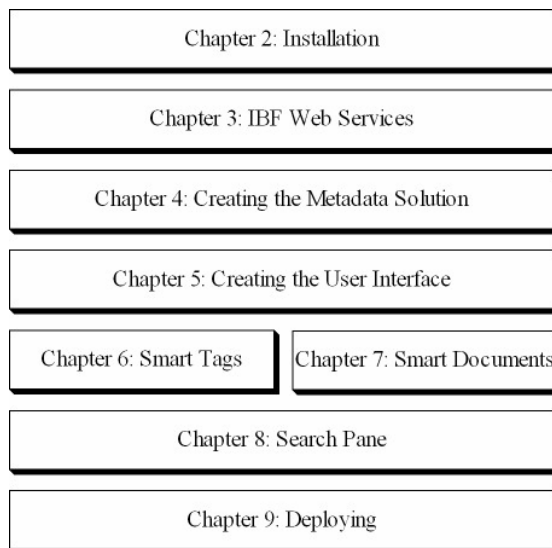


Figure 1

Downloading the Source Code

For your convenience, the full source code for the projects in this book is available on the Apress web site at <http://www.apress.com>. Click the Downloads link on the home page and follow the directions to download the code.