What is WCF in simple terms?

Asked 16 years, 3 months ago   Modified 6 years, 11 months ago

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What is WCF in simple terms?

It's hard to distill the meaning from [the Wikipedia page](#).

.net   wcf

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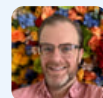
See the [WCF Tag Page](#). – John Saunders Sep 16, 2010 at 5:28

5 Answers

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29

WCF - [Windows Communication Framework](#) - is Microsoft's framework to make inter-process communication easier. It let's you do this communication

through various means, plain old asmx web services, Remoting, MS Message Queuing, and a couple more.

It let's you talk with other .NET apps, or non-Microsoft technologies (like J2EE). It's extensible enough to allow for newer stuff, like REST too (I don't think REST is built-in).

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answered Sep 3, 2008 at 22:33

swilliams
48.8k ● 27 ● 102 ● 130

13   REST is built in with .NET v3.5 – Eric Schoonover Sep 17, 2008 at 7:34

WCF allows you to create "services" without specifying that it's a Windows service or a Web service, or which protocols are used to communicate with it or how the data is serialized.

All those details may be specified externally, either programmatically in a service host or via the config file.

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answered Sep 3, 2008 at 22:27

Mark Cidade
99.8k ● 33 ● 229 ● 237

I would recommed you to read about Indigo (the first WCF name). This is the case when an old article can explain the definition better than wikipedia.

4 Here is the complete [article](#).

> "Indigo," Microsoft's unified programming model for building ***service-oriented*** applications.

But what does "service-oriented" mean?

> Choosing the best abstractions for building software is an ongoing process. Objects are the dominant approach today for building an application's business logic, but modeling application-to-application communication using objects hasn't been as successful. **A better approach is to explicitly model interactions between discrete chunks of software as services**.

Plenty of support already (2005) exists for building object-oriented applications, ***but thinking of services as a fundamental software building block*** is a more recent idea. Because of this, technologies explicitly designed to create service-oriented applications haven't been widely available.

1. Indigo is also a combination of 5 techonologies.

	ASP.NET Web services	.NET Remoting	Enterprise Services	WSE	MSMQ	Indigo
Interoperable Web Services	X					X
.NET – .NET Communication		X				X
Distributed Transactions, etc.			X			X
Support for WS-* Specifications				X		X
Queued Messaging					X	X

All of these options had value, yet the diversity was certainly confusing to developers. Why have so many choices? A better solution would be to have one technology that addresses all of these problems. That is WCF.

2. Interoperability with Non-Microsoft Applications

Making life easier for Windows developers by unifying disparate technologies is a good thing. But with the universal agreement among vendors on Web services, the long-standing problem of application interoperability can also be solved. (example is communication of .NET windows application with Java application on Linux or other operating systems).

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edited Jan 26, 2016 at 20:21

answered Jan 26, 2016 at 19:51

Anton Lyhin

1,935 ● 2 ● 29 ● 36

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WCF stands for Windows Communication Foundation. It's Microsoft's attempt to sort out and simplify network programming. It provides an easy to use level of abstraction over different communication protocols and transportation methods. It allows you to concentrate more on *what* you want to implement rather than thinking on *how* to implement it. Read Microsoft's [WCF FAQ](#) for more info.

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WCF is Microsoft's new .NET do-all extensible communications framework meant to replace functionality previously available in [DCOM](#), [.NET Remoting](#) and ASMX web services.

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