CSX Enterprise Framework

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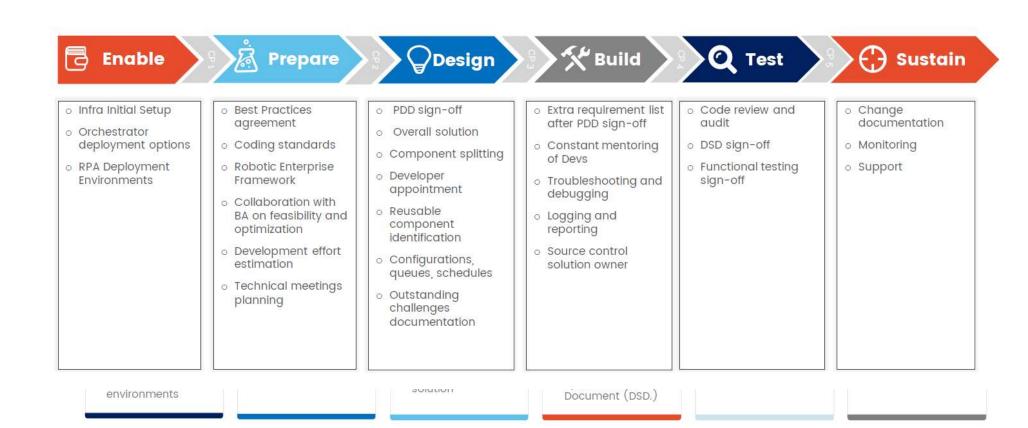
Content

- Solution Architect role
- Transactional processing
- UiPath Framework
- Framework template SCX 0.3f



Solution Architect role

Responsibilities and ownership of the SA





Solution Architect role QA

RPA Test – Quality assurance



Code review

- Thorough code review activity level
- · Follow the agreed standard and guidelines
- Naming strategy
- Optimal techniques
- Hard coded values vs Config
- Assets vs config files
- Duplicated code
- · Scalability and Maintainability
- Clean code



Audit

- · Credentials for applications usage
- Scope limitation of credentials
- Check against exposing sensitive information (send mail, save file, etc.)
- Check against modifying configuration parameters



Solution Architect role Competitive factors

- Using one FW template
- Folder structure
- WF naming convention
- Variable naming convention
- Best practice
- Lessons learned
- Snippets and reusable components
- Quality assurance
- Facilitated support
- Knowledge base and Team capacity



Transaction

Source: training Robotic Enterprise Framework Overview

Transaction Processing

What is a transaction?

A transaction represents the minimum (atomic) amount of data and the necessary steps required to process the data, as to fulfill a section of a business process

We call the data atomic because once it is processed, the assumption is that we no longer need it going forward with the business process.



Transaction example 1

Examples

- Withdrawal from an ATM
 - Authenticate Check the account, plastic, validity, expiration, pin
 - Authorize Check the amount available to withdraw
 - Execute count and release to tray
 - Taken Make sure the customer has taken the money

Breaking obstacles: If there is no enough money available in the machine, the transaction will be cancelled.

The transaction is consider successful only if all steps, E2E, have been executed successfully



Transaction example 2

Real live scenario: We provide a service to thousands of end users and it is time to apply monthly service tax

Charging credit cards with monthly service tax

Each CC will be processed, but some of them may fail for various reasons:

- NW issue with the payment portal (System error)
- One card issuer (Visa) does not respond (System error)
- NW connection with the DB is broken (System error)
- The CC has expired (Business error)
- No enough amount (Business error)
- The CC is locked (Business error)



Transaction example 2

- Now what would happen if the whole charging process stops?
- Can we restart it?
- How to make sure CC will not be re-charged again?
 Identify exactly that charge is not reliable, we do charge
 same end user for other services too, or upon plan
 changes.
- Do we need to retry all failures? May be only those system errors should be retried?
- How can we get visibility how the process is progressing, and the success rate?

Solution is a TASK-TRANSACTION log.



Run the whole process - Linear

Linear

The steps of the process are performed only once and, if there is the need to process different data, the automation needs to be executed again. For example, if we go back to the CC example, and we had a NW issue for one CC, the automation needs to be executed again in order to process it.

Linear processes are usually simple and easy to implement, but **not very suitable** to situations that require repetitions of steps using different data.



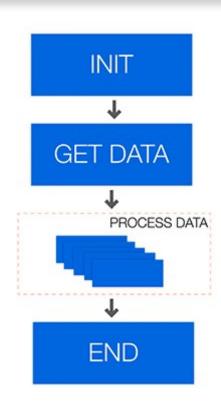


Run the whole process - Iterative

Iterative

The steps of the process are performed multiple times, but each time different data items are used. For example, instead of reading a single CC on each execution, the automation can retrieve multiple CC and iterate through them doing the same steps.

