GETTING GOING WITH COLDFUSION BUILDER

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Slide deck:
carehart.org/presentations

- CFBuilder: the free extension for the free VSCode editor
  - Some common initial questions
  - Installation (including on vscodium)
- Features and benefits
  - VSCode features
  - CFB basic features
  - CFB configurability; features which require additional configuration (in CFB and/or CF)
- Comparison to other VSCode CFML extensions
  - What they offer that CFBuilder does not; What CFBuilder offers that they do not
- Some more on CFB and VSCode
- Resources for finding more on both

TOPICS

- I focus on CF server troubleshooting, as an independent consultant
  - Assist organizations of all sizes, experience levels
  - Work remotely 99% of the time, safe, secure, easy (via **shared desktop**)
  - **Solve most problems in less than an hour**, teaching you also as we go
  - **Satisfaction guaranteed**
  - More on rates, approach, online calendar, etc at *carehart.org/consulting*
- But to be clear, I'm not selling anything in this session! ☺

- Again, slides for this talk available online:
  - *carehart.org/presentations*

ME.ABOUT()

- There are many different potential audiences for this talk:
  - Those who love CFB and look forward to learning more
  - Those who have heard of CFB on VSCode and want to learn more
  - Those who knew of old Eclipse version, unaware of VSCode extension
  - Those who have never heard of CFBuilder
  - Those who have never heard of VSCode
  - Those who use VSCode or CFB, as “a text editor” and expecting nothing more
  - Those who get frustrated with not finding things they expect from other editors
  - Those who have tried CFB on VSCode and hit problems
  - Those familiar with other VSCode CFML extensions, who may fit in the above

AUDIENCES

- Before we go any further, let's make a few points clear
- VSCode is free, open source, from Microsoft
  - Formally "Visual Studio Code", aka simply "code" (NOT Visual Studio)
  - Huge marketplace of free extensions from the community and vendors
  - By some estimates, VSCode used by most developers across most languages
- CFBuilder (aka "CFB") is free, closed source, from Adobe
  - Extension first released in July 2022; a few updates since then
- Original CFBuilder: commercial and closed source, based on Eclipse
  - Last updated with CF2018, retired in 2024
- CFB on Vscode available for Windows, MacOS, Linux

CFBUILDER: THE FREE ADOBE EXTENSION FOR THE FREE MS VISUAL STUDIO CODE EDITOR

- What’s the relationship of VS Code to MS Visual Studio?
- Why did Adobe choose to leverage VSCode?
- What about existing CFML extensions for VSCode?
- Is there an available open source alternative? Yes: VSCodium (aka “codium”)
- What happened with Dreamweaver and CFStudio/HomeSite+?

SOME COMMON INITIAL QUESTIONS

- Two key resources
  - *code.visualstudio.com/docs/setup/setup-overview*
  - *helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/coldfusion-builder-extension-for-visual-studio-code/get-started-coldfusion-builder-extension-visual-studio-code.html*
- Note that CFB's design requires Java be installed, JAVA_HOME env var defined
  - More on this later
- Both tools are very simple, can start working with them within seconds (right now)
  - But with both, there's *much* you can learn to be more productive, as we will see!

INSTALLING VSCODE & CFBUILDER

- Some folks are adamantly against MS licensing, not wanting MS telemetry, etc.
- VSCodium (vscodium.com) is built from same VSCode open source
  - But no MS license (is permissive MIT license instead)
  - No MS Telemetry
    - FWIW, note that MS Telemetry can easily be DISABLED in VSCode
  - No MS branding; lacking some MS-provided features
- VSCodium also uses its own marketplace (*open-vsx.org*): CFB not offered there
- But you CAN implement easily CFB within VSCodium…

IMPLEMENTING CFB IN VSCODIUM

- You would use the VSCode feature to install an extension via its “vsix” file
- You can no longer obtain those from VSCode marketplace, but can either:
  - Install CFB on VSCode and use “download vsix” under gear on all extension pages
  - Downloading the extension at *vsixhub.com/vsix/96583/*
- Then in VSCodium, use “install from VSIX”, either:
  - From Extensions tab, under its “…” (actions), choose “install from VSIX”
  - Using Palette, type “install from VSIX”
  - Point to the vsix downloaded above, then it’s installed instantly just like on VSCode

IMPLEMENTING CFB IN VSCODIUM (CONT.)

FEATURES AND BENEFITS

- So many: code formatting, code folding, terminal, word wrap themes …
  - File comparison, timeline, git integration, emmet expansion for html/css/more, AI, more…
- Could do literally for multiple talks on these alone
  - I’ll point out at end resources for these and many more VScode capabilities
- Most available via either menus, buttons, keyboard shortcuts (configurable), or…
- Perhaps most important vscode tip: USE THE PALETTE!
  - Access with *View>Command Palette* menu or *ctrl-shift-p* (or more simply *F1*) keystroke
  - Start typing, to access world of feature possibilities
  - Note that it remembers the most recently used ones at the top

VSCODE FEATURES

- IntelliSense/Code assist
  - Cfml tags, functions, script statements appear as you start typing their name
    - Can hit enter to select before completion (or use arrows to select)
  - Hit space on tag to see popup description and attributes of tags, ctrl-space to see values
  - Tag completion (closing tag offered after ending opening tag, where appropriate)
  - Syntax help: mouse over a tag to see more help, and link to CF docs
- And still more …

CFB BASIC FEATURES

- As well as:
  - Color coding
  - Code formatting (that recognizes CFML, cfscript)
  - Hover help
  - Code navigation/outlining/folding
  - Code insertion/wrapping (comments, dump, abort, as tags or script), #s, more
- Also supports these features for HTML, JavaScript, CSS
- And there are still more powerful features. More on them in a moment
- But what if you don’t like the choices Adobe made? …

CFB BASIC FEATURES (CONT.)

