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WiX 3.6: A Developer's Guide To Windows Installer XML



Synopsis

If you're a developer needing to create installers for Microsoft Windows, then this book is essential. It's a step-by-step tutorial that teaches you all you need to know WiX 3.6: the professional way to produce a Windows installer package.

Overview Brings the reader up to speed on all of the major features of WiX, including the new bootstrapper engine, Burn. Provides a richer understanding of the underlying Windows Installer technology. Showcases the flexibility and versatility of WiX, with a few tips and tricks along the way.

In Detail The cryptic science of Windows Installer can seem far off from the practical task of simply getting something installed. Luckily, we have WiX to simplify the matter. WiX is an XML markup, distributed with an open-source compiler and linker, used to produce a Windows Installer package. It is used by Microsoft and by countless other companies around the world to simplify deployments. "WiX 3.6: A Developer's Guide to Windows Installer XML" promises a friendly welcome into the world of Windows Installer. Starting off with a simple, practical example and continuing on with increasingly advanced scenarios, the reader will have a well-rounded education by book's end. With the help of this book, you'll understand your installer better, create it in less time, and save money in the process. No one really wants to devote a lifetime to understanding how to create a hassle-free installer. Learn to build a sophisticated deployment solution targeting the Windows platform in no time with this hands-on practical guide. Here we speed you through the basics and zoom right into the advanced. You'll get comfortable with components, features, conditions and actions. By the end, you'll be boasting your latest deployment victories at the local pub. Once you've finished "WiX 3.6: A Developer's Guide to Windows Installer XML", you'll realize just how powerful and awesome an installer can really be.

What you will learn from this book Register with Add/Remove Programs and build in a consistent way to uninstall your software. Customize an easy to navigate install Wizard. Gain an understanding of the order in which events happen during an install and how to hook into this process. Learn how WiX builds and links your files into the final MSI package and how to fine tune this process. Make your project more modular with Fragments, Components, and ComponentGroups. Prevent users from installing your software on unsupported operating systems and introduce other prerequisite checks. Install, start, stop, and uninstall Windows services at the time of setup. Bootstrap required dependencies before installing your own software.

Approach A step-by-step tutorial with plenty of code and examples to improve your learning curve.

Who this book is written for If you are a developer and want to create installers for software targeting the Windows platform, then this book is for you. You'll be using plenty of XML and ought to know the basics of writing a well-formed document. No prior experience in WiX or Windows Installer is assumed. You should know your way

around Visual Studio to compile projects, add project references and tweak project properties.

Book Information

Paperback: 488 pages

Publisher: Packt Publishing; 2 edition (December 17, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1782160426

ISBN-13: 978-1782160427

Product Dimensions: 7.5 x 1.1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (22 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #223,750 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 inÂ Books > Computers & Technology > Programming > Languages & Tools > XML #1389 inÂ Books > Computers & Technology > Computer Science #3661 inÂ Books > Textbooks > Computer Science

Customer Reviews

I have realized that this probably is one of the better books on WiX, and I would certainly recommend it to other users: Lots of practical examples, clearly highlighting the essentials. Especially the first few chapters lead you by the hand to get you started, in order to gain practical experience yourself. Language is consise, clear and not too wordy. Yet the book has a few shortcomings. The major one could easily be remedied in the next edition: The index isn't worth much. Every single term I would try to look up is missing, and I must resort to sequential search through the text (or to googling). Not even XML element names are generally available as lookup terms. This makes the book poorly suited as a reference for the half-studied reader who now and then have to resort to reading the documentation, but with no time to sit down to review a long series of tutorials, no matter how instructional they are. My second complaint requires more extensive work: The book is good at telling what to do, but not why. The line of thought, the logic behind the curtains, does not come through very cleary. Again and again, my co-workers and I struggle for days to get things right, going out on the wrong tracks again and again, because we assume a different sort of logic. Once we grasp 'the big picture', we see the meaning of those details in the book, and exclaim "But why didn't you explain WHY?" After all, few textbook examples fit exactly to your problem, and then you must have a somewhat deeper understanding of the internals to work efficiently. The book takes some steps in the right direction, e.g. by explaining the sequence of steps in the installation process, but it requires a great effort from the reader to

relate various parts of the WiX markup to these steps. Extending the index to five times its current size would alone change my rating from a high 3 to a high 4. To reach a 5 would take a lot of revision to make the reader not only learn WiX, but understand WiX and the Windows installer. After reading this book from start to end, you still have a long way to go to truly understand WiX and msixexec.

This book was excellent. I pretty much had a day to learn how to move from ClickOnce to a packaged deployment and this made the learning curve that is associated with WiX so much easier. I tried not to buy it and just read the documentation, but that was slow going. I couldn't recommend this book enough.

I've been using WiX for several years so I have the benefit of having already surmounted the enormous learning curve that comes with beginning WiX. Unfortunately, my team members and I only use Wix just prior to shipping our products so a couple of times a year we jump back into WiX and tend to reminisce about how many sleepless nights this framework has caused us! I was spending so much time re-reading the documentation over the years that I decided it was high time to purchase a book that I could keep on my desk and refer to. Let me express my gratitude that this book has been published. It's an excellent resource and I'm not afraid to admit that I learned a few things I did not know (which I wasn't expecting). The author covers all the core basic topics without stagnating too long on any one area. From the MSI execution sequence to Launch Conditions, everything you need to know is covered to an extent where you can become productive after just a few chapters. I can tell you that back in 2011 it took me about a week of non-stop hacking at a WiX project to figure out how to send properties entered by the user into a form (during the InstallUISequence) to a deferred CustomAction being executed in commit mode (during the InstallExecuteSequence). I was more than impressed that the author dedicated a whole page to this specific scenario (imagine your installer is placing down a file, like web.config, and you need to update that file based on a value the user enters in the user interface). The only real complaint I have with the book is the total absence of any mention of the `lisExtension` and `SqlExtension`, which allow you to deploy Web Sites/Web Services and SQL databases natively in WiX without the need for any custom action code. The good news is that once you understand the basics, digging into all the extensions (such as `lisExtension`) takes little effort since you already understand the framework. If you have even a passing interest in WiX then purchasing this book is a no-brainer. If you're the kind of programmer that thinks you can pick up and use Wix effectively simply by reading

the WiX documentation stop that thought right now and consider how valuable your time is. It's true what they say about the learning curve in WiX but it's tight integration with Visual Studio, ability to run native .NET custom actions, and it's extension versatility make it much more useful for most .NET programmers when compared to NSIS or InstallShield.

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