This kind of process can be implemented with a simple loop, but it has the disadvantage that, if a problem happens when processing one item, **the whole process is interrupted** and the other items remain unprocessed



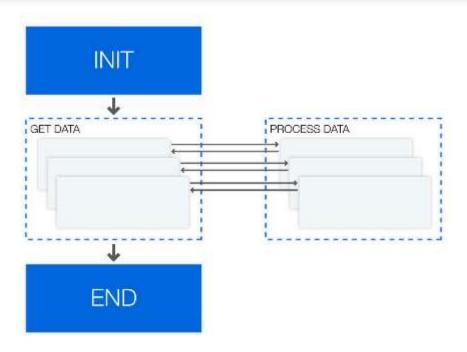


Run the whole process - Transactional

Transactional

Similarly to iterative processes, the steps of transactional processes repeat multiple times over different data items. However, the automation is designed so that each repeatable part is processed independently.

These repeatable parts are then called transactions. Transactions are independent from each other, because they do not share any data or have any particular **order to be processed**.





Run the whole process 1

The three categories of processes can be seen as maturity stages of an automation project, starting with simple linear tasks, which then are repeated multiple times and finally evolve into a transactional approach.



Run the whole process 2

However, this is not an absolute rule for all cases, and the category should be chosen according to the characteristics of the process (e.g., data being processed and frequency of repetitions) and other relevant requirements (e.g., ease of use and robustness).

For example, a process for sending daily report can be Linear.

Nevertheless, if we already have a queue, adding such task is cheap, but would enable:

- Deliver evidence that report has been generated and sent out to the right recipients
- If the process fails, it can be retried
- Can initiate email notification and eventual investigation if the report fails continuously



Business scenarios

What are some business scenarios in which I will use transaction processing?

- You need to read data from several invoices that are in a folder and input that data into another system. Each invoice can be seen as a transaction, because there is a repetitive process for each of them (i.e. extract data and input somewhere else).
- There is a list of people and their email addresses in a spreadsheet, and an email needs to be sent to each of them along with a personalized message. The steps in this process (i.e., get data from spreadsheet, create personalized message and send email) are the same for each person, so each row in the spreadsheet can be considered a transaction.
- When looking for a new apartment, a robot can be used to make a search according to some criteria and, for each result of the search, the robot extracts the information about the property and insert the data into a spreadsheet. In this case, the details page for each property constitutes a transaction.



What is a Framework?

 Generally speaking, a framework is a template that helps you design (automation) processes. At a barebones minimum, a framework should offer a way to store, read, and easily modify project configuration data, a robust exception handling scheme, event logging for all exceptions and relevant transaction information.



How Framework catches exceptions

What is the mechanism to keep the process running

CatchException prj





UiPath REFramework

- The REFramework is implemented as a state machine, which is a type of workflow that has two very useful features:
 - States that define actions to be taken according to the specified input
 - Transitions that move the execution between states depending on the outcomes of the states themselves.
- One of the examples presented was the typical air conditioner:
 - It has the OFF State, from where it moves to an IDLE State by pressing the ON/OFF button;
 - From the IDLE State, it moves to either HEAT or COLD States when the temperature inputted by the user is lower and higher respectively than the current one. Once the desired temperature is achieved, it moves back to the IDLE State;
 - From the IDLE State, it can move to the OFF State when the ON/OFF button is pressed;
- All the conditions that trigger the movements between the states are Transitions.



UiPath REFramework States

Init State

This is where the process starts. It's an operation where the process initializes the settings and performs application checks in order to make sure all the prerequisites for the starting the process are in place.

Get Transaction Data State

Gets the next transaction item. This can be a queue item or any item of a collection. By default, transaction items are queue items, but this can be easily changed to suit your needs. This is also the state in which the Developer should set up the condition to exit

this state when there are no items to process.

Process Transaction State

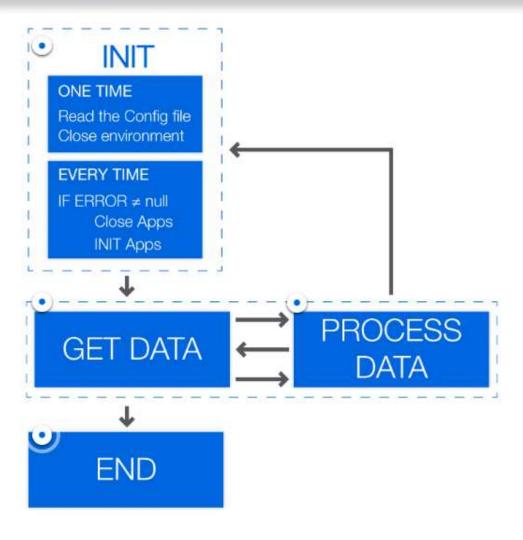
Performs actions/applies logic in various applications for the transaction item obtained at the previous step. Once a transaction item is processed, the process continues with the next available transaction item.

