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Skinning Components in Flex 4

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Agenda

A. Halo vs Spark Components
B. What is Skinning?
C. Skin/Component Interaction
D. Creating and Applying Skins
E. Examples
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Halo vs Spark Components

Halo components are the base set of components that are a part of the Flex 3 framework.

These components have the look and feel of the component directly connected to the logic and methods of the component.

Too much time spent in Actionscript code.

Halo vs Spark Components (cont.)

Spark is the new component architecture found in the Flex 4 framework – based on the Halo system.

The look and feel have been pulled away from the logic and methods.

An MXML-based skin class defines the look and feel of the component.

Halo vs Spark Components (cont.)

Take a quick look at the some visual differences between a Halo and Spark component.

What is Skinning?

Skinning (skin ▪ ning): *transitive verb*

1. to cover with or as with skin
2. the process of changing a component's appearance by modifying its visual elements

What is Skinning? (cont.)

The process of skinning in Flex 4 is very different from how it was done in previous versions of Flex.

The skin class not only defines the look and feel but can also define the layout and allow the creation of transitions and effects.

Flex 4 skinning is more powerful, easier, and more intuitive!

What is Skinning? (cont.)

There are graphical skins that can be embedded:

JPEG, GIF, PNG, SVG, SWF, and any other file type as a bitmap array.

There are declarative skins:

Flash XML Graphics (FXG)

There are programmatic skins:

Extending UIComponent, ProgramaticSkin, etc
Using the Drawing API

Skin/Component Interaction

In order for the skin to interact with the component there must be a *contract* defined.

There are three parts to this *contract*:

Skin States

Data

Parts

Skin/Component Interaction (cont.)

The component defines the following three pieces of the *contract*:

Data: Component properties accessed by the skin

(example) [Bindable] public var title:String;

Parts: Help define the component

(example) [SkinPart] public var upButton:Button;

States: Defines the various component states

(example) [SkinStates("up")] public class Button{ …

Skin/Component Interaction (cont.)

The skin responds to them:

Data: Allows the skin to access component properties

(example) text="{hostComponent.title}"

Parts: These help define the component

(example) <s:Button id="upButton" />

States: Change appearance based on component state

(example) <s:State name="up" />

Creating and Applying Skins

Skins are typically created using Spark skin classes, written in MXML.

The MXML typically used FXG to draw the graphical elements. You can also use embedded images.

The skin class is typically applied to the component using CSS or MXML.

Creating and Applying Skins (cont.)

Flash XML Graphics (FXG) is a declarative, xml-based language used for interchanging graphics among application that support it.

FXG can be exported from other Adobe tools such as Fireworks CS4, Adobe Photoshop CS4, and Adobe Illustrator CS4

FXG can be used in MXML or in a standalone document.

Examples

Skinned Simple Button

Skinned Button with States and Transitions

Skinned Button with Filters

Skinned ButtonBar

Q&A

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