Flex in a Week, Flex 4

Video 1.08: Laying out a form in Flash Builder Design mode

In this video, you will learn how to lay out your application using Design mode and the pre-built Flex components.

This will include using the video playback components.

Overview.camrec

This is the Company Vehicle Request Form that I will build upon in the next several videos.

It allows employees of a fictional company to reserve a company car for a period of time.

The Employee DropDownList control is populated with data that comes from an XML file and when I select an employee from the list, the employee's phone number populates the Office Phone field.

Note that my form doesn't look exactly like the form that you will build in the associated exercise.

Due to my smaller presentation screen size, I have moved the video clip up in the display and made it smaller.

I have also modified my application skin – this yellow background with rounded corners – but I will discuss that with you in the next video.

In this video, I will focus just on laying out the interface.

All of the display elements are MX and Spark components, which you learned about in the last video.

You will learn about modifying the default look-and-feel of the components and adding the data in later videos.

Switch_to_Design_mode.camrec

This is the starter file for the main application.

You can see that it contains the Application tag block, and the Declarations block, which you will learn about later.

I am clicking on the Design button in the Editor view to switch to Design mode.

In the Components view I am looking in the Controls branch and dragging a Label control onto the Design area.

I am dropping it in the upper left corner.

With the Label selected, you can see that the Properties view shows the properties for the Label control.

Notice that it is a component in the Spark namespace.

I am giving the text field a text value of Company Vehicle Request Form and then hitting the Enter, or Return, key.

You will see that the new value is reflected in the Design area.

In the Style segment of the Properties view, I am changing the text color to blue, the font size to 16 and clicking the first T button to set the font weight to bold.

All of these changes are reflected in the Design area.

Position_the_Label_control.camrec

Watch the control in the Design area as I perform the next steps.

Still within the Properties view, I am using the Size and Position segment to set the control's X value to 80 and its Y value to 34.

These numbers are set in pixels.

The control has moved to the specified x/y coordinate.

Flash applications can layout components either using absolute positioning with x/y properties or using relative positioning.

You will learn more about both as this video training series progresses.

For now, note that the 0,0 point of any Flash component is its upper left corner.

The x value increases as you move to the right and the y value increases as you move down.

You can supply negative values to move components off screen, which can be very valuable for animation purposes.

Add_a_Form_container.camrec

From the Components view Layout branch, I am dragging a Form container below the Label control and using the blue guide lines to align the controls to their left edges.

The Insert Form dialog appeared when I dropped the component into the Design area.

I am clicking the OK button to keep the default values, which will automatically resize this form container to fit its children.

Look at the Properties view.

You can see that the Form container is in the MX namespace.

Remember that you can mix and match the components from the different namespaces in the same application.

You will learn more about these rules throughout the series.

There are two types of components in Flex: containers and controls.

Controls are UI elements like Button, ColorPicker and DataGrid.

Containers, like this Form component, are used to layout controls and have specific formatting results.

The first child control that I am placing in the Form container is Spark component named DropDownList control.

Watch the blue guidelines I am using to ensure that the DropDownList control is placed inside the Form container.

Watch me as I click on the label to the left of the control to select the FormItem container that was automatically added to the display.

In the Properties view, I am typing Employee: for the Label property.

Now I will walk through laying out the rest of the form.

I am dragging a FormHeading control from the Layout branch and dropping it below the DropDownList control.

This will add a bold header to my form and acts as a separator between parts of the form.

Using the Properties view, I am changing the FormHeading control's Label property to Personal Information.

Next, I'm dragging a TextInput control below the FormHeading control.

When I click on the label next to it, I am selecting the FormItem container and changing its value to Office Phone:.

I'm adding a second TextInput control and changing it's associated label to Mobile Phone:.

Add_DateChoosers.camrec

I am adding a second FormHeading control to the form below the last control.

I am changing its value to Dates Requested

Below that, I am dragging a DateChooser control and giving it a label of Pickup Date:.

The second DateChooser control will be labeled Return Date:.

Add_button.camrec

```
 <mx:FormItem>
    <s:Button label="Submit Request"/>
</mx:FormItem>
```

Next, I am going to add a Button control using Source mode.

Doing this in Source mode will allow me to avoid the label value from the FormItem container that is automatically added for you when you drop a control into the Form container in Design mode.

I'm clicking on the Source button in the Editor.

You can see all the form code with each UI control that you added to the form surrounded by a FormItem container with a label.

I'm adding an MX FormItem container tag block and then adding a Spark Button control inside of it with a label property of Submit Request.

When I save the file and run the application, you can see the form is displayed in the browser.

You will probably notice that the application doesn't automatically display a scrollbar.

If your browser window is small enough, there is no way for you to access the rest of the form.

You will learn how to add scrollbars to your application towards the end of this day of training.

Add_VideoDisplay.camrec

The last element that I will add to the application is a video.

As I mentioned earlier, I am going to place my video in a different place, and with smaller dimensions than you will in the associated exercise.

This is simply because I have a small presentation window.

I am switching back to Design mode and then dragging the VideoDisplay control to the Design area and dropping it to the right of the Form container.

In the Properties view, I am setting the Source property value to a Flash video file that is stored on a remote server (http://www.adobetes.com/f4iaw100/ex1_02_video.flv).

I'm setting the x and y values – excuse me! – the width and height values to 325 and 267, respectively, like you will in the exercise.

However, again, because my area for viewing is so small, I'm going to hold down the Shift key and then drag from a corner to resize the video.

Like in many visual design tools, holding down the Shift key when you resize something will keep the element dimensions proportional.

I am also going to set the Muted property to true so that I can speak over the video playback.

When I save the file and run the application, you can see that the video control doesn't have any playback controls.

Add_VideoPlayer.camrec
Back in Flash Builder, I have deleted the VideoDisplay control and am dragging the VideoPlayer control to the Design area.

Again, I will set the Source property value to the Flash video file that is stored on a remote server (http://www.adobetes.com/f4iaw100/ex1_02_video.flv).

Now I am resizing the control to be 290 pixels wide by 227 pixels tall and then setting the Muted property to true.

When I save the file and run the application.
You can see the VideoPlayer control has a play/pause button, a seek bar, volume controls and a full screen option.

Next_step.camrec

Next step

Video: Introducing styling and skinning

For your next step, watch the video titled "Introducing styling and skinning".