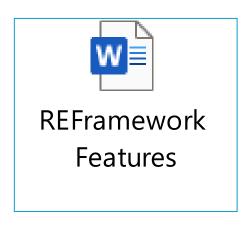
End Process State

The process ends (and the applications opened during the automation should be gracefully closed).



UiPath REFramework States







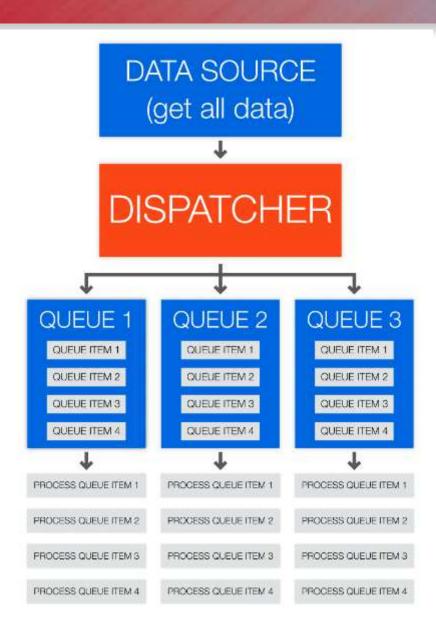
Dispatcher

The dispatcher is a process used to push transaction items to a queue. It extracts data from one or multiple sources and uses it to create Queue items to be processed by Performer robots.

Information is pushed to one or more queues allowing the dispatcher to use a common format for all data stored in queue items.

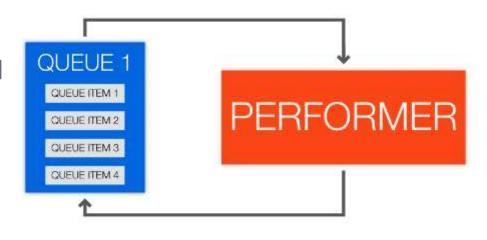
The major advantage of using a dispatcher pattern is that you can **split** the processing of the items between multiple robots





Performer

- The performer is a process used to pull transaction items from a queue and process them as needed in the company. Queue items are processed one at a time.
- It uses error handling and retry mechanisms for each processed item.
- A major advantage of the performer is its scalability (multiple performers can be used with a single queue)



Performer architecture



- Role of state Init
 - To validate all applications (and connections) are alive and the robot can login
 - If possible, leave some apps open for the Dispatcher
- What if we do not validate applications and connections?
 - Risk to get every transaction fail all possible times
 - No point of trying any transaction further
- What if the email does not work?
 - Depends how critical is the role of the email
- What if Init fails?
 - Retry Init, then send email to IT support



- Role of module Dispatcher.xaml
 - Adds transactions to the queue
 - Where Dispatcher should be placed? Init, at the bottom of "First run"
 - To make quick and simple task list
 - To be reliable, collecting minimum information. If it fails, the whole Init would fail as well
 - To avoid multiple processing of same items
- What if Dispatcher fails?
 - No point to continue, unless there are pending transactions, not dependent on the failed app
- How many Dispatchers we may have?
 - As many as Actions we create



- Role of state Get Transaction Data
 - To retrieve a transaction and pass it to Performer. No selection/order criteria in case of Orchestrator.
 - Retrieving the transaction changes its status to "In progress"
- Role of module Process.xaml
 - To initiate any coming transaction. For example "Date-time Process started"
 - There could be logic, but usually there is no business code inside, it simply invokes corresponding application-driven-Process.xaml
 - To pass Result upon success



Dispatcher & performer model advantages:

- 1. Better separation of processes (between dispatcher and performer)
- 2. Better separation & distinction between architecture and process layers
- 3. Better error handling and retry mechanism
- 4. Possibility to run processes across several machines (availability and productivity)
- 5. Better re-usability within your project's created components
- 6. Improved built-in configuration & Orchestrator integration
- 7. Previous workflows created without REFramework can be easily adapted and deployed in order to use REFramework and the dispatcher/performer model



How the REFramework works 2

- Failure in a sub-Process for a single transaction
 - Execution stops immediately
 - You cannot expect any output arguments from any module
 - All local variables are destroyed
 - The execution goes to SetTransactionStatus
 - Application is abandoned in unknown state, next would be closing and reopening all applications. You are not able to perform a rollback.
- What you have left?
 - You have error. Message and error. Source
 - You still have the transaction row, but it is too late for update data are gone
 - Config is also available
- What should you do?
 - Leave a line in field History to explain what happened



How the REFramework works 3

- Keep TR up to date inside the workflow
 - Update data fields as soon as you receive them
 - Update History field with a row after each important stage, to be seen what point you have reached
 - In order to update TR on stages, before anything bad happens, you may need to pass the TR as argument to each business process workflow.
 This may not be necessary for screen layer workflows
 - If you need to perform a rollback upon Business exception easy, just create a clone for "recovery actions" or "rollback", eventually send email, and finally do throw Business exception.
 - If you need to perform a rollback upon System error: Surround the critical workflows with try catch, remember raised Exception into variable, and after "recovery actions" throw same or similar Exception again to break the execution and let the framework to handle it.



