

Chapter 18

MVVM

Can you remember your earliest experiences with programming? It's likely that your main goal was just getting the program working, and then getting it working correctly. You probably didn't think much about the organization or structure of the program. That was something that came later.

The computer industry as a whole has gone through a similar evolution. As developers, we all now realize that once an application begins growing in size, it's usually a good idea to impose some kind of structure or architecture on the code. Experience with this process suggests that it's often a good idea to start thinking about this architecture perhaps before any code is written at all. In most cases, this structure strives for a "separation of concerns" where different pieces of the program focus on different sorts of tasks.

In a graphically interactive program, one obvious technique is to separate the user interface from underlying non-user-interface logic, sometimes called *business logic*. The first formal description of such an architecture for graphical user interfaces was called Model-View-Controller (MVC), but this architecture has since given rise to others derived from it.

To some extent, the nature of the programming interface itself influences the application architecture. For example, a programming interface that includes a markup language with data bindings might suggest a particular way to structure an application.

There is indeed an architectural model that was designed specifically with XAML in mind. This is known as Model-View-ViewModel or MVVM. This chapter covers the basics of MVVM (including the command interface), but you'll see more MVVM in the next chapter on collection views. Also, some other features of *Xamarin.Forms* are often used in conjunction with MVVM; these features include *triggers* and *behaviors*, and they are the subject of a future chapter.

MVVM interrelationships

MVVM divides an application into three layers:

- The Model provides underlying data, sometimes involving file or web accesses.
- The ViewModel connects the Model and the View. It helps to manage the data from the Model to make it more amenable to the View, and vice versa.
- The View is the user-interface or presentation layer, generally implemented in XAML.

The Model is ignorant of the ViewModel. In other words, the Model knows nothing about the public properties and methods of the ViewModel, and certainly nothing about its internal workings. Similarly, the ViewModel is ignorant of the View. If all the communication between the three layers occurs through method calls and property accesses, then calls in only one direction are allowed. The View only makes calls into the ViewModel, or accesses properties of the ViewModel, and the ViewModel similarly only makes calls into the Model, or accesses Model properties:



These method calls allow the View to get information from the ViewModel, which in turn gets information from the Model.

In modern environments, however, data is often dynamic. Often the Model will obtain more or newer data that must be communicated through the ViewModel and eventually to the View. For this reason, the View can attach handlers to events that are implemented in the ViewModel, and the ViewModel can attach handlers to events defined by the Model. This allows two-way communication while continuing to hide the View from the ViewModel, and the ViewModel from the Model:



MVVM was designed to take advantage of XAML and particularly XAML-based data bindings. Generally, the View is a page class that uses XAML to construct the user interface. Therefore, the connection between the View and the ViewModel consists largely—and perhaps exclusively—of XAML-based data bindings:



Programmers who are very passionate about MVVM often have an informal goal of expressing all interactions between the View and the ViewModel in a page class with XAML-based data bindings, and in the process reducing the code in the page's code-behind file to a simple `InitializeComponent` call. This goal is difficult to achieve in real-life programming, but it's a pleasure when it happens.

Small programs—such as those in a book like this—often become larger when MVVM is introduced. Do not let this discourage your use of MVVM! Use the examples here to help you determine how MVVM can be used in a larger program, and you'll eventually see that it helps enormously in architecting your applications.

ViewModels and data binding

In many simpler demonstrations of MVVM, the Model is absent or only implied, and the ViewModel contains all the business logic. The View and the ViewModel communicate through XAML-based data bindings. The visual elements in the View are data-binding targets, and properties in the ViewModel are data-binding sources.

Ideally, a ViewModel should be independent of any particular platform. This independence allows ViewModels to be shared among multiple XAML-based environments (such as Silverlight or Windows) in addition to Xamarin.Forms. For this reason, you should try to avoid using the following statement in your ViewModels:

```
using Xamarin.Forms;
```

That rule is frequently broken in this chapter! One of the ViewModels is based on the `Xamarin.Forms.Color` structure, and another uses `Device.StartTimer`. So let's call the avoidance of anything specific to Xamarin.Forms in the ViewModel a "suggestion" rather than a "rule."

Visual elements in the View qualify as data-binding targets because the properties of these visual elements are backed by bindable properties. To be a data-binding source, a ViewModel must implement a notification protocol to signal when a property in the ViewModel has changed. This notification protocol is the `INotifyPropertyChanged` interface, which is defined in the `System.ComponentModel` namespace very simply with just one event:

```
public interface INotifyPropertyChanged
{
    event PropertyChangedEventHandler PropertyChanged;
}
```

The `INotifyPropertyChanged` interface is so central to MVVM that in informal discussions it is often abbreviated INPC.

The `PropertyChanged` event is of type `PropertyChangedEventHandler`. The event handler gets an instance of the `PropertyChangedEventArgs` class, which defines a single property named `PropertyName` of type `string` indicating what property in the ViewModel has changed. The event handler can then access that property.

A class that implements `INotifyPropertyChanged` should fire a `PropertyChanged` event whenever a public property changes, but the class should *not* fire the event when the property is merely set

but not changed.

Some classes define properties that are initialized in the constructor and then never change. Those properties do not need to fire `PropertyChanged` events because a `PropertyChanged` handler can only be attached after the code in the constructor finishes, and the property never changes after that time.

In theory, a `ViewModel` class can be derived from `BindableObject` and implement its public properties as `BindableProperty` objects. `BindableObject` implements `INotifyPropertyChanged` and automatically fires a `PropertyChanged` event when any property backed by a `BindableProperty` changes. But deriving from `BindableObject` is overkill for a `ViewModel`. Because `BindableObject` and `BindableProperty` are specific to `Xamarin.Forms`, such a `ViewModel` is no longer platform independent, and the technique provides no real advantages over a simpler implementation of `INotifyPropertyChanged`.

A ViewModel clock

Suppose you are writing a program that needs access to the current date and time, and you'd like to use that information through data bindings. The .NET base class library provides date and time information through the `DateTime` structure. To get the current date and time, just access the `DateTime.Now` property. That's the customary way to write a clock application.

But for data-binding purposes, `DateTime` has a severe flaw: It provides just static information with no notification when the date or time has changed.

In the context of MVVM, the `DateTime` structure perhaps qualifies as a Model in the sense that `DateTime` provides all the data we need but not in a form that's conducive to data bindings. It's necessary to write a `ViewModel` that makes use of `DateTime` but provides notifications when the date or time has changed.

The **Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit** library contains the `DateTimeViewModel` class shown below. The class has only one property named `DateTime` of type `DateTime`, but this property dynamically changes as a result of frequent calls to `DateTime.Now` in a `Device.StartTimer` callback.

Notice that the `DateTimeViewModel` class is based on the `INotifyPropertyChanged` interface and includes a `using` directive for the `System.ComponentModel` namespace that defines this interface. To implement this interface, the class defines a public event named `PropertyChanged`.

Watch out: It is very easy to define a `PropertyChanged` event in your class without explicitly specifying that the class implements `INotifyPropertyChanged`! The notifications will be ignored if you don't explicitly specify that the class is based on the `INotifyPropertyChanged` interface:

```
using System;
using System.ComponentModel;
using Xamarin.Forms;
```

```

namespace Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit
{
    public class DateTimeViewModel : INotifyPropertyChanged
    {
        DateTime dateTime = DateTime.Now;

        public event PropertyChangedEventHandler PropertyChanged;

        public DateTimeViewModel()
        {
            Device.StartTimer(TimeSpan.FromMilliseconds(15), OnTimerTick);
        }

        bool OnTimerTick()
        {
            DateTime = DateTime.Now;
            return true;
        }

        public DateTime DateTime
        {
            private set
            {
                if (dateTime != value)
                {
                    dateTime = value;

                    // Fire the event.
                    PropertyChangedEventHandler handler = PropertyChanged;

                    if (handler != null)
                    {
                        handler(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs("DateTime"));
                    }
                }
            }

            get
            {
                return dateTime;
            }
        }
    }
}

```

The only public property in this class is called `DateTime` of type `DateTime`, and it is associated with a private backing field named `dateTime`. Public properties in ViewModels usually have private backing fields. The `set` accessor of the `DateTime` property is private to the class, and it's updated every 15 milliseconds from the timer callback.

Other than that, the `set` accessor is constructed in a very standard way for ViewModels: It first checks if the value being set to the property is different from the `dateTime` backing field. If not, it sets that backing field from the incoming value and fires the `PropertyChanged` handler with the name of the property. It is considered very bad practice to fire the `PropertyChanged` handler if the property is merely being set to its existing value, and it might even lead to problems involving infinite cycles of recursive property settings in two-way bindings.

This is the code in the `set` accessor that fires the event:

```
PropertyChangedEventHandler handler = PropertyChanged;

if (handler != null)
{
    handler(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs("DateTime"));
}
```

That form is preferable to code such as this that doesn't save the handler in a separate variable:

```
if (PropertyChanged != null)
{
    PropertyChanged(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs("DateTime"));
}
```

In a multithreaded environment, a `PropertyChanged` handler might be detached between the `if` statement that checks for a `null` value and the actual firing of the event. Saving the handler in a separate variable prevents that from causing a problem, so it's a good habit to adopt even if you're not yet working in a multithreaded environment.

