



Procession

Frequently Asked Questions

I have mapped out my business process using a third party modelling tool, how can Procession use this map to build an application?

Procession has an XML Design Gateway that allows for processes defined in XML to be imported. If your modelling tool allows you to export your process map as XML then a transformation stylesheet can be used to transform this XML into the format required by the XML Design Gateway. This will then form the backbone of your application. You can then use Procession's development tools to refine and complete the build.

For what third party tools are transformation stylesheets provided?

We do not currently provide any transformation stylesheets for third party tools, however these can be written on a customer requirements basis.

What development tools are provided with Procession?

Procession provides three tools for developing your application. The Graphical Process Design (GPD), an extension to Dreamweaver, and the Copy and Versioning tool. The GPD is used for building the process and its components. The extension to Dreamweaver is used to create JSPs for the application's user interface. The extension places custom tags into the JSP which allow interaction with the Process Engine. The Copy and Versioning tool allows you to make a copy of a live process, modify it using the GPD, make the new process live and then, most importantly, manage the instances from the original process across to the new process.

Can I use third party development tools?

For the creation of the user interface, any tool that allows you to develop JSPs can be used. However you must include the tags from Procession's Tag Library if you wish the page to interact with the Process Engine. Due to the unique way that Procession stores the process definition, only the GPD can be used for the building of the process and its components.

Can I use third party libraries in my application?

Since the JSP is executed by the Servlet Container and not the Process Engine, any library that can run inside a Servlet Container can be used as part of the JSP.

Can the user interface pages of my application use AJAX?

Procession has an XML Runtime Gateway that can transfer data in XML format. AJAX (Asynchronised JavaScript and XML) can be used, from a web page, to send XML through the gateway and receive XML from it, creating a rich user interface.

Can the XML Runtime Gateway be used by any external system?

The XML Runtime Gateway can send and receive XML over HTTP/HTTPS to/from any source, therefore any external system with the ability to send/receive XML via HTTP/HTTPS can use the XML Runtime Gateway. If the external system cannot handle the XML format required by the Runtime Gateway then a transformation stylesheet can be written and the runtime gateway can use this to transform the XML into the format required.

Do the development tools automatically generate the deployment descriptors for my application, and will it be deployable on any Application Server?

The only deployment descriptor that is required is for the presentation layer. A web.xml file is provided that has all the servlets used by the Presentation Layer already entered. This deployment descriptor does not have any vendor specific entries included and therefore should deploy on any Application Server. Since the application specific user interface is created using JSPs, which do not require an entry in the deployment descriptor, then there should be little requirement to modify this file. So the Procession development tools do not generate deployment descriptors for your application. If, however, you do require the ability to modify this file, then this can be achieved by any third party tool that can modify deployment descriptors.

What about EJBs?

Procession does not use EJBs, this means we do not have to deal with the vendor specific descriptors for the EJB containers.

If Procession does not use EJBs then how are the objects for the business logic of my application created?

Procession stores the process definition in tables inside the database, Then at runtime the engine interrogates these tables to decide who does what, when and how in the application. No code is generated or compiled for this to happen.

How does Procession integrate with other systems?

Procession uses its SSXMQ, (Server Side Message Queue) to integrate with other systems. This is done via an adaptor that has been written for that system. This is then executed from the SSXMQ task in your process.

What SSXMQ adaptors are included as standard?

Some of the SSXMQ adaptors included with a Procession installation are as follows:

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| The Email adaptor: | This allows the sending of email from Procession via a SMTP Mail Server. |
| The JDBC adaptor | This allows the transfer of data to/from Procession via JDBC. |
| The JMS adaptor | This allows the sending of messages to a JMS provider. |
| The XML Transformation adaptor | This allows the sending of XML via standard protocols, e.g. HTTP. |
| The Web Services adaptor | This allows the invoking of Web Services. |

If the integration cannot be performed via one of the standard adaptors then a custom adaptor can be written.

How do you deploy Procession Applications?

Processes are deployed into a Procession installation using the Copy and Versioning tool. The Presentation Layer including all the JSPs for the application is deployed using a standard war file, which can be deployed by any servlet container.

If I need to modify my process due to the business rules changing, how does Procession handle the versioning of processes in a production environment?

It is not good practice to modify live processes because any modification can have a knock-on effect within the process being modified. The correct approach is to make a copy of the existing process and make modifications to that copy. The copy, once tested, is made live and all new instances of that process go through the modified copy. If instances of the original process also need to go through the modified copy, then it is possible to move (version) those instances across from the original process to the copy.

What skills are required in order to build an application using Proccession?

There are 3 elements involved with building a process application. Firstly, to design and build the processes, you will need business and process analyst skills together with the ability to create data designs and write SQL. Secondly, to design and build the user interface, web design skills will be required; and on the occasions that you use the XML gateways, knowledge of transformation stylesheets will be needed. Thirdly, in the rare circumstances that you need a custom adaptor for the SSXMQ, the ability to program in Java will be needed.

How long does it take to be trained so that I can build an application using Proccession?

Our normal training program consists of 2 three-day training programs, separated by 2 to 4 weeks during which we recommend that you use one or more members of our professional services team to help you build your first few processes.

What are folios

Folios are how Proccession stores application data. These are tables in the database. Proccession automatically adds an additional IDENTIFIER column to the table, when created, which is the primary key.

With Proccession, is it possible to analyse the amount of time is spent on a given task?

With Proccession, time is an important factor, the Process Engine automatically records who did what task and how long they took. Therefore reports can be created that analyse the amount of time a performer spends on a task or group of tasks (activity.)

Is it possible to see the human resource allocation in real time, i.e. who is currently working on what and how many tasks they have been allocated?

The Process Engine stores the current state of all process instances, i.e. what the current tasks are and who they are allocated to. This means that reports can be created that show what stages each of the process instances have reached and to whom the tasks are assigned. This then allows an analysis to be performed to see where the bottleneck in any process is so that more resource can be applied to it.

Is it possible to run simulations of the application with varying factors, like the time taken to complete a task or the performer of the task?

Proccession does not have a simulation engine and therefore cannot run simulations. However, since the application built using Proccession is a web application, standard testing software for web applications can be used to simulate various conditions like the time taken to complete a task, the performer of a task or the number of performers accessing the system at any given time.

What additional software is required for Proccession?

The minimum software required to use Proccession is as follows:

Process Engine:	Oracle 8i Database
Presentation Layer	Servlet 2.3/JSP1.2 Container or a Java EE 1.3 Application Server
SSXMQ	Java 1.3.1
User Interface	Microsoft Internet Explorer 5 or a Mozilla 5 browser (Netscape 6+, Firefox, Mozilla 1.x, etc.)
Development Tools	Microsoft Windows 32bit Operating System Oracle 8i client Dreamweaver 4

Why is Oracle required, can't I use another database, (DB2, Sybase, SQL Server etc.) ?

The Process Engine is written in Oracle PL/SQL and therefore Oracle is required to run the Process Engine.

Is there a .NET version available?

No.

What will be available in future versions of Proccession?

The next stage in the development of Proccession is to create a Process Engine written in Java. This will remove the requirement for Oracle and will enable any persistence store to be used. Once we have a Java Process Engine, we can look at porting this to the .NET Framework.