Manage exceptions

- You may not have exhaustive list of all exceptions upfront
- Build list of System and Business exceptions during the development as you face or set them.
- Ask the customer of the corresponding actions for each exception. Assume and propose simply stopping the process and leaving a note to the T log.
- Any deviations from out of the box design (simply breaking the execution), like taking "recovery actions" and notifications, can be very expensive in term of effort and project complexity.
- You may end up with a table of exceptions, containing module name, technical reason, business explanation, recovery actions, and notification with list of recipients.



Corporate template SCX 0.3f



Specifics and advantages

- Much cheaper. Designed to use Excel file as a transaction queue, no orchestrator required, providing similar productivity*1 and transactional processing
- More reliable: No single point of failure: instead of NW connection to Orchestrator it uses local resources for transactional processing.
- The queue can be used as a pre-built reporting tool. Filtering might be required.



Specifics and advantages

- The config file allows switching between testing and production environment
- The config file allows mode switch regarding step-bystep execution (Dialog mode) and Debug mode (for troubleshooting with detail output)
- The data folder placement is flexible
- Multipurpose queue: allows reusing the same queue for various processes
- Can be easily re-integrated with Orchestrator



Can avoid duplicate transactions

Problem: The dispatcher would take all items (for example Requests) from the application after filtering, then will put them into the queue. What if after processing the **same items** appear each time we open the application? If this is an Orchestrator queue, there would be duplication, i.e. requests would be added, then processed, each time the dispatcher runs.

Solution: SCX framework checks for item duplication, using various criteria, for example when the item was last updated. This check is located in module QAddTransaction, using "Select" statement.



- Can get next transaction based on criteria or order. For example Failed first, Pending first, etc.
- Can check previous transactions for existence of same ticket/request. For example, can find how many documents were uploaded recently for this request, and expect same amount in current download. Allows cross-transaction data usage.
- Can filter existing transactions on specific status and trigger actions. For example, if there are requests in pending signature, can send emails to corresponding agents. Cross-transaction data usage again.
- Can make several attempts to run Init state
- Facilitated support (modular, folder, naming)



Disadvantages

- The excel file may get corrupted
 - SCX framework does not engage Excel.
 Nevertheless, be careful how you use Excel
 - Make file backup once a day. Delete old backups
- The excel file may become too slow, if more than 10 thousand rows
 - Backup the file periodically, then use a new queue from template

Solution: SCX Framework 4 using SQL server



Exotic frameworks

1

Case pre-building task list is impossible

Scenario: At Post Bank there is a button, which shows just one Credit Card that need to be processed.

Solution: Place the Dispatcher in Get Transaction Data (see next slide)

Common\Framework\Framework\SCX 0.3c example SingleTID.zip

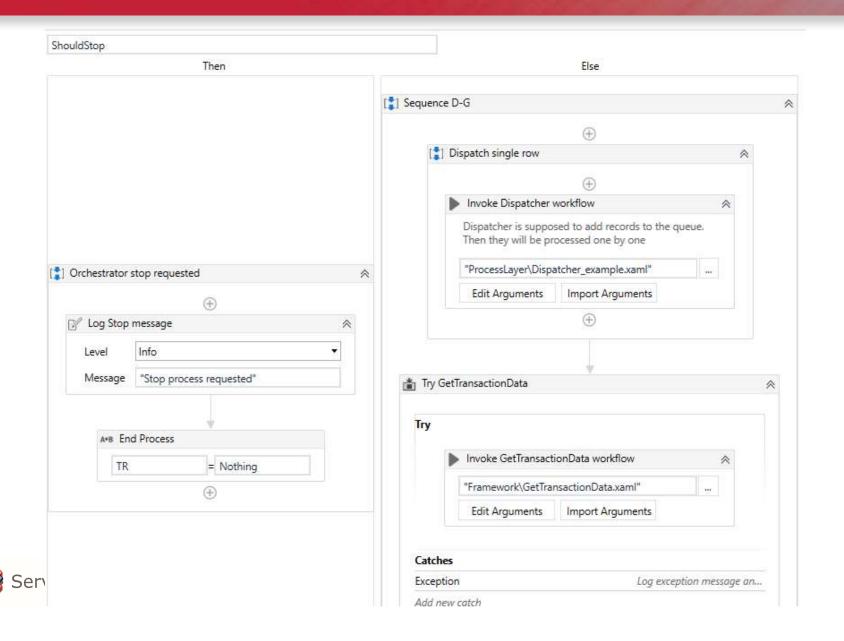
 Case a transaction need to be put in sleeping state, then checked each time the process runs

Scenario: Robot 1 has uploaded documents for end user signature, and checks periodically if they have been signed or not yet

Solution: Implementing status "Pending" plus field "MainRunTime" to avoid cycling on same Get Transaction.