The `get` accessor simply returns the `dateTime` backing field.

The **MvvmClock** program demonstrates how the `DateTimeViewModel` class is capable of providing updated date and time information to the user interface through data bindings:

```
<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             xmlns:sys="clr-namespace:System;assembly=mscorlib"
             xmlns:toolkit=
                 "clr-namespace:Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit;assembly=Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit"
             x:Class="MvvmClock.MvvmClockPage">

    <ContentPage.Resources>
        <ResourceDictionary>
            <toolkit:DateTimeViewModel x:Key="dateTimeViewModel" />

            <Style TargetType="Label">
                <Setter Property="FontSize" Value="Large" />
                <Setter Property="XAlign" Value="Center" />
            </Style>
        </ResourceDictionary>
    </ContentPage.Resources>
```

```

<StackLayout VerticalOptions="Center">
    <Label Text="{Binding Source={x:Static sys:DateTime.Now},
        StringFormat='This program started at {0:F}'}" />

    <Label Text="But now..." />

    <Label Text="{Binding Source={StaticResource dateTimeViewModel},
        Path=DateTime.Hour,
        StringFormat='The hour is {0}'}" />

    <Label Text="{Binding Source={StaticResource dateTimeViewModel},
        Path=DateTime.Minute,
        StringFormat='The minute is {0}'}" />

    <Label Text="{Binding Source={StaticResource dateTimeViewModel},
        Path=DateTime.Second,
        StringFormat='The seconds are {0}'}" />

    <Label Text="{Binding Source={StaticResource dateTimeViewModel},
        Path=DateTime.Millisecond,
        StringFormat='The milliseconds are {0}'}" />

</StackLayout>
</ContentPage>

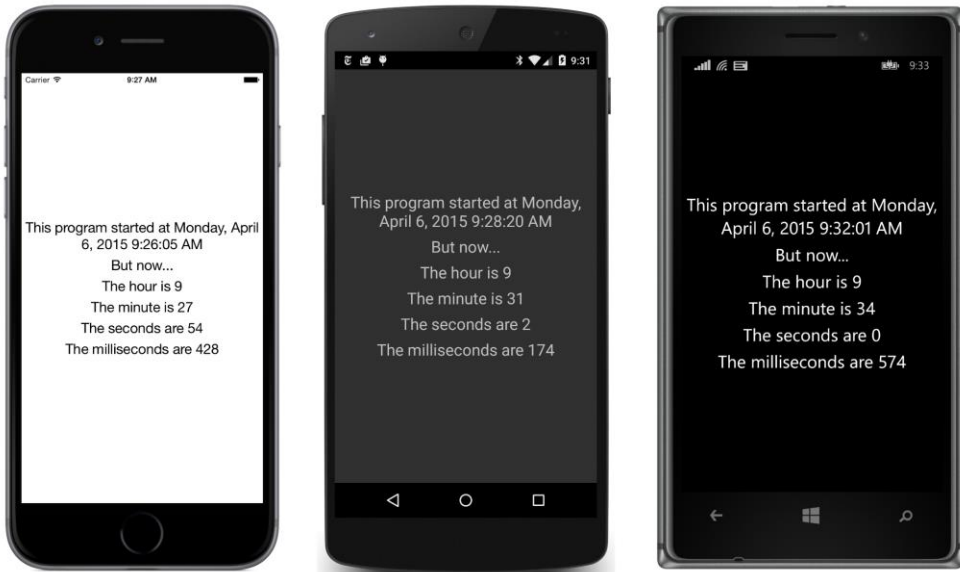
```

The `Resources` section for the page instantiates the `DateTimeViewModel` and also defines an implicit `Style` for the `Label`.

The first of the six `Label` elements sets its `Text` property to a `Binding` object that involves the actual .NET `DateTime` structure. The `Source` property of that binding is an `x:Static` markup extension that references the static `DateTime.Now` property to obtain the date and time when the program first starts running. No `Path` is required in this binding. The “F” formatting specification is for the full date/time pattern with long versions of the date and time strings. Although this `Label` displays the date and time when the program starts up, it will never get updated.

The final four data bindings *will* be updated. In these data bindings, the `Source` property is set to a `StaticResource` markup extension that references the `DateTimeViewModel` object. The `Path` is set to various sub-properties of the `DateTime` property of that `ViewModel`. Behind the scenes the binding infrastructure attaches handlers for the `DateTime` property and updates the `Text` property of the `Label` whenever that property changes.

The code-behind file is empty except for an `InitializeComponent` call and a statement that ensures that the library is linked to the application. The data bindings of the final four labels display an updated time that changes as fast as the video refresh rate:



The markup in this XAML file can be simplified by setting the `BindingContext` property of the `StackLayout` to a `StaticResource` markup extension that references the `ViewModel`. That `BindingContext` is propagated through the visual tree so that you can remove the `Source` settings on the final four `Label` elements:

```
<StackLayout VerticalOptions="Center"
    BindingContext="{StaticResource dateTimeViewModel}">

    <Label Text="{Binding Source={x:Static sys:DateTime.Now},
        StringFormat='This program started at {0:F}'}" />

    <Label Text="But now..." />

    <Label Text="{Binding Path=DateTime.Hour,
        StringFormat='The hour is {0}'}" />

    <Label Text="{Binding Path=DateTime.Minute,
        StringFormat='The minute is {0}'}" />

    <Label Text="{Binding Path=DateTime.Second,
        StringFormat='The seconds are {0}'}" />

    <Label Text="{Binding Path=DateTime.Millisecond,
        StringFormat='The milliseconds are {0}'}" />
</StackLayout>
```

The `Binding` on the first `Label` overrides that `BindingContext` with its own `Source` setting.

You can even remove the `DateTimeViewModel` item from the `ResourceDictionary` and instan-

tiate it right in the `StackLayout` between `BindingContext` property-element tags:

```
<StackLayout VerticalOptions="Center">
  <StackLayout.BindingContext>
    <toolkit:DateTimeViewModel />
  </StackLayout.BindingContext>

  <Label Text="{Binding Source={x:Static sys:DateTime.Now},
                      StringFormat='This program started at {0:F}'}" />

  <Label Text="But now..." />

  <Label Text="{Binding Path=DateTime.Hour,
                      StringFormat='The hour is {0}'}" />

  <Label Text="{Binding Path=DateTime.Minute,
                      StringFormat='The minute is {0}'}" />

  <Label Text="{Binding Path=DateTime.Second,
                      StringFormat='The seconds are {0}'}" />

  <Label Text="{Binding Path=DateTime.Millisecond,
                      StringFormat='The milliseconds are {0}'}" />
</StackLayout>
```

Or, you can set the `BindingContext` property of the `StackLayout` to a `Binding` that includes the `DateTime` property. The `BindingContext` then becomes the `DateTime` value, which allows the individual bindings to simply reference properties of the .NET `DateTime` structure:

```
<StackLayout VerticalOptions="Center"
  BindingContext="{Binding Source={StaticResource dateTimeViewModel},
                      Path=DateTime}">

  <Label Text="{Binding Source={x:Static sys:DateTime.Now},
                      StringFormat='This program started at {0:F}'}" />

  <Label Text="But now..." />

  <Label Text="{Binding Path=Hour,
                      StringFormat='The hour is {0}'}" />

  <Label Text="{Binding Path=Minute,
                      StringFormat='The minute is {0}'}" />

  <Label Text="{Binding Path=Second,
                      StringFormat='The seconds are {0}'}" />

  <Label Text="{Binding Path=Millisecond,
                      StringFormat='The milliseconds are {0}'}" />
</StackLayout>
```

You might have doubts that this will work! Behind the scenes, a data binding normally installs a `Prop-`

ertyChanged event handler and watches for particular properties being changed, but it can't in this case because the source of the data binding is a `DateTime` value and `DateTime` doesn't implement `INotifyPropertyChanged`. However, the `BindingContext` of these `Label` elements changes with each change to the `DateTime` property in the `ViewModel`, so the binding infrastructure accesses new values of these properties at that time.

As the individual bindings on the `Text` properties decrease in length and complexity, you can remove the `Path` attribute name and put everything on one line and nobody will be confused:

```
<StackLayout VerticalOptions="Center">
    <StackLayout.BindingContext>
        <Binding Path="DateTime">
            <Binding.Source>
                <toolkit:DateTimeViewModel />
            </Binding.Source>
        </Binding>
    </StackLayout.BindingContext>

    <Label Text="{Binding Source={x:Static sys:DateTime.Now},
        StringFormat='This program started at {0:F}'}" />

    <Label Text="But now..." />

    <Label Text="{Binding Hour, StringFormat='The hour is {0}'}" />
    <Label Text="{Binding Minute, StringFormat='The minute is {0}'}" />
    <Label Text="{Binding Second, StringFormat='The seconds are {0}'}" />
    <Label Text="{Binding Millisecond, StringFormat='The milliseconds are {0}'}" />
</StackLayout>
```

In future programs in this book, the individual bindings will mostly be as short and as elegant as possible.

Interactive properties in a ViewModel

The second example of a `ViewModel` does something so basic that you'd never write a `ViewModel` for this purpose. The `SimpleMultiplierViewModel` class simply multiplies two numbers together. But it's a good example for demonstrating the overhead and mechanics of a `ViewModel` that has multiple interactive properties. (And although you'd never write a `ViewModel` for multiplying two numbers together, you might write a `ViewModel` for solving quadratic equations or something much more complex.)

