ColdFusion 8 Beta is Released by Adobe

Posted At : June 20, 2007 1:19 PM | Posted By : Christian Ready
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ColdFusion 8 Beta is Released by Adobe
By Derek Vaughan

The wait is over and the latest version of ColdFusion has just been released in beta. Code named 'Scorpio' (the eighth sign of the Zodiac) during the development stages, the new release is officially named ColdFusion 8 and has just recently been made available for free trial beta accounts through select ColdFusion web hosting providers.

Mr. Tim Buntel, Senior Product Marketing Manager, ColdFusion at Adobe and Mr. Monish Sood, Director of Marketing with ColdFusion webhost, HostMySite.com were kind enough to help us learn more about the new release, it's features, and how to get started with a free beta account.

First the basics - the new beta release has been available since May 30, 2007. At this point the full commercial release of ColdFusion 8 is anticipated to be in a couple of months. Adobe hasn't set a specific date yet, as the company is leaving a bit of time to react should they discover anything through the public beta. According to the company that puts the estimated delivery of the full releases at pretty much dead center of the calendar year.

When asked to distill the key features of the new ColdFusion 8 into a brief statement, Mr. Buntel stated, "The tip of the iceberg on new features is already a pretty long list. I think if I had to say one thing about the release, this is Adobe ColdFusion. ColdFusion 8 shows what happens when you inject ColdFusion with Adobe's DNA.

It's really about making this great experience for the application user, with a whole slew of new features: PDF's, rich Internet applications, and multimedia presentations - simply a much more meaningful experience for users. There is also a lot more integration in the enterprise. We're Doing for .NET what we've done for Java in the past. Plus Exchange integration. Then also enhancing the developer's experience."

One feature that's getting considerable attention is the ability of ColdFusion 8 to invoke .NET components directly from ColdFusion Markup Language (CFML). This is true for both local or remote .NET components. According to Adobe the new feature works much like cfobject/CreateObject for java. Here's how Tim Buntel describes it: "There are organizations that have both java and .NET development work going on, whether through acquisition or size or different divisions or different areas of the world. ColdFusion has been in a great position over the years to build an application with ColdFusion, if you were doing java development as well - no problem. ColdFusion can take advantage of those java assets within the ColdFusion language for it's own application. So now we're able to do the same thing for .NET. If some group in your organization is writing a specific piece of business logic in .NET - up until now the ColdFusion application couldn't take advantage of that development work that the .NET team was doing - except maybe with SOAP services - but there were some issues with that. Now your ColdFusion team can leverage that business logic that the .NET team developed within ColdFusion in a much easier and efficient way than you could have with web services.

For the .NET guys the important thing to them is that they don't have to change their code. The primary way today that you would bridge java and .NET would be with .NET remoting - but that would require the .NET team to change their .NET. They would actually have to compile .NET assemblies to use remoting, but they don't want to have to do that. ColdFusion 8 will allow you to access .NET directly from ColdFusion without the .NET team having to do any additional work. We're unique as a java into .NET bridge without using either web services or .NET remoting."

Other new features of note - the ability to monitor the server applications in production. According to information supplied by Adobe, the server monitoring will permit developers to diagnose slow pages queries and threads, track memory usage, manage active threads, and monitor database usage. Added in this version as well is the ability to create on-demand presentations with a customizable look and feel. ColdFusion 8 will also further improve the Flex/ColdFusion connectivity through data exchange simplification and a simpler architecture.

So the new features look good, but what if you are satisfied with the current ColdFusion version that you're running today? Mr. Buntel explained the benefits of upgrading to ColdFusion 8, "First and foremost in terms of people who are running ColdFusion today - There are compelling reasons to move to ColdFusion 8 even if you don't rewrite a single line of code that you're currently running in ColdFusion version 7 or 6.1 or 6. Simply moving your applications to ColdFusion 8 will yield a whole range of benefits. It's going to be faster, it's going to be more stable, and you're going to have the ability to monitor those applications in production.

Existing ColdFusion developers are going to be able to take advantage of all of these features very quickly and easily. As well, people who are getting into rich Internet application development, and want to find the easiest and most productive server side compliment for a rich Internet app. So if you're doing AJAX or you're doing Flex, or flash for rich client, ColdFusion 8 is going to allow those applications to talk to databases and object services and enterprise infrastructure very easily and make you productive to hook that rich Internet app up to all of those back end services.

To get started, if you feel comfortable installing ColdFusion on your own computer or workstation, all you have to visit the Adobe Labs and they will provide you with the full product along with all kinds of documentation and helpful articles to get you started. You can also access multimedia demonstrations as well. That is all free. According to Tim Buntel, "A developer can just grab that and go to town".

He continued, "If you don't want to install or are unable to install the product on your machine for any reason, then with a ColdFusion hosting partner such as HostMySite.com, you'll be able to go sign up and have a small account that is running on ColdFusion 8 that will allow you to start writing code and use the features that environment. Those accounts are free as well."

With regard to the beta accounts mentioned above, Monish Sood, Director of Marketing at HostMySite.com explained the details, "The ColdFusion 8 Beta comes fully loaded with features including a 600 MB MS SQL Server database, 4 GB of disk space, and ASP.NET 3.0 framework access. We want developers to be able to test the newest release of ColdFusion in real-world situations with features that are available with our ColdFusion developer edition plans."

Mr. Sood continued, "We have worked closely with Adobe throughout the beta process to transfer all feedback from participating developers. The developers get access to production level features to test in a beta environment. HostMySite.com provides the same level of support and service for the beta as any production plan."

For further details on the new beta release of ColdFusion 8, please visit the Adobe Labs at: http://labs.adobe.com/technologies/coldfusion8.

To sign up for the free ColdFusion 8 beta account with HostMySite.com, please visit: http://www.hostmysite.com/CF8/.

About the Author

Derek Vaughan is Chief Marketing Officer with TechPad Agency, LLC - a full resource advertising and marketing agency, specializing in products and services for the web hosting industry. Mr. Vaughan's writing appears courtesy of the hosting experts at www.thehostingnews.com.