ColdFusion 8 has been out for a while and has been talked about for months. You probably could name five to ten top features. As with each release, there are product Top 10 lists, marketing materials, and user group/conference talks that focus on those features. They help sell the new release. But there are also always little hidden gems which don’t get as much press. Sometimes these may be the answer to a long-nagging problem.

Now, if you read all the blogs and the documentation (the CFML Reference, or better yet the Developer’s Guide that many miss), as well as the Release Notes, the “What’s New” documents and pages on the Adobe site, you may well come across many such hidden gems. Sadly, developers don’t often have the time to do that, so about June, I started giving a Hidden Gems talk for ColdFusion 8, pointing out all those that I or others had found. It grew to over 75 items!

I can’t possibly list them all here, but these are just a few that I think are of value to most developers (in no particular order):

- `ArrayIsDefined()`, to test for existence of a potentially empty element in an array.
- `CFINPUT` has a new `input="datefield"` that offers a nifty calendar popup in HTML.
- Indeed, there is now a purely HTML `CFGRID` with lots of power and ease of use.
- `CFLOOP` can loop over arrays, as well as files by line or by character.
- `CFDUMP` has new show, hide, keys, output, format, and metainfo attributes.
- `AttributeCollection` attribute lets you dynamically pass in attributes to most tags.
- `CFDBINFO` gives you info on tables, columns, SPs, indexes, keys, and more.
- There are attributes and functions for securing Ajax calls (`VerifyClient`, `SecureJSON`).
- There are dozens of things you can do with PDFs using `CFPDF` that may surprise you.
- The CF8 Server Monitor has many features that impose no overhead at all.
- `CFIMAGE` can create captchas.
- All tags and functions work in CF 8 Standard. Those that were formerly Enterprise-only now run but may be single-threaded through the Enterprise Feature Router (EFR) feature.
- ColdFusion now includes an embedded cross-platform, open-source database, called Derby.
- You can now force a refresh of ColdFusion’s cached web service info when invoking the service.
- An Admin can prevent use of the ServiceFactory and other internal ColdFusion Java objects without disabling access to all Java objects.
- `CFMAIL` and the Admin mail settings now support SSL and TLS.
- You can now have multiple user accounts for the Admin and for RDS, and RDS sandboxing.
- Admin API method `runtime.cleartrustedcache()` can take a list of file(s) to flush from the template cache.
- There is a dramatic performance improvement related to memory use when uploading files to ColdFusion.
Adobe offers an enhanced set of Eclipse extensions, including the debugger, a log viewer, and
an Ajax application generation wizard—on top of things released for Eclipse in 7.02.
Adobe has offered ColdFusion 8 tag updates for Dreamweaver and HomeSite/HomeSite+/CF
Studio.
While the ColdFusion 8 Getting Started Experience wasn’t in the download, it is available online,
including the code snippets explorer offering live demos/source code for using most new tags/
functions.
There is already a Cumulative HotFix 1, for those who like to wait for an update to a new
release.

Some may ask, “What about things like implicit array creation, the nifty JavaScript-
style operators, the ability to use CFQUERYPARAM in cached queries, per application
settings, CFZIP, and so much more?” Well, I said I couldn’t list all 75 here! To see the
complete list, check out my user group presentation, which is available online at
http://carehart.org/presentations/cf8gems. To give you a sense of the wealth of changes in
ColdFusion 8, I’ve grouped my talk into the following sections:

(Part 1) Coding Gems, Query-related Gems, CFC Gems, Miscellaneous Tag Enhancements,
Miscellaneous New Tags You Might Have Missed, Miscellaneous Function Enhancements;

(Part 2) Performance Gems, Editor Gems, Gems Related to Ajax Features, PDF Features,
Gems Within Other New Features, Admin Console Gems; and

(Part 3) Doc Change Gems, Platform Support, Enterprise vs. Standard, CF8 Hotfixes, and
Resources for Learning More.

With so much information, I’ve found I can no longer fit it into an hour-long user group
talk, so I’ve decided to change it into a class, likely half-day, adding much more detail,
code examples, live demos, and more. The user group presentation will still remain on the
site (in its abbreviated form) listing all the items and what detail I can present in a typical,
hour-long CFUG talk. If you might be interested in the class, please drop me a note at
charlie@carehart.org. That will help me gauge the level of interest.

A veteran ColdFusion developer since 1997, Charlie Arehart is a longtime contributor to
the community and a recognized Adobe Community Expert. He’s a certified Advanced
CF Developer and Instructor for CF 4/5/6/7 who served as tech editor of the ColdFusion
Developers Journal until 2003. Now an independent contractor living in Alpharetta GA,
Charlie provides high-level troubleshooting/tuning assistance and training/mentoring
for CF teams (carehart.org/consulting). He helps run the Online ColdFusion Meetup
coldfusionmeetup.com, an online CF user group), is a contributor to the CF8 WACK books
by Ben Forta, and is frequently invited to speak to developer conferences and user groups
worldwide.