The `SimpleMultiplierViewModel` class is part of the **SimpleMultiplier** project:

```
using System;
using System.ComponentModel;

namespace SimpleMultiplier
{
```

```
class SimpleMultiplierViewModel : INotifyPropertyChanged
{
    double multiplicand, multiplier, product;

    public event PropertyChangedEventHandler PropertyChanged;

    public double Multiplicand
    {
        set
        {
            if (multiplicand != value)
            {
                multiplicand = value;
                OnPropertyChanged("Multiplicand");
                UpdateProduct();
            }
        }
        get
        {
            return multiplicand;
        }
    }

    public double Multiplier
    {
        set
        {
            if (multiplier != value)
            {
                multiplier = value;
                OnPropertyChanged("Multiplier");
                UpdateProduct();
            }
        }
        get
        {
            return multiplier;
        }
    }

    public double Product
    {
        protected set
        {
            if (product != value)
            {
                product = value;
                OnPropertyChanged("Product");
            }
        }
        get
        {
            return product;
        }
    }
}
```

```

        return product;
    }
}

void UpdateProduct()
{
    Product = Multiplicand * Multiplier;
}

protected void OnPropertyChanged(string propertyName)
{
    PropertyChangedEventHandler handler = PropertyChanged;

    if (handler != null)
    {
        PropertyChanged(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs(propertyName));
    }
}
}
}

```

The class defines three public properties of type `double` named `Multiplicand`, `Multiplier`, and `Product`. Each property is backed by a private field. The `set` and `get` accessors of the first two properties are public, but the `set` accessor of the `Product` property is private to prevent it from being set outside the class.

The `set` accessor of each property begins by checking if the property value is actually changing, and if so, sets the backing field to that value and calls a method named `OnPropertyChanged` with that property name.

The `INotifyPropertyChanged` interface does not require an `OnPropertyChanged` method, but `ViewModel` classes often include one to cut down the code repetition. It's usually defined as `protected` in case you need to derive one `ViewModel` from another and fire the event in the derived class. Later in this chapter, you'll see techniques to cut down the code repetition in `INotifyPropertyChanged` classes even more.

The `set` accessors for both the `Multiplicand` and `Multiplier` properties conclude by calling the `UpdateProduct` method. This is the method that performs the job of multiplying the two properties and setting a new value for the `Product` property, which then fires its own `PropertyChanged` event.

Here's the XAML file that makes use of this `ViewModel`:

```

<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
              xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
              xmlns:local="clr-namespace:SimpleMultiplier"
              x:Class="SimpleMultiplier.SimpleMultiplierPage"
              Padding="10, 0">

    <ContentPage.Resources>

```

```

    <ResourceDictionary>
        <local:SimpleMultiplierViewModel x:Key="viewModel" />

        <Style TargetType="Label">
            <Setter Property="FontSize" Value="Large" />
        </Style>
    </ResourceDictionary>
</ContentPage.Resources>

<StackLayout BindingContext="{StaticResource viewModel}">

    <StackLayout VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <Slider Value="{Binding Multiplicand, Mode=TwoWay}" />
        <Slider Value="{Binding Multiplier, Mode=TwoWay}" />
    </StackLayout>

    <StackLayout Orientation="Horizontal"
        Spacing="0"
        VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand"
        HorizontalOptions="Center">
        <Label Text="{Binding Multiplicand, StringFormat='{0:F3}}'" />
        <Label Text="{Binding Multiplier, StringFormat=' x {0:F3}}'" />
        <Label Text="{Binding Product, StringFormat=' = {0:F3}}'" />
    </StackLayout>
</StackLayout>
</ContentPage>

```

The `SimpleMultiplierViewModel` is instantiated in the `Resources` dictionary and set to the `BindingContext` property of the `StackLayout` using a `StaticResource` markup extension. That `BindingContext` is inherited by all the children and grandchildren of the `StackLayout`, which includes two `Slider` and three `Label` elements. The use of the `BindingContext` allows these bindings to be as simple as possible.

The bindings on the `Slider` elements must be specified as two-way:

```

<Slider Value="{Binding Multiplicand, Mode=TwoWay}" />
<Slider Value="{Binding Multiplier, Mode=TwoWay}" />

```

As you learned in Chapter 16 on “Data binding,” the default binding mode for the `Value` property of `Slider` is `OneWay`. A `OneWay` binding allows changes in the source (the `ViewModel` in this case) to affect the `Value` property of the `Slider` target but not the other way around. Here we want the `Value` property of the `Slider` to also set the source property in the `ViewModel`.

The three `Label` elements display the values of all three properties of the `ViewModel` with some formatting that inserts times and equals signs with the numbers:

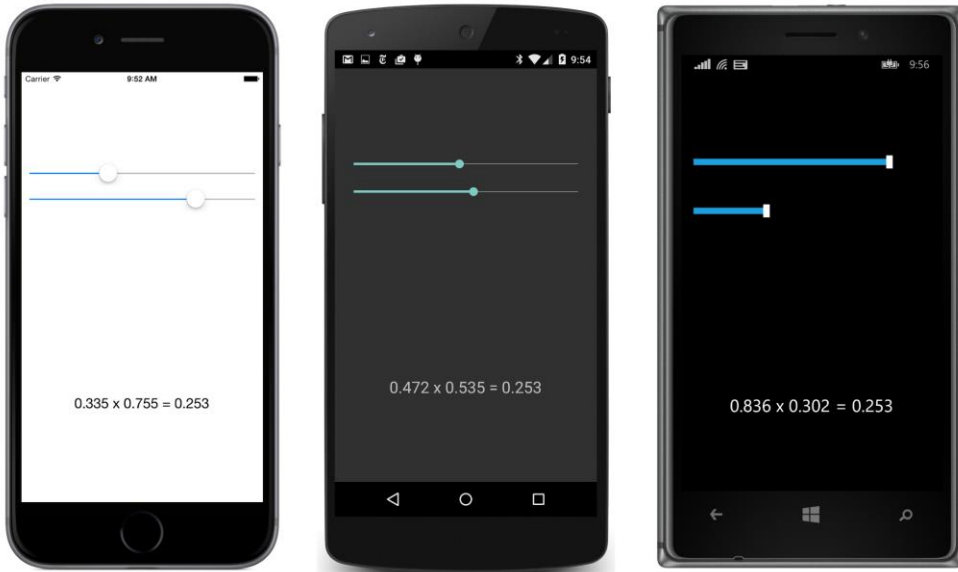
```

<Label Text="{Binding Multiplicand, StringFormat='{0:F3}}'" />
<Label Text="{Binding Multiplier, StringFormat=' x {0:F3}}'" />
<Label Text="{Binding Product, StringFormat=' = {0:F3}}'" />

```

For the first two, you can alternatively bind the `Text` property of the `Label` elements directly to the `Value` property of the corresponding `Slider`, but that would require that you give each `Slider` a name with `x:Name` and reference that name in a `Source` argument using the `x:Reference` markup extension. The approach used in this program is much cleaner and verifies that data is making a full trip through the `ViewModel` from each `Slider` to each `Label`.

There is nothing in the code-behind file except a call to `InitializeComponent` in the constructor. All the business logic is in the `ViewModel` and the whole user interface is defined in XAML:



If you'd like to, you can initialize the `ViewModel` as it is instantiated in the `Resources` dictionary:

```
<local:SimpleMultiplierViewModel x:Key="viewModel"
    Multiplicand="0.5"
    Multiplier="0.5" />
```

The `Slider` elements will get these initial values as a result of the two-way binding.

The advantage to separating the user interface from the underlying business logic becomes evident when you want to change the user interface somewhat, perhaps by substituting a `Stepper` for the `Slider` for one or both numbers:

```
<StackLayout VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
    <Slider Value="{Binding Multiplicand, Mode=TwoWay}" />
    <Stepper Value="{Binding Multiplier}" />
</StackLayout>
```

You don't need to specify a binding mode of `TwoWay` with the `Stepper` because the default binding

mode of the stepper's `Value` property is already `TwoWay`. The functionality is fine, but a little more work with the XAML would be required for visual consistency among the three platforms:



You could also substitute an `Entry`:

```
<StackLayout VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
    <Slider Value="{Binding Multiplicand, Mode=TwoWay}" />
    <Entry Text="{Binding Multiplier}" />
</StackLayout>
```

As with the `Stepper`, the default binding mode for the `Text` property of the `Entry` is `TwoWay`, so all you need to worry about is the conversion between the source property `double` and target property `string`. Fortunately, this conversion is handled by the binding infrastructure:



If you type a series of characters that cannot be converted to a `double`, the binding will maintain the last valid value. If you want more sophisticated validation, you'll have to implement your own (such as with a trigger to be discussed in a future chapter).