Framework SingleTID



Exotic frameworks MultiAction

 Case the process is split into several sequent and relatively independent Actions

Scenario 1: Upon transaction successful completion a new transaction should be generated for a follow up process.

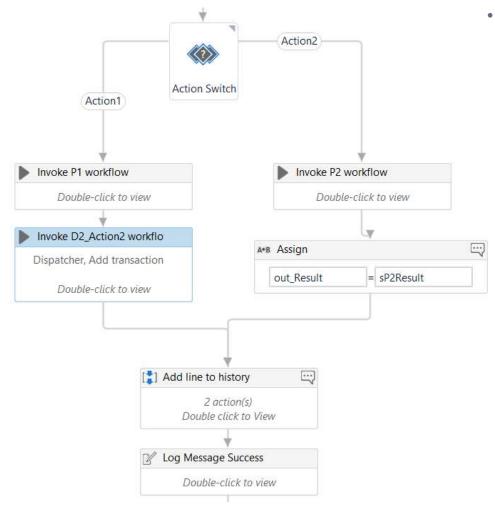
Scenario 2: The process is too heavy/complex to be executed as a single transaction. It is much better to be split into several steps, where each one can fail and then retried.

Solution:

Use MultiAction queue. It has field "Action" that indicates which Action-Process.xaml should be invoked. Each such process ends with adding the next action-transaction



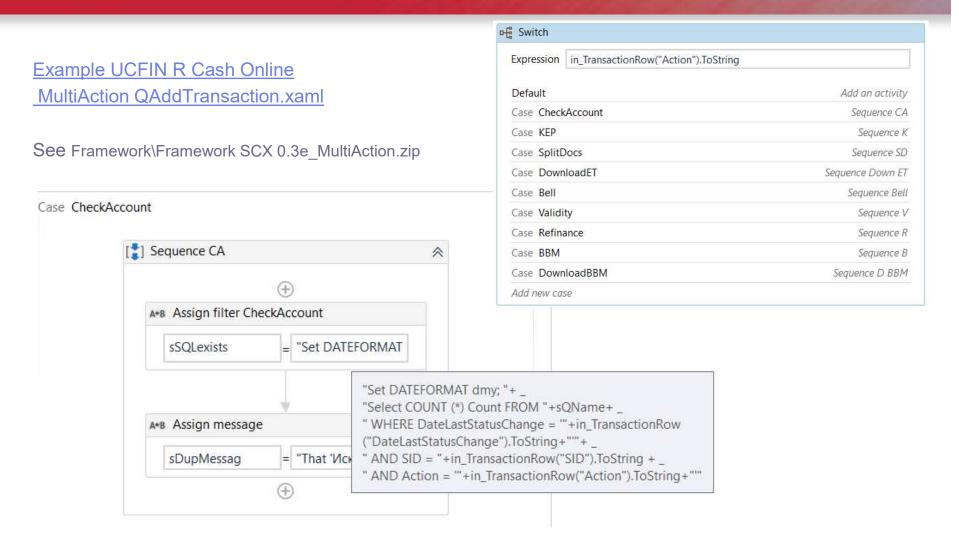
Framework MultiAction 2



example MultiAction QAddTransaction.xaml



Framework MultiAction 3





Exotic frameworks Pending

Case process need to wait, Pending status
 Implemented in SCX 0.3f

Challenge: Avoid taking the same transaction in Pending status indefinitely

- In Main run time is remembered
- Argument in_MainRunTime is passed to QGetTransaction.xaml,
 which does not take those in pending withing same Runtime

```
"[Status] = 'New'
OR ( [Status] = 'Pending' AND [MainRunTime] < ""+in_MainRunTime.ToString("yyyy-MM-dd HH:mm:ss")+"' )"
```

 Whenever status is put back to Pending, MainRunTime is updated by SetTransactionStatus.xaml



Exotic frameworks 2 frameworks

 Case Dispatcher is complex and may fail at specific item, or need to process exceptions

Examples

- Exceptions: Processing each email, downloading attachments, validate their content, then finally adding transaction rows or eventually replying back to the sender
- Separate schedule: Dispatcher should run many times throughout the day, then the process should run just once

Solution

- Put the Dispatcher in a separate framework
- The Data folder can be shared (config file)



Framework challenges 1

- Sometimes a failure may require **reverse** actions to be performed, before marking the transaction as failed.
- If it is about a **business issue**, where throwing the error is more or less under control, such code can be placed in the workflow itself, right before throwing the BE.
- In case of **system error**, the execution will return back to SetTrasnactionStatus.xaml, but it would be hard to determine what has happened and where, since output arguments from the failed workflow cannot be passed. We may know only its name, and the message. Both are not reliable, moreover, maybe even we have lost control over the application. In such case, the solution is to **surround the critical pace with Try-catch** and take reverse actions immediately after catching the error. Hereby we can put the right comment into the transaction row, as well as to send a warning email notification, along with exception's details.



