CONNX® Solutions™
Simplified Data Access™

CONNX® and Microsoft® .NET

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CONNX Solutions

.NET TECHNOLOGY

Microsoft® .NET server technology promises to revolutionize how companies create software. Microsoft .NET, a suite of new technologies, facilitates creation of software, but the portion of Microsoft .NET that this paper focuses on is the ability to rapidly create Web applications.

Before .NET, creating complicated Web applications with Microsoft technology was piecemeal and tedious. Server-side development needed to be done in ASP code. Debugging ASP pages was not straightforward. The ASP code was disjointed and sprinkled between sections of HTML, which meant that two different toolsets were needed: one for HTML formatting and another for ASP code generation.

Microsoft ® ASP.NET® technology provides a single development environment that facilitates the rapid creation of complex Web applications. One of the most important features of ASP.NET is its ability to debug Web applications as if it were an ordinary client server application. The Web developer no longer has to include Reponse.Write (“We got here.”) messages in their ASP code to determine where a problem occurred.

.NET is a new technology, and bugs are still being worked out. However, .NET was in beta for over a year, and Microsoft has already released a service pack for .NET that addresses the first generation bugs. Note, too, that .NET technology already is being used by Fortune 500 companies such as Pacific Life (http://msdn.microsoft.com/net/realworld/), major companies such as Dollar® Rent-A-Car and ISVs that focus on Fortune 500 companies such as VDI, Borland International, and CONNX Solutions.

You may be also be thinking, “How can .NET save our company money?”

As with any software product, there are two main ways that it can help a company save money:

1. By reducing license or maintenance fees for existing software products.
2. By improving productivity through automation of manual tasks.

REDUCTION OF LICENSE FEES

Web-based applications are a return to mainframe-style applications, in the sense that the application is stored on a single, centralized server, and the end users access the application through a “dumb terminal”, in this case, a Web browser. Centralized applications typically result in reduced license fees because components are no longer distributed to each client’s PC. Fees for a Web server license for a given product are usually higher than a single client license, but much less than the cost of the aggregate of client licenses required by a large company. An example would be a client license for Oracle. With a properly designed Web server application, a small pool of ten connections could serve up data for hundreds of Web browsers.

IMPROVEMENT OF PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH AUTOMATION OF MANUAL TASKS

One of the fastest growing segments of IT is the process used to create company intranets and extranets. Company intranets save time and money for large corporations by automating manual tasks, which in the past required paperwork and the manpower to read and interpret that paperwork. A simple example of this is time collection. Many companies have their employees keep track of their hours and qualify time worked by assigning task IDs. In the past, this was a manual process done on paper. Intranets can automate the time- collection process, and also reduce the likelihood of duplicate data entry errors.

Extranets enable companies to provide electronic help desks and product announcements. Extranet access can be secured so that only valid customers have access to the data, thereby satisfying customer requirements without unduly tipping your hand to the competition.

CONNX + .NET TECHNOLOGY

.NET by itself provides a framework for developing enterprise web based applications. However, enterprise application development requires access to enterprise data. CONNX seamlessly integrates with .NET to extend the power of this web based technology to your legacy data. Out of the box, .NET only provides native support for SQL Server, and OLEDB Providers. Additionally, .NET does not have any native support for ODBC Drivers at all. Microsoft is driving the industry to a pure OLEDB model. Microsoft does provide an add-on called ODBC.NET, which is a special provider that works with ODBC Drivers. However, ODBC.NET does not work with any of the time-saving wizards that are integrated into the .NET development platform. Using ODBC.NET, everything must be done manually, which makes it a less enticing technology. On the contrary, using the native CONNX OLEDB Provider with .NET provides instant access to all of your legacy data sources such as IBM® VSAM, IBM® C-ISAM®, RMS, Oracle® RDB, Dataflex®, PowerFlex®, and Oracle® Codasyl DBMS, and also relational data sources (even those who do not have an OLEDB Providers), such as Microsoft® SQL Server™, Oracle, Sybase®, IBM® Informix®, Microsoft® Access®, Microsoft® Excel®, and text files. Using CONNX with .NET, all of the time saving wizards for creating data connections, and datasets, are at your disposal.

CONNX + .NET + XML

Microsoft provides a complete suite of XML services with .NET. Using ADO.NET, you can take any dataset, and import from and export to XML documents. By using CONNX with .NET, any CONNX query is instantly XML enabled, providing complete XML services to your existing relational and legacy data across the enterprise.

SUMMARY

In summary, what makes CONNX + .NET so appealing is that it enables the very large pool of Microsoft® Visual Basic® and Microsoft® Visual C++® developers simplified entry into Web development. Most companies already have both types of technical resources on staff. CONNX + .NET enables existing staff to make use of existing production data, no matter where it resides; to use solid development techniques for creating client server applications; and to extend those techniques to Web-based application development.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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