One interesting experiment is to type "1E-1", which is scientific notation that is convertible to a `double`. You'll see it immediately change to "0.1" in the `Entry`. This is the effect of the `TwoWay` binding: The `Multiplier` property is set to 1E-1 from the `Entry` but the `ToString` method that the binding infrastructure calls when the value comes back to the `Entry` returns the text "0.1." Because that is different from the existing `Entry` text, the new text is set. To prevent that from happening, you can set the binding mode to `OneWayToSource`:

```
<StackLayout VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
    <Slider Value="{Binding Multiplicand, Mode=TwoWay}" />
    <Entry Text="{Binding Multiplier, Mode=OneWayToSource}" />
</StackLayout>
```

Now the `Multiplier` property of the `ViewModel` is set from the `Text` property of the `Entry`, but not the other way around.

Should you worry about infinite cycles in two-way bindings? Usually not, because `PropertyChanged` events are only fired when the property actually changes and not when it's merely set to the same value. Generally the source and target will stop updating each other after a bounce or two. However, it is possible to write a "pathological" value converter that doesn't provide for round-trip conversions, and that could indeed cause infinite update cycles in two-way bindings.

A Color ViewModel

Color always provides a good means of exploring the features of a graphical user interface, so you probably won't be surprised to learn that the **Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit** library contains a class called `ColorViewModel`.

The `ColorViewModel` class exposes a `Color` property but also `Red`, `Green`, `Blue`, `Alpha`, `Hue`, `Saturation`, and `Luminosity` properties, all of which are individually settable. This is not a feature that the `Xamarin.Forms` `Color` structure provides. Once a `Color` value is created from a `Color` constructor or one of the methods in `Color` beginning with the words `Add`, `From`, `Multiply`, or `With`, it is immutable.

This `ColorViewModel` class is complicated by the interrelationship of its `Color` property and all the component properties. For example, suppose the `Color` property is set. The class should fire a `PropertyChanged` handler, not only for `Color` but also for any component (such as `Red` or `Hue`) that also changes. Similarly, if the `Red` property changes, then the class should fire a `PropertyChanged` event for both `Red` and `Color`, and probably `Hue`, `Saturation`, and `Luminosity` as well.

The `ColorViewModel` class solves this problem by storing a backing field for the `Color` property only. All the `set` accessors for the individual components create a new `Color` by using the incoming value with a call to `Color.FromRgba` or `Color.FromHsla`. This new `Color` value is set to the `Color` property rather than the `color` field, which means that the new `Color` value is subjected to processing in the `set` accessor of the `Color` property:

```
public class ColorViewModel : INotifyPropertyChanged
{
    Color color;

    public event PropertyChangedEventHandler PropertyChanged;

    public double Red
    {
        set
        {
            if (color.R != value)
                Color = Color.FromRgba(value, color.G, color.B, color.A);
        }
        get
        {
            return color.R;
        }
    }

    public double Green
    {
        set
        {
            if (color.G != value)
```

```
        Color = Color.FromRgba(color.R, value, color.B, color.A);
    }
    get
    {
        return color.G;
    }
}

public double Blue
{
    set
    {
        if (color.B != value)
            Color = Color.FromRgba(color.R, color.G, value, color.A);
    }
    get
    {
        return color.B;
    }
}

public double Alpha
{
    set
    {
        if (color.A != value)
            Color = Color.FromRgba(color.R, color.G, color.B, value);
    }
    get
    {
        return color.A;
    }
}

public double Hue
{
    set
    {
        if (color.Hue != value)
            Color = Color.FromHsla(value, color.Saturation, color.Luminosity, color.A);
    }
    get
    {
        return color.Hue;
    }
}

public double Saturation
{
    set
    {
        if (color.Saturation != value)
```

```

        Color = Color.FromHsla(color.Hue, value, color.Luminosity, color.A);
    }
    get
    {
        return color.Saturation;
    }
}

public double Luminosity
{
    set
    {
        if (color.Luminosity != value)
            Color = Color.FromHsla(color.Hue, color.Saturation, value, color.A);
    }
    get
    {
        return color.Luminosity;
    }
}

public Color Color
{
    set
    {
        Color oldColor = color;

        if (color != value)
        {
            color = value;
            OnPropertyChanged("Color");
        }

        if (color.R != oldColor.R)
            OnPropertyChanged("Red");

        if (color.G != oldColor.G)
            OnPropertyChanged("Red");

        if (color.B != oldColor.B)
            OnPropertyChanged("Blue");

        if (color.A != oldColor.A)
            OnPropertyChanged("Alpha");

        if (color.Hue != oldColor.Hue)
            OnPropertyChanged("Hue");

        if (color.Saturation != oldColor.Saturation)
            OnPropertyChanged("Saturation");

        if (color.Luminosity != oldColor.Luminosity)

```

```

        OnPropertyChanged("Luminosity");
    }
    get
    {
        return color;
    }
}

protected void OnPropertyChanged(string propertyName)
{
    PropertyChangedEventHandler handler = PropertyChanged;

    if (handler != null)
    {
        handler(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs(propertyName));
    }
}
}

```

The `set` accessor for the `Color` property is responsible for the firings of all `PropertyChanged` events based on changes to the properties.

The **HslSliders** program instantiates the `ColorViewModel` between `Grid.BindingContext` tags so it becomes the `BindingContext` for all the `Slider` and `Label` elements within the `Grid`:

```

<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
    xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
    xmlns:toolkit="clr-namespace:Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit;assembly=Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit"
    x:Class="HslSliders.HslSlidersPage"
    SizeChanged="OnPageSizeChanged">

    <ContentPage.Padding>
        <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="Thickness"
            iOS="0, 20, 0, 0" />
    </ContentPage.Padding>

    <Grid x:Name="mainGrid">
        <Grid.BindingContext>
            <toolkit.ColorViewModel Color="Gray" />
        </Grid.BindingContext>

        <Grid.Resources>
            <ResourceDictionary>
                <Style TargetType="Label">
                    <Setter Property="FontSize" Value="Large" />
                    <Setter Property="XAlign" Value="Center" />
                </Style>
            </ResourceDictionary>
        </Grid.Resources>

        <!-- Initialized for portrait mode. -->

```

```

<Grid.RowDefinitions>
    <RowDefinition Height="*" />
    <RowDefinition Height="Auto" />
</Grid.RowDefinitions>

<Grid.ColumnDefinitions>
    <ColumnDefinition Width="*" />
    <ColumnDefinition Width="0" />
</Grid.ColumnDefinitions>

<BoxView Color="{Binding Color}"
    Grid.Row="0" Grid.Column="0" />

<StackLayout x:Name="controlPanelStack"
    Grid.Row="1" Grid.Column="0"
    Padding="10, 5">

    <StackLayout VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <Slider Value="{Binding Hue, Mode=TwoWay}" />
        <Label Text="{Binding Hue, StringFormat='Hue = {0:F2}}'" />
    </StackLayout>

    <StackLayout VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <Slider Value="{Binding Saturation, Mode=TwoWay}" />
        <Label Text="{Binding Saturation, StringFormat='Saturation = {0:F2}}'" />
    </StackLayout>

    <StackLayout VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <Slider Value="{Binding Luminosity, Mode=TwoWay}" />
        <Label Text="{Binding Luminosity, StringFormat='Luminosity = {0:F2}}'" />
    </StackLayout>
</StackLayout>
</Grid>
</ContentPage>

```

Notice that the `Color` property of `ColorViewModel` is initialized when `ColorViewModel` is instantiated. The two-way bindings of the sliders then pick up the resultant values of the `Hue`, `Saturation`, and `Luminosity` properties.

If you instead want to implement a display of hexadecimal values of `Red`, `Green`, and `Blue`, you can use the `DoubleToIntConverter` class demonstrated in connection with the **GridRgbSliders** program in the previous chapter.

The **HslSliders** program implements the same technique for switching between portrait and landscape modes as that **GridRgbSliders** program. The code-behind file handles the mechanics of this switch:

```

public partial class HslSlidersPage : ContentPage
{
    public HslSlidersPage()
    {

```

```

        // Ensure link to library.
        new Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit.ColorViewModel();

        InitializeComponent();
    }

    void OnPageSizeChanged(object sender, EventArgs args)
    {
        // Portrait mode.
        if (Width < Height)
        {
            mainGrid.RowDefinitions[1].Height = GridLength.Auto;
            mainGrid.ColumnDefinitions[1].Width = new GridLength(0, GridUnitType.Absolute);

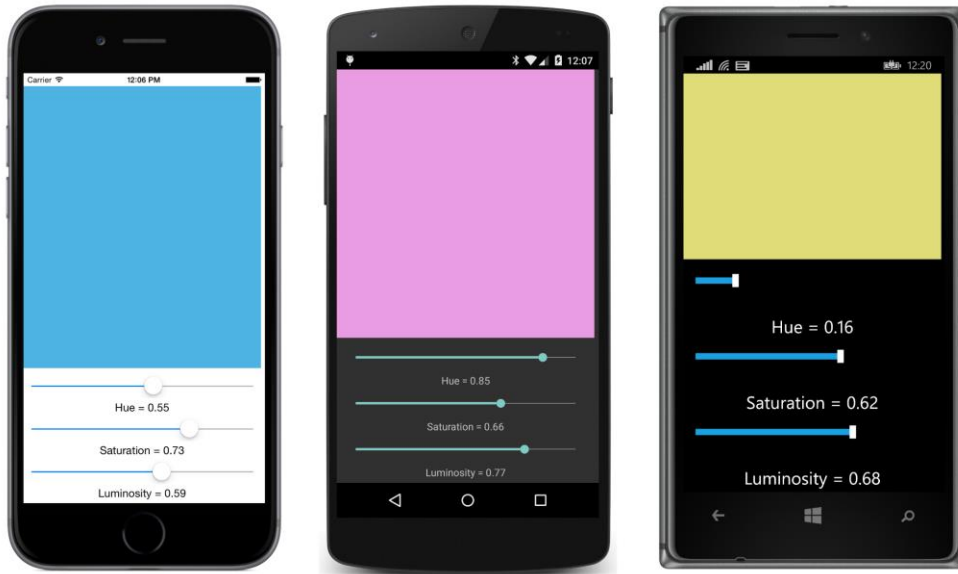
            Grid.SetRow(controlPanelStack, 1);
            Grid.SetColumn(controlPanelStack, 0);
        }
        // Landscape mode.
        else
        {
            mainGrid.RowDefinitions[1].Height = new GridLength(0, GridUnitType.Absolute);
            mainGrid.ColumnDefinitions[1].Width = new GridLength(1, GridUnitType.Star);

            Grid.SetRow(controlPanelStack, 0);
            Grid.SetColumn(controlPanelStack, 1);
        }
    }
}