SCX Framework 0.3f Config file

- Two environments. Switching is easy
- Dialog mode, Debug mode
- Queue definition with predefined fields



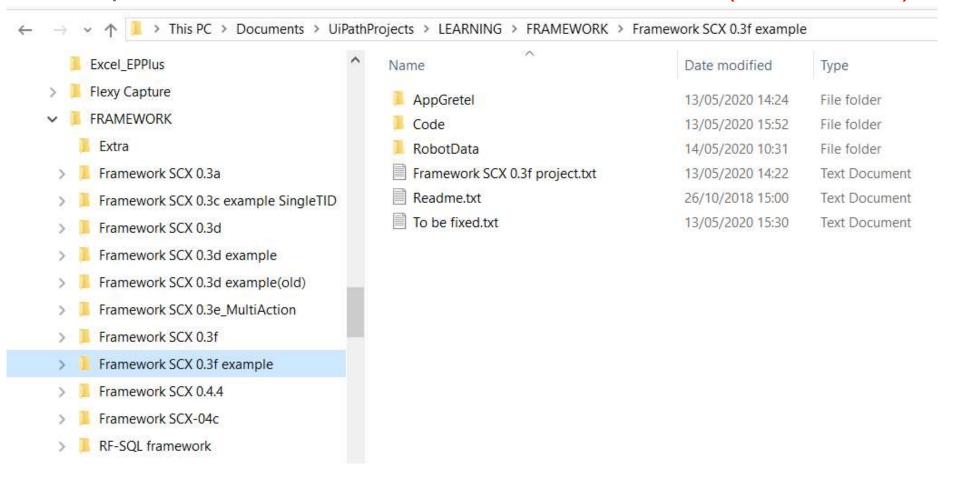
Using SCX Framework 0.3f Folders and config file location

- Finding Config file is hardcoded in InitAllSetting.xaml
- Row "DataPath" exists in config file solely to indicate it will be filled automatically
- Why DataPath is not retrieved from Config file?
- Config.xlsx is always in the data folder
- Last action in InitAllSetting.xaml sets default DateTime order dd/MM/yyyy, instead of default US order month-day
- Folder Code can be renamed
- Folder RobotData can be renamed, if DataPath.ini is used
- Keep both Code and Data folder on non-system drive
- Folder Documentation is good for BR, release information, Ops manual, etc.



Using SCX Framework 0.3f Data folder and config file location O1

Option 1: One folder for both Code and Data (Unattended)





Using SCX Framework 0.3f Data folder and config file location O1

Advantages

- Keep the folder structure simple, it works from any root folder
- Can have several independent robots/frameworks on same machine
- Compact. Moving robot to another machine is easy
- Disadvantages
 - Will not work if project packed then run from robot tray.
 - Why?



PackageLocation.PNG

How to set?

This is by default

(file name is Code\DataPath.ini.notused)



Using SCX Framework 0.3f Data folder and config file location O2

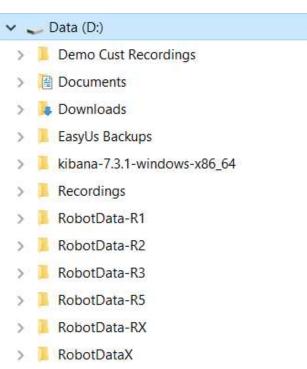
Option 2: Any folder for Code and specific folder Data

(Attended)

- Advantages
 - Can have several independent robots/frameworks on same machine
 - Works from schedule, starting Main.xaml
 - Works as a robot package from system tray
- Disadvantages
 - Moving to another machine is more complex
 - Robots may use wrong data folder
 Solution: there is value *RobotName* in config
- How to set?

Rename file *Code\DataPath.ini*.notused to *DataPath.ini* and enter the full path to the data folder





Using SCX Framework 0.3f

Design the queue

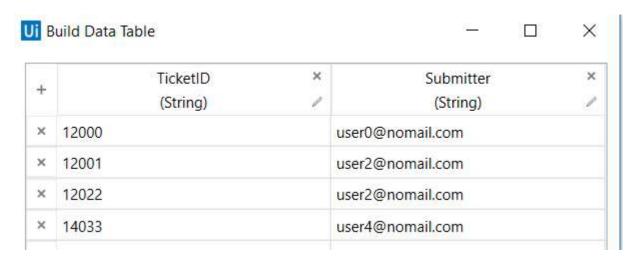
- Determine what is going to be the scope of a single transaction.
- If we need to use multiple records per transaction, like many items per one purchase order, we can store these items as an excel file, named with the transaction id and located in folder Temp *1.
- Fill tab QueueDefinition
- Make fields for critical values. Short list can be stored in a single string field
- Always store Date-time values as a Datetime filed, to be able to compare them and avoid formatting issues.
- Fields like Item id, for example RequestID, TicketID, etc. is more practical to be stored as strings
- The queue file will be created upon first call of QAddTransaction

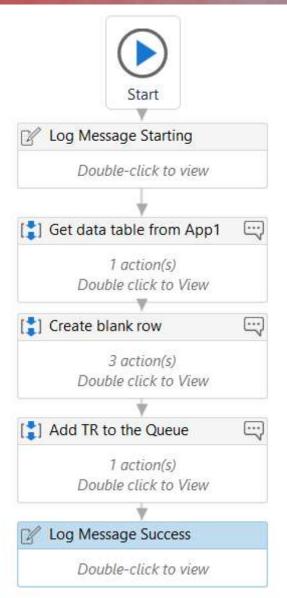


Make Dispatcher

Look at file "Framework SCX 0.3 example.zip" Dispatcher.xaml

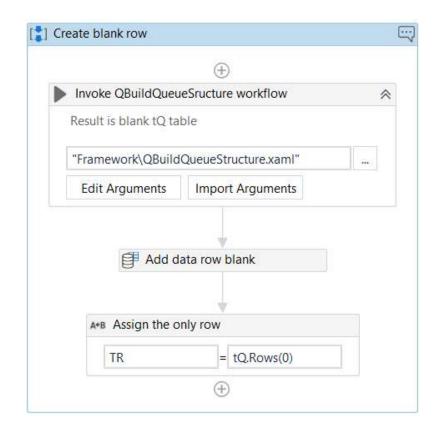
 Get data table from App1 is a dummy sequence. In reality you should set a filter and get records that need to be processed into a table t1. For demo purposes the job is done by this activity:





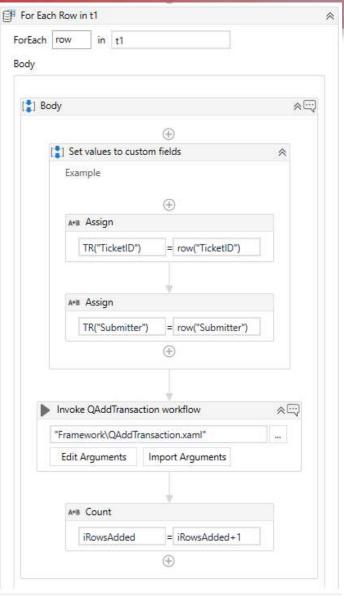


- A blank transaction row is created. Same row will be reused many times
- QBuildQueueStructure will provide an empty table tQ, which is built with all fields and data types according to the config file.
- Each time you need to add records to the queue (in each Dispatcher) you have to use that sequense





- Each record, retrieved from our application, will be set as value to our Transaction Row (TR), then added as a new transaction to the queue
- You do not need to take care about "mandatory fields", they will be populated automatically, according to the rules of table tQ.





- Why simply reading from the queue file should not be used?
- Reading a range from Excel file would provide field names without data type, i.e. all fields in the resulting table would be data type "Object".
- Using QBuildQueueStructure will enforce DataType for each field

Demo ExcelReadRange.xaml



- Make your own dispatcher
- Test your dispatcher, running

Process\TestInvoke\TestInvoke_Dispatcher.xaml

- Modify query
 - Delete all rows: Do not delete content, mark the waste rows and delete them
 - Delete all rows or the last ones, but not in the middle. This would break the queue: ThransactionID must confirm to same row number+2
 - Add/remove/modify fields

You can either modify config file, then regenerate the queue, or edit config file and update the queue file accordingly

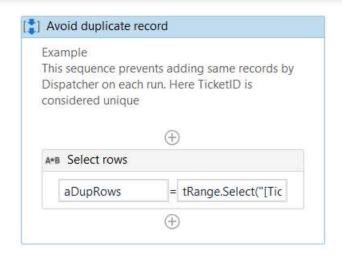


Customize QAddTransaction

This is necessary if you want to avoid adding same records each time you run the dispatcher.
Customize the select statement. Currently it checks for same TicketID:

tRange.Select("[TicketID] = "'+in_TR("TicketID").ToString +"' ")

In case of MultiAction queue, you can use a switch







Using SCX Framework 0.3f Performer

Customize Process

- Keep it simple. Build it up invoking workflows
- Assign argument out_Result, if you want to replace default Result value "Record processed" with something else, for example "Request approved"
- Be aware if BE or SE happens anywhere, no arguments will be returned
- Pass TR to invoked workflows, if you want them to be able updating the transaction with their own history, as well as other fields. Recommended for **Business** layer workflows. Otherwise get out argument from them and update TR in Process.