```

This code-behind file isn't quite as pretty as a file that merely calls `InitializeComponent`, but even in the context of MVVM, switching between portrait and landscape modes is a legitimate use of the code-behind file because it is solely devoted to the user interface rather than underlying business logic.

Here's the **HslSliders** program in action:



Streamlining the ViewModel

A typical implementation of `INotifyPropertyChanged` has a private backing field for every public property defined by the class, for example:

```
double number;
```

It also has an `OnPropertyChanged` method responsible for firing the `PropertyChanged` event:

```
protected void OnPropertyChanged(string propertyName)
{
    PropertyChangedEventHandler handler = PropertyChanged;

    if (handler != null)
    {
        PropertyChanged(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs(propertyName));
    }
}
```

A typical property definition looks like this:

```
public double Number
{
    set
    {
        if (number != value)
        {
            number = value;
            OnPropertyChanged("Number");
        }
    }
}
```

```

        // Do something with the new value.
    }
}
get
{
    return number;
}
}

```

A potential problem involves the text string you pass to the `OnPropertyChanged` method. If you misspell it, you won't get any type of error message, and yet bindings involving that property won't work. Also, the backing field appears three times within this single property. If you had several similar properties and defined them through copy-and-paste operations, it's possible to omit the renaming of one of the three appearances of the backing field, and that bug might be very difficult to track down.

You can solve the first problem with a feature introduced in C# 5.0. The `CallerMemberNameAttribute` class allows you to replace an optional method argument with the name of the calling method or property.

You can make use of this feature by redefining the `OnPropertyChanged` method. Make the argument optional by assigning `null` to it and preceding it with the `CallerMemberName` attribute in square brackets. You'll also need a `using` directive for `System.Runtime.CompilerServices`:

```

protected void OnPropertyChanged([CallerMemberName] string propertyName = null)
{
    PropertyChangedEventHandler handler = PropertyChanged;

    if (handler != null)
    {
        PropertyChanged(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs(propertyName));
    }
}

```

Now the `Number` property can call the `OnPropertyChanged` method without the argument that indicates the property name. That argument will be automatically set to the property name "Number" because that's where the call to `OnPropertyChanged` is originating:

```

public double Number
{
    set
    {
        if (number != value)
        {
            number = value;
            OnPropertyChanged();

            // Do something with the new value.
        }
    }
}

```



```

    get
    {
        return number;
    }
}

```

This approach avoids a misspelled text property name and also allows property names to be changed during program development without worrying about also changing the text strings. Indeed, one of the primary reasons that the `CallerMemberName` attribute was invented was to simplify classes that implement `INotifyPropertyChanged`.

However, this only works when `OnPropertyChanged` is called from the property whose value is changing. In the earlier `ColorViewModel`, explicit property names would still be required in all but one of the calls to `OnPropertyChanged`.

It's possible to go even further to simplify the `get` accessor logic: You'll need to define a generic method, probably named `SetProperty` or something similar. This `SetProperty` method is also defined with the `CallerMemberName` attribute:

```

bool SetProperty<T>(ref T storage, T value, [CallerMemberName] string propertyName = null)
{
    if (Object.Equals(storage, value))
        return false;

    storage = value;
    OnPropertyChanged(propertyName);
    return true;
}

protected void OnPropertyChanged([CallerMemberName] string propertyName = null)
{
    PropertyChangedEventHandler handler = PropertyChanged;
    if (handler != null)
    {
        PropertyChanged(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs(propertyName));
    }
}

```

The first argument to `SetProperty` is a reference to the backing field, and the second argument is the value being set to the property. `SetProperty` automates the checking and setting of the backing field. Notice that it explicitly includes the property name argument when calling `OnPropertyChanged`. (Otherwise the `propertyName` argument would become the string `"SetProperty"!`) The method returns `true` if the property was changed. You can use this return value to perform additional processing with the new value.

Now the `Number` property looks like this:

```

public double Number
{

```

```

    set
    {
        if (SetProperty(ref number, value))
        {
            // Do something with the new value.
        }
    }
    get
    {
        return number;
    }
}

```

Although `SetProperty` is a generic method, the C# compiler can deduce the type from the arguments. If you don't need to do anything with the new value in the property `set` accessor, you can even reduce the two accessors to single lines without obscuring the operations:

```

public double Number
{
    set { SetProperty(ref number, value); }
    get { return number; }
}

```

You might like this streamlining so much that you'll want to put the `SetProperty` and `OnPropertyChanged` methods in their own class and derive from that class when creating your own `ViewModel`s. Such a class, called `ViewModelBase`, is already in the **Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit** library:

```

using System;
using System.ComponentModel;
using System.Runtime.CompilerServices;

namespace Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit
{
    public class ViewModelBase : INotifyPropertyChanged
    {
        public event PropertyChangedEventHandler PropertyChanged;

        protected bool SetProperty<T>(ref T storage, T value,
                                     [CallerMemberName] string propertyName = null)
        {
            if (Object.Equals(storage, value))
                return false;

            storage = value;
            OnPropertyChanged(propertyName);
            return true;
        }

        protected void OnPropertyChanged([CallerMemberName] string propertyName = null)
        {
            PropertyChangedEventHandler handler = PropertyChanged;
            if (handler != null)

```

```

        {
            PropertyChanged(this, new PropertyChangedEventArgs(propertyName));
        }
    }
}

```

This class is used in the two remaining examples in this chapter.

The Command interface

Data bindings are very powerful. Data bindings connect properties of visual elements in the View with properties of data in the ViewModel, and allow the direct manipulation of data items through the user interface.

But not everything is a property. Sometimes ViewModels expose public *methods* that must be called from the View. Without MVVM, you'd probably call such a method from a `Clicked` event handler of a `Button` or a `Tapped` event handler of a `TapGestureRecognizer`. When considering these needs, the whole concept of data bindings and MVVM might start to seem hopelessly flawed. How can the code-behind file of a page class be stripped down to an `InitializeComponent` call if it must still make method calls from the View to the ViewModel?

Don't give up on MVVM so quickly! Xamarin.Forms supports a feature that allows data bindings to make method calls in the ViewModel directly from `Button` and `TapGestureRecognizer` and a few other elements. This is a protocol called the *command interface* or the *commanding interface*.

The command interface is supported by eight classes:

- `Button`
- `MenuItem` (covered in Chapter 19, "CollectionViews"), and hence also `ToolbarItem`
- `SearchBar`
- `TextCell`, and hence also `ImageCell` (also to be covered in Chapter 19)
- `ListView` (also to be covered in Chapter 19)
- `TapGestureRecognizer`

It is also possible to implement commanding in your own custom classes.

The command interface is likely to be a little confusing at first. Let's focus on `Button`.

`Button` defines two ways for code to be notified when the element is clicked. The first is the `Clicked` event. But you can also use the button's command interface as an alternative to (or in addi-

tion to) the `Clicked` event. This interface consists of two public properties that `Button` defines:

- `Command` of type `System.Windows.Input.ICommand`.
- `CommandParameter` of type `Object`

To support commanding, a `ViewModel` must define a public property of type `ICommand` that is then connected to the `Command` property of the `Button` through a normal data binding.

Like `INotifyPropertyChanged`, the `ICommand` interface is not a part of `Xamarin.Forms`. It's defined in the `System.Windows.Input` namespace and implemented in the **System.ObjectModel** assembly, which is one of the .NET assemblies linked to a `Xamarin.Forms` application. `ICommand` is the *only* type in the `System.Windows.Input` namespace that `Xamarin.Forms` supports. Indeed it's the only type in *any* `System.Windows` namespace supported by `Xamarin.Forms`.

Is it a coincidence that `INotifyPropertyChanged` and `ICommand` are both defined in .NET assemblies rather than `Xamarin.Forms`? No. These interfaces are often used in `ViewModels`, and some developers might already have `ViewModels` developed for one or more of Microsoft's XAML-based environments. It's easiest to incorporate these `ViewModels` into `Xamarin.Forms` if `INotifyPropertyChanged` and `ICommand` are defined in standard .NET namespaces and assemblies rather than in `Xamarin.Forms`.

The `ICommand` interface defines two methods and one event:

```
public interface ICommand
{
    void Execute(object arg);
    bool CanExecute(object arg)
    event EventHandler CanExecuteChanged;
}
```

To implement commanding, the `ViewModel` defines one or more properties of type `ICommand`, meaning that the property is a type that implements these two methods and the event. A property in the `ViewModel` that implements `ICommand` can then be bound to the `Command` property of a `Button`. When the `Button` is clicked, the `Button` fires its normal `Clicked` event as usual, but also calls the `Execute` method of the object bound to its `Command` property. The argument to the `Execute` method is the object set to the `CommandParameter` property of the `Button`.

That's the basic technique. However, it could be that certain conditions in the `ViewModel` prohibit a `Button` click at the current time. In that case, the `Button` should be disabled. This is the purpose of the `CanExecute` method and the `CanExecuteChanged` event in `ICommand`. The `Button` calls `CanExecute` when its `Command` property is first set. If `CanExecute` returns `false`, the `Button` disables itself and doesn't generate `Execute` calls. The `Button` also installs a handler for the `CanExecuteChanged` event. Thereafter, whenever the `ViewModel` fires the `CanExecuteChanged` event, the button calls `CanExecute` again to determine if the button should be enabled.

A `ViewModel` that supports the command interface must make use of a class that implements the `ICommand` interface. What is this class, and how does it work?

If you were implementing the commanding protocol in one of Microsoft's XAML-based environments, you would be writing your own class that implements `ICommand`, or perhaps using one that you found on the web, or one that was included with some MVVM tools. Sometimes such classes are named `CommandDelegate` or something similar.

You can use that same class in the `ViewModels` of your `Xamarin.Forms` applications. However, for your convenience, `Xamarin.Forms` includes two classes that implement `ICommand` that you can use instead. These two classes are named simply `Command` and `Command<T>` where `T` is the type of the arguments to `Execute` and `CanExecute`.

If you are indeed sharing a `ViewModel` between Microsoft environments and `Xamarin.Forms`, you can't use the `Command` classes defined by `Xamarin.Forms`. However, you'll be using something similar to the `Command` classes, so the following discussion will certainly be applicable regardless.

The `Command` class includes the two methods and events of the `ICommand` interface, and also defines a `ChangeCanExecute` method. This method causes the `Command` object to fire the `CanExecuteChanged` event, and this method turns out to be very handy.

Within the `ViewModel`, you'll probably create an object of type `Command` or `Command<T>` for every public property in the `ViewModel` of type `ICommand`. The `Command` or `Command<T>` constructor requires a callback method in the form of an `Action` object that is called when the `Button` calls the `Execute` method of the `ICommand` interface. The `CanExecute` method is optional but takes the form of a `Func` object that returns `bool`.

In many cases, the properties of type `ICommand` are set in the `ViewModel`'s constructor and do not change thereafter. For that reason, these particular properties do not need to fire `PropertyChanged` events.

Simple method executions

Let's look at a simple example. A program called **PowersOfThree** lets you use two buttons to explore various powers of 3. One button increases the exponent and the other button decreases the exponent.

The `PowersViewModel` class derives from the `ViewModelBase` class in the **Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit** library, but the `ViewModel` itself is in the **PowersOfThree** application project. It is not restricted to powers of 3, but the constructor requires an argument that the class uses as a base value for the power calculation, and which it exposes as the `BaseValue` property. Because this property has a private `set` accessor and doesn't change after the constructor concludes, the property does not fire a `PropertyChanged` event.

Two other properties, named `Exponent` and `Power` do fire `PropertyChanged` events, but both

properties also have private `set` accessors. The `Exponent` property is only increased and decreased from external button clicks.

To implement the response to `Button` taps, the `PowersViewModel` class defines two properties of type `ICommand` named `IncreaseExponentCommand` and `DecreaseExponentCommand`. Again, both properties have private `set` accessors. As you can see, the constructor sets these two properties by instantiating `Command` objects that reference little private methods immediately following the constructor. These two little methods are called when the `Execute` method of `Command` is called. The View-Model uses the `Command` class rather than `Command<T>` because the program doesn't make use of any argument to the `Execute` methods:

```
class PowersViewModel : ViewModelBase
{
    double exponent, power;

    public PowersViewModel(double baseValue)
    {
        // Initialize properties.
        BaseValue = baseValue;
        Exponent = 0;

        // Initialize ICommand properties.
        IncreaseExponentCommand = new Command(ExecuteIncreaseExponent);
        DecreaseExponentCommand = new Command(ExecuteDecreaseExponent);
    }

    void ExecuteIncreaseExponent()
    {
        Exponent += 1;
    }

    void ExecuteDecreaseExponent()
    {
        Exponent -= 1;
    }

    public double BaseValue { private set; get; }

    public double Exponent
    {
        private set
        {
            if (SetProperty(ref exponent, value))
            {
                Power = Math.Pow(BaseValue, exponent);
            }
        }
        get
        {
            return exponent;
        }
    }
}
```

```

    }
}

public double Power
{
    private set { SetProperty(ref power, value); }
    get { return power; }
}

public ICommand IncreaseExponentCommand { private set; get; }

public ICommand DecreaseExponentCommand { private set; get; }
}

```

The two `Execute` methods make a change to the `Exponent` property (which fires a `PropertyChanged` event), and the `Exponent` property recalculates the `Power` property, which also fires a `PropertyChanged` event.

Very often the methods passed to the `Command` constructor are lambda functions, so they can alternatively be defined right in the constructor, like so:

```

IncreaseExponentCommand = new Command(() =>
{
    Exponent += 1;
});

DecreaseExponentCommand = new Command(() =>
{
    Exponent -= 1;
});

```

The `PowersOfThreePage` XAML file links the `Text` properties of three `Label` elements to the `BaseValue`, `Exponent`, and `Power` properties of the `PowersViewModel` class, and the `Command` properties of the two `Button` elements to the `IncreaseExponentCommand` and `DecreaseExponentCommand` properties of the `ViewModel`.

Notice how an argument of 3 is passed to the constructor of `PowersViewModel` as it is instantiated in the `Resources` dictionary. Passing arguments to `ViewModel` constructors is the primary reason for the existence of the `x:Arguments` tag:

```

<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
    xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
    xmlns:local="clr-namespace:PowersOfThree"
    x:Class="PowersOfThree.PowersOfThreePage">

    <ContentPage.Resources>
        <ResourceDictionary>
            <local:PowersViewModel x:Key="viewModel">
                <x:Arguments>
                    <x:Double>3</x:Double>
                </x:Arguments>
            </local:PowersViewModel>
        </ResourceDictionary>
    </ContentPage.Resources>

```

```

        </x:Arguments>
    </local:PowersViewModel>
</ResourceDictionary>
</ContentPage.Resources>

<StackLayout BindingContext="{StaticResource viewModel}">
    <StackLayout Orientation="Horizontal"
        Spacing="0"
        HorizontalOptions="Center"
        VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <Label FontSize="Large"
            Text="{Binding BaseValue, StringFormat='{0}'}" />

        <Label FontSize="Small"
            Text="{Binding Exponent, StringFormat='{0}'}" />

        <Label FontSize="Large"
            Text="{Binding Power, StringFormat=' = {0}'}" />
    </StackLayout>

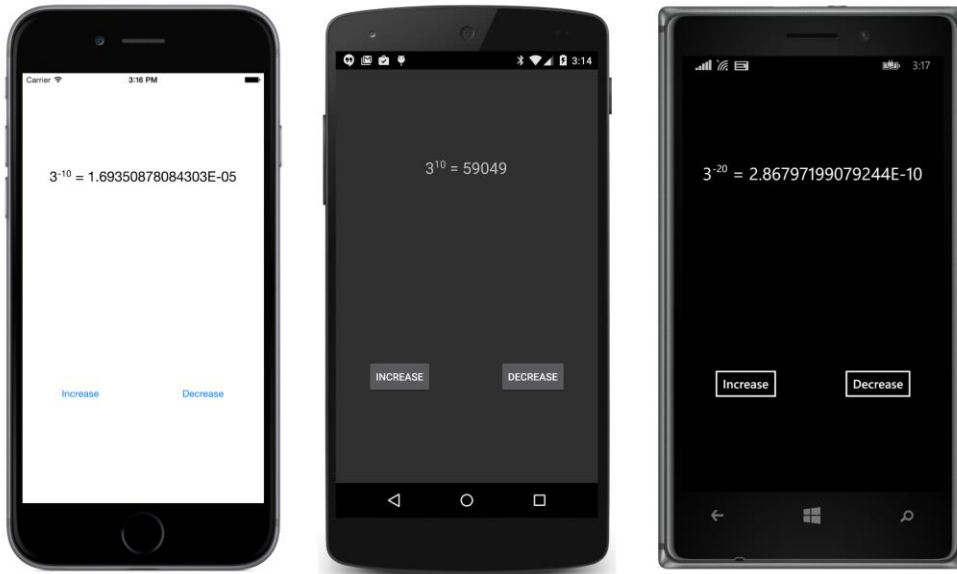
    <StackLayout Orientation="Horizontal"
        VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">

        <Button Text="Increase"
            Command="{Binding IncreaseExponentCommand}"
            HorizontalOptions="CenterAndExpand" />

        <Button Text="Decrease"
            Command="{Binding DecreaseExponentCommand}"
            HorizontalOptions="CenterAndExpand" />
    </StackLayout>
</StackLayout>
</ContentPage>