Using SCX Framework 0.3f Modular structure

- Why we need modules?
 - Stable during modification
 - Version control
 - Avoid code duplication
- Application and business modules
 - Always use framework
 - For new modules start form template. Mandatory argument is in_config, and optional is in_TR
 - Place all application-related workflows in one folder, for example App1SAP
 - Non application-related workflows should be in folder Common



Workflow abstraction

2. Business Process layer: Modeling of the business process rules - a flowchart integrating other components from the other levels.

4. Application Process layer:

Components working with applications and implementing process rules. The argument names can be related to the business process. This component will navigate, write and extract.

 Data layer: Interact only with easily accessible (local) data.
 Orchestrator activities allowed.
 Not for application interaction. Framework layer: High level State
 Machine using the REFrameWork with overall exception handling.

3. Services layer: Additional service components with internal exception handling. State machine template.

5. Application Screen layer: Generic components where arguments are not related to the business process rules. Separate workflows can be created to navigate, input, and extract data.



SCX Framework 0.3f Unit testing

- Make unit testing of each module
 - For each module create calling workflow for unit testing, in folder TestInvoke. Use snippets template and name it as module's name.
 - The test module may pass a TR, and save the result into TR.xlsx

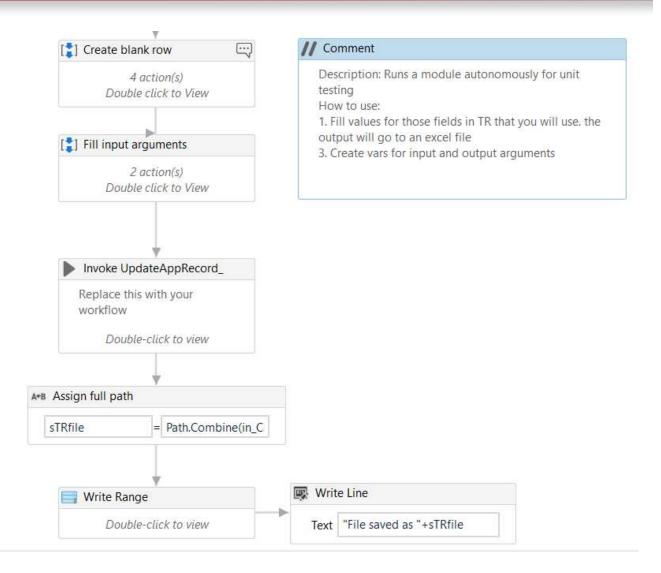
See template Code\Snippets\TestInvoke_TR_X.xaml Here is the output produced:

Transactio CreatedDate	Status	FailureType Result	History	Retries	TicketID
			04/05/2020 17:54:19 First run		
0 04/05/2020 17:5	4 New		04/05/2020 17:54:22 Step 1: Record was submitted	O	0001



SCX Framework 0.3f Unit testing

TestInvoke_TR_X.xaml





SCX Framework 0.3f UiPath package version

- Update Activity packages. In SCX framework they are 18.x, but can be updated to 19.x or 20.x
- Set Runtime rule, for a robot should be "Strict"
- Remove not used dependencies
- Upon first framework load you can even delete project.json, if you want to use your already installed packages, or if your Studio version is too old
- Dependencies

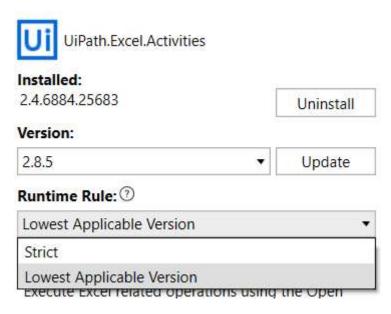
 UiPath.Credentials.Activities = 1.1.6479.13204

 UiPath.Excel.Activities = 2.4.6884.25683

 UiPath.Mail.Activities = 1.2.6863.29868

 UiPath.System.Activities = 18.4.1

 UiPath.UlAutomation.Activities = 18.4.2





SCX Framework 0.3f Recap

- Create folder structure, Datapath.ini
- Design queue (part of solution design)
- Config: Set queue name and fields
- Config: Set app URL, credentials, etc.
- Make screen layer workflows (Login_Appx, FindRecord, GoToDetials, etc.
- Make Business layer workflows (ReadData, Calculate...) they may need TR passed
- Build Dispatcher, set AvoidDuplications (QAddTransaction.xaml), Unit test, integrate in Framework
- Build Process, Unit test, integrate in Framework



Thank you!

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