```

Here's what it looks like after several presses of one button or the other:



Once again, the wisdom of separating the user interface from the underlying business logic is revealed when the time comes to change the View. For example, suppose you want to replace the buttons with a view used in combination with `TapGestureRecognizer`. Fortunately, `TapGestureRecognizer` has a `Command` property:

```
<StackLayout Orientation="Horizontal"
              VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">

    <Frame OutlineColor="Accent"
            BackgroundColor="Transparent"
            Padding="20, 40"
            HorizontalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <Frame.GestureRecognizers>
            <TapGestureRecognizer Command="{Binding IncreaseExponentCommand}" />
        </Frame.GestureRecognizers>

        <Label Text="Increase"
                FontSize="Large" />
    </Frame>

    <Frame OutlineColor="Accent"
            BackgroundColor="Transparent"
            Padding="20, 40"
            HorizontalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <Frame.GestureRecognizers>
            <TapGestureRecognizer Command="{Binding DecreaseExponentCommand}" />
        </Frame.GestureRecognizers>

        <Label Text="Decrease"
```

```

        FontSize="Large" />
    </Frame>
</StackLayout>

```

Without touching the ViewModel or even renaming an event handler so that it applies to a tap rather than a button, the program still works the same, but with a different look:



A calculator, almost

Now it's time to make a more sophisticated ViewModel with `ICommand` objects that have both `Execute` and `CanExecute` methods. The next program is almost like a calculator except that it only adds a series of numbers together. The ViewModel is named `AdderViewModel` and the program is called **AddingMachine**.

Let's look at the screen shots first:



At the top of the page you can see a history of the series of numbers that have already been entered and added. This is a `Label` in a `ScrollView`, so it can get rather long.

The sum of those numbers is displayed in the `Entry` view above the keypad. Normally, that `Entry` view contains the number that you're typing in, but after you hit the big plus sign at the right of the keypad, the `Entry` displays the accumulated sum. That plus sign is now disabled. You need to begin typing another number for the accumulated sum to disappear and for the button with the plus sign to be enabled. Similarly, the backspace button is enabled as soon as you begin typing.

These are not the only keys that can be disabled. The decimal point is disabled when the number you're typing already has a decimal point, and all the number keys become disabled when the number contains 16 characters. This is to avoid the number in the `Entry` from becoming too long to display.

The disabling of these buttons is the result of implementing the `CanExecute` method in the `ICommand` interface.

The `AdderViewModel` class is in the **Xamarin.FormsBook.Toolkit** library and derives from `ViewModelBase`. Here is the part of the class with all the public properties and their backing fields:

```
public class AdderViewModel : ViewModelBase
{
    string currentEntry = "0";
    string historyString = "";
    ...

    public string CurrentEntry
    {
```

```

        private set { SetProperty(ref currentEntry, value); }
        get { return currentEntry; }
    }

    public string HistoryString
    {
        private set { SetProperty(ref historyString, value); }
        get { return historyString; }
    }

    public ICommand ClearCommand { private set; get; }

    public ICommand ClearEntryCommand { private set; get; }

    public ICommand BackspaceCommand { private set; get; }

    public ICommand NumericCommand { private set; get; }

    public ICommand DecimalPointCommand { private set; get; }

    public ICommand AddCommand { private set; get; }

    ...
}

```

They all have private `set` accessors. The two properties of type `string` are only set internally based on the key taps, and the properties of type `ICommand` are set in the `AdderViewModel` constructor (which you'll see shortly).

The eight public properties are all that the XAML file in the **AddingMachine** project needs to know about `AdderViewModel`. Here is that XAML file. It contains a two-row and two-column main `Grid` for switching between portrait and landscape mode, and a `Label`, `Entry`, and 15 `Button` elements, all of which are bound to one of the eight public properties of the `AdderViewModel`. Notice that the `Command` properties of all ten digit buttons are bound to the `NumericCommand` property and the buttons are differentiated by the `CommandParameter` property. The setting of this property is passed as an argument to the `Execute` and `CanExecute` methods:

```

<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
              xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
              x:Class="AddingMachine.AddingMachinePage"
              SizeChanged="OnPageSizeChanged">

    <ContentPage.Padding>
        <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="Thickness"
                    iOS="10, 20, 10, 10"
                    Android="10"
                    WinPhone="10" />
    </ContentPage.Padding>

    <Grid x:Name="mainGrid">

```

```

<!-- Initialized for Portrait mode. -->
<Grid.RowDefinitions>
    <RowDefinition Height="*" />
    <RowDefinition Height="Auto" />
</Grid.RowDefinitions>

<Grid.ColumnDefinitions>
    <ColumnDefinition Width="*" />
    <ColumnDefinition Width="0" />
</Grid.ColumnDefinitions>

<!-- History display. -->
<ScrollView Grid.Row="0" Grid.Column="0"
    Padding="5, 0">
    <Label Text="{Binding HistoryString}" />
</ScrollView>

<!-- Keypad. -->
<Grid x:Name="keypadGrid"
    Grid.Row="1" Grid.Column="0"
    RowSpacing="2"
    ColumnSpacing="2"
    VerticalOptions="Center"
    HorizontalOptions="Center">

    <Grid.WidthRequest>
        <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="x:Double"
            iOS="240"
            Android="240"
            WinPhone="360" />
    </Grid.WidthRequest>

    <Grid.HeightRequest>
        <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="x:Double"
            iOS="360"
            Android="360"
            WinPhone="540" />
    </Grid.HeightRequest>

    <Grid.Resources>
        <ResourceDictionary>
            <Style TargetType="Button">
                <Setter Property="FontSize" Value="Large" />
                <Setter Property="BorderWidth" Value="1" />
            </Style>
        </ResourceDictionary>
    </Grid.Resources>

    <Label Text="{Binding CurrentEntry}"
        Grid.Row="0" Grid.Column="0" Grid.ColumnSpan="4"
        FontSize="Large"
        LineBreakMode="HeadTruncation"

```

```

        VerticalOptions="Center"
        XAlign="End" />

<Button Text="C"
        Grid.Row="1" Grid.Column="0"
        Command="{Binding ClearCommand}" />

<Button Text="CE"
        Grid.Row="1" Grid.Column="1"
        Command="{Binding ClearEntryCommand}" />

<Button Text="&#x21E6;"
        Grid.Row="1" Grid.Column="2"
        Command="{Binding BackspaceCommand}" />

<Button Text="+"
        Grid.Row="1" Grid.Column="3" Grid.RowSpan="5"
        Command="{Binding AddCommand}" />

<Button Text="7"
        Grid.Row="2" Grid.Column="0"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="7" />

<Button Text="8"
        Grid.Row="2" Grid.Column="1"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="8" />

<Button Text="9"
        Grid.Row="2" Grid.Column="2"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="9" />

<Button Text="4"
        Grid.Row="3" Grid.Column="0"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="4" />

<Button Text="5"
        Grid.Row="3" Grid.Column="1"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="5" />

<Button Text="6"
        Grid.Row="3" Grid.Column="2"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="6" />

<Button Text="1"
        Grid.Row="4" Grid.Column="0"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"

```

```

        CommandParameter="1" />

<Button Text="2"
        Grid.Row="4" Grid.Column="1"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="2" />

<Button Text="3"
        Grid.Row="4" Grid.Column="2"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="3" />

<Button Text="0"
        Grid.Row="5" Grid.Column="0" Grid.ColumnSpan="2"
        Command="{Binding NumericCommand}"
        CommandParameter="0" />

<Button Text="⌵"
        Grid.Row="5" Grid.Column="2"
        Command="{Binding DecimalPointCommand}" />
</Grid>
</Grid>
</ContentPage>

```

What you won't find in the XAML file is a reference to `AdderViewModel`. For reasons you'll see shortly, `AdderViewModel` is instantiated in code.

The core of the adding-machine logic is in the `Execute` and `CanExecute` methods of the six `ICommand` properties. These properties are all initialized in the `AdderViewModel` constructor shown below, and the `Execute` and `CanExecute` methods are all lambda functions.

When only one lambda function appears in the `Command` constructor, that's the `Execute` method (as the parameter name indicates) and the `Button` is always enabled. This is the case for `ClearCommand` and `ClearEntryCommand`.

All the others have two lambda functions. The first is the `Execute` method and the second is the `CanExecute` method. The `CanExecute` method returns `true` if the `Button` should be enabled and `false` otherwise.

All the `ICommand` properties are set with the non-generic form of the `Command` class except for `NumericCommand`, which requires an argument to the `Execute` and `CanExecute` methods to identify which key has been tapped:

```

public class AdderViewModel : ViewModelBase
{
    ...

    bool isSumDisplayed = false;
    double accumulatedSum = 0;

```

```

public AdderViewModel()
{
    ClearCommand = new Command(
        execute: () =>
        {
            HistoryString = "";
            accumulatedSum = 0;
            CurrentEntry = "0";
            isSumDisplayed = false;
            RefreshCanExecutes();
        });

    ClearEntryCommand = new Command(
        execute: () =>
        {
            CurrentEntry = "0";
            isSumDisplayed = false;
            RefreshCanExecutes();
        });

    BackspaceCommand = new Command(
        execute: () =>
        {
            CurrentEntry = CurrentEntry.Substring(0, CurrentEntry.Length - 1);

            if (CurrentEntry.Length == 0)
            {
                CurrentEntry = "0";
            }

            RefreshCanExecutes();
        },
        canExecute: () =>
        {
            return !isSumDisplayed && (CurrentEntry.Length > 1 || CurrentEntry[0] != '0');
        });

    NumericCommand = new Command<string>(
        execute: (string parameter) =>
        {
            if (isSumDisplayed || CurrentEntry == "0")
                CurrentEntry = parameter;
            else
                CurrentEntry += parameter;

            isSumDisplayed = false;
            RefreshCanExecutes();
        },
        canExecute: (string parameter) =>
        {
            return isSumDisplayed || CurrentEntry.Length < 16;
        });
}

```



```

DecimalPointCommand = new Command(
    execute: () =>
    {
        if (isSumDisplayed)
            CurrentEntry = "0.";
        else
            CurrentEntry += ".";

        isSumDisplayed = false;
        RefreshCanExecutes();
    },
    canExecute: () =>
    {
        return isSumDisplayed || !CurrentEntry.Contains(".");
    });

AddCommand = new Command(
    execute: () =>
    {
        double value = Double.Parse(CurrentEntry);
        HistoryString += value.ToString() + " + ";
        accumulatedSum += value;
        CurrentEntry = accumulatedSum.ToString();
        isSumDisplayed = true;
        RefreshCanExecutes();
    },
    canExecute: () =>
    {
        return !isSumDisplayed;
    });
}

void RefreshCanExecutes()
{
    ((Command)BackspaceCommand).ChangeCanExecute();
    ((Command)NumericCommand).ChangeCanExecute();
    ((Command)DecimalPointCommand).ChangeCanExecute();
    ((Command)AddCommand).ChangeCanExecute();
}

...
}

```

All the `Execute` methods conclude by calling a method following the constructor named `RefreshCanExecute`. This method calls the `ChangeCanExecute` method of each of the four `Command` objects that implement `CanExecute` methods. That method call causes the `Command` object to fire a `ChangeCanExecute` event. The corresponding `Button` has installed a handler for this event. The `Button` then makes another call to the `CanExecute` method to determine if the `Button` should be enabled or not.

It is not necessary for every `Execute` method to conclude with a call to all four `ChangeCanExecute` methods. For example, the `ChangeCanExecute` method for the `DecimalPointCommand` need not be called when the `Execute` method for `NumericCommand` executes. However, it turned out to be easier—both in terms of logic and code consolidation—to simply call them all after every key tap.

You might be more comfortable implementing these `Execute` and `CanExecute` methods as regular methods rather than lambda functions. Or you might be more comfortable having just one `Command` object that handles all the keys. Each key could have an identifying `CommandParameter` string and you could distinguish between them with a `switch` and `case` statement.

There are lots of ways to implement the commanding logic, but I think it's clear that the use of commanding tends to structure the code in a flexible and ideal way.

Once the adding logic is in place, why not add a couple more buttons for subtraction, multiplication, and division?

Well, it's not quite so easy to go from one operation to multiple operations. If the program supports multiple operations, then when the user types one of the operation keys, that operation needs to be saved to await the next number. Only after the next number is completed (signaled by the press of another operation key or the equals key) is that saved operation applied.

An easier approach would be to write a Reverse Polish Notation (RPN) calculator, where the operation *follows* the entry of the second number. The simplicity of RPN logic is one big reason why RPN calculators appeal to programmers so much!

ViewModels and the application lifecycle

In a real calculator program on a mobile device, one important feature involves saving the entire state of the calculator when the program is terminated, and restoring it when the program starts up again.

And once again, the concept of the `ViewModel` seems to break down.

Sure it's possible to write some application code that accesses the public properties of the `ViewModel` and saves them, but the state of the calculator depends on private fields as well. The `isSumDisplayed` and `accumulatedSum` fields of `AdderViewModel` are essential for restoring the calculator's state.

It's obvious that code external to the `AdderViewModel` can't save and restore the `AdderViewModel` state without the `ViewModel` exposing more public properties. There's only one class that knows what's necessary to represent the entire internal state of a `ViewModel`, and that's the `ViewModel` itself.

The solution is for the `ViewModel` to define public methods that save and restore its internal state. But these methods must be defined by the `ViewModel`, so they shouldn't use anything specific to a

particular platform. These methods shouldn't access the `Xamarin.Forms Application` object and then add items to (or retrieve items from) the `Properties` dictionary of that `Application` object. That is much too specific to `Xamarin.Forms`.

However, working with a generic `IDictionary` object in methods named `SaveState` and `RestoreState` is possible in any .NET environment, and that's how `AdderViewModel` implements these methods:

```
public class AdderViewModel : ViewModelBase
{
    ...

    public void SaveState(IDictionary<string, object> dictionary)
    {
        dictionary["CurrentEntry"] = CurrentEntry;
        dictionary["HistoryString"] = HistoryString;
        dictionary["isSumDisplayed"] = isSumDisplayed;
        dictionary["accumulatedSum"] = accumulatedSum;
    }

    public void RestoreState(IDictionary<string, object> dictionary)
    {
        CurrentEntry = GetDictionaryEntry(dictionary, "CurrentEntry", "0");
        HistoryString = GetDictionaryEntry(dictionary, "HistoryString", "");
        isSumDisplayed = GetDictionaryEntry(dictionary, "isSumDisplayed", false);
        accumulatedSum = GetDictionaryEntry(dictionary, "accumulatedSum", 0.0);

        RefreshCanExecutes();
    }

    public T GetDictionaryEntry<T>(IDictionary<string, object> dictionary,
                                   string key, T defaultValue)
    {
        if (dictionary.ContainsKey(key))
            return (T)dictionary[key];

        return defaultValue;
    }
}
```

The code in **AddingMachine** involved in saving and restoring this state is mostly implemented in the `App` class. The `App` class is responsible for instantiating the `AdderViewModel` and calling `RestoreState` using the `Properties` dictionary of the current `Application` class. That `AdderViewModel` is then passed as an argument to the `AddingMachinePage` constructor:

```
public class App : Application
{
    AdderViewModel adderViewModel;
```

```

public App()
{
    // Instantiate and initialize ViewModel for page.
    adderViewModel = new AdderViewModel();
    adderViewModel.RestoreState(Current.Properties);
    MainPage = new AddingMachinePage(adderViewModel);
}

protected override void OnStart()
{
    // Handle when your app starts
}

protected override void OnSleep()
{
    // Handle when your app sleeps
    adderViewModel.SaveState(Current.Properties);
}

protected override void OnResume()
{
    // Handle when your app resumes
}
}

```

The `App` class is also responsible for calling `SaveState` on `AdderViewModel` during processing of the `OnSleep` method.

The `AddingMachinePage` constructor merely needs to set the instance of `AdderViewModel` to the page's `BindingContext` property. The code-behind file also manages the switch between portrait and landscape layouts:

```

public partial class AddingMachinePage : ContentPage
{
    public AddingMachinePage(AdderViewModel viewModel)
    {
        InitializeComponent();

        // Set ViewModel as BindingContext.
        BindingContext = viewModel;
    }

    void OnPageSizeChanged(object sender, EventArgs args)
    {
        // Portrait mode.
        if (Width < Height)
        {
            mainGrid.RowDefinitions[1].Height = GridLength.Auto;
            mainGrid.ColumnDefinitions[1].Width = new GridLength(0, GridUnitType.Absolute);

            Grid.SetRow(keypadGrid, 1);
            Grid.SetColumn(keypadGrid, 0);
        }
    }
}

```

```
    }  
    // Landscape mode.  
    else  
    {  
        mainGrid.RowDefinitions[1].Height = new GridLength(0, GridUnitType.Absolute);  
        mainGrid.ColumnDefinitions[1].Width = GridLength.Auto;  
  
        Grid.SetRow(keypadGrid, 0);  
        Grid.SetColumn(keypadGrid, 1);  
    }  
}
```

The **AddingMachine** program demonstrates one way to handle the ViewModel, but it's not the only way. Alternatively, it's possible for `App` to continue to instantiate the `AdderViewModel` but define a property of type `AdderViewModel` that the constructor of `AddingMachinePage` can access.

Or if you want the page to have full control over the ViewModel, you can do that as well. `AddingMachinePage` can define its own `OnSleep` method that is called from the `OnSleep` method in the `App` class, and the page class can also handle the instantiation of `AdderViewModel` and the calling of the `RestoreState` and `SaveState` methods. However, this approach might become somewhat clumsy for multipage applications.

In a multipage application, you might have separate ViewModels for each page, perhaps deriving from a ViewModel with properties applicable to the entire application. In such a case, you'll want to avoid properties with the same name using the same dictionary keys for saving each ViewModel's state. You can use more extensive dictionary keys that include the class name, for example, "Adder-ViewModel.CurrentEntry".

Although the power and advantages of data binding and ViewModels should be apparent by now, these features really blossom when used with the Xamarin.Forms `ListView`. That's up in the next chapter.