CONFIGURABILITY OF CFB

- On a CFM page, click “Profile Preferences” in lower right (or use palette: *Profile Preferences*)
  - Can control tag closing, auto-quoting, indentation, white space insertion, wrapping, braces, and more
  - Also offers profiles to save grouped settings
- Still a few other settings for the CFB extension:
  - Click Extensions in sidebar, right-click installed ColdFusion Builder extension
    - choose “settings” (also available by left-click of gear icon shown for extension)
  - (Or use palette> @ext:com-adobe-coldfusion.adobe-cfml-lsp)
- …

- Can also modify/view keyboard shortcuts for CFB features
  - Use steps above but choose "keyboard shortcuts" instead of "settings" (for CFB)
  - Shown over 80 CFB features/commands and their shortcuts
    - About 1/3 have shortcuts assigned: can change/remove
    - Can add shortcuts to any of the rest
- Can also configure the shortcuts for hundreds of VSCode feature
  - (remove the search value shown at top, @ext:com-adobe-coldfusion.adobe-cfml-lsp)
  - More on configurability of VSCode, later
- Several powerful CFB features require more than just "opening a CFM file"…

CONFIGURABILITY OF CFB (CONT.)

- These include:
    - Code refactoring, “quick fix” capabilities
    - Security code analysis
    - Code profiler (in association with CF PMT)
    - Step debugging
    - Server management
    - RDS: Remote access for code, datasources, and more
    - SQL building, editor
    - Log viewer
    - Services browser
- If this was a daylong workshop I’d demonstrate each, showing their power
    - Again, other resources do that, which I offer in this talk
- Key: these need info in your CF server admin config, or the relationship of files (as “project”)…

CFB FEATURES THAT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL CONFIGURATION

- Define a “project” holding your CF code, which requires first a “workspace”
  - Workspace can technically be anywhere, just a folder where a file of metadata is put
  - Project is the actual location of your CFML code
    - That code can be anywhere, need NOT be in cf’s “wwwroot”
    - But some features will only work if it’s a folder accessible by some URL in your browser
  - *helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/coldfusion-builder-extension-for-visual-studio-code/project-manager.html*
- I just learned that a coming update will remove requirement of a workspace
- Then some features require also rely on defining connection to a CF “server”…

DEFINING A WORKSPACE, PROJECT

DEFINING A “SERVER”

- Under CF logo, configure a CF “server”, pointing to your CF instance
  - Defining access to CF instance, local or remote (domain/ip, port, RDS password)
    - If remote, your CFB machine must be able to reach that port of course
  - *helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/coldfusion-builder-extension-for-visual-studio-code/add-coldfusion-builder-vscode-extension.html* (that’s not a mistaken URL)
- Notice how this enables the RDS File View and RDS Dataview features
- Also empowers features where CFB needs CF config like datasources, mappings, etc.
  - These are what require that the “project” be connected to a “server”
  - Step debugging and security analyzer also require connection of “project” to “server”
- When pointing to Commandbox instance, may get “invalid server home” error
  - See my solution(s):
  - community.ortussolutions.com/t/commandbox-visual-studio-code-adobe-coldfusion-builder-extension-with-commandbox/9376/5

COMPARISON TO OTHER VSCODE CFML EXTENSIONS

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FAMILY TREE TIME: SOME NEW, MOST ORPHANED

- Newer/currently updated
  - **CFMLEditor** (cfmleditor.cfmleditor), from Gareth Eddies, forked from KamasamaK (below)
  - **Boxlang** (ortus-solutions.vscode-boxlang), for boxlang (with cfml support as forked from Vadim below)
- Older/orphaned/no longer updated
  - **Vscode-cfml,** from Vadim Sibiryanskiy, last updated in 2023, which was a fork of…
    - **Vscode-cfml,** aka **"CFML"**, "**Kamasamak**" (kamasamak.vscode-cfml), last updated 2022, adapted from:
      - **vscode-coldfusion ,** aka **"ColdFusion"** (ilich8086.coldfusion), from Ilya Verbitskiy, last updated 2018
  - **ColdFusion**, aka "Sketchpunk" (sketchpunk.coldfusion), last updated in 2015
  - And more (note some are Lucee-only, like "CFML Formatter")
- Beware judging them by "Install Count", older ones naturally have larger values
  - Note that VSCode default sort order is an undefined algorithm: not install count, rating, update date

- Considering all those built from kamasamak, ilya, vadim, etc.
- Things they offer (which CFB does as well)
  - Color coding, code formatting, hover help, code assist, snippets
  - Ample (different) configurability of these things
- Things they offer which CFB does not
  - Linting (static code analysis, enforcing coding standards)
    - Bundling CFLint extension (KamasamaK.vscode-cflint), which can be added to CFB
  - Don't require java like CFB, nor use of project or workspace like CFB does for some features
  - And for many people, the above may seem "enough" to code CFML on VSCode
- Things CFB offers that they do not
  - Recall those 10 features listed previously, which rely on defining a project, perhaps server

WHAT DID/DO OTHERS OFFER FOR CFML?

MORE ON CFB AND VSCODE

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- Error: “Java version greater than 7 is required to run CFML extension"
  - Must set JAVA_HOME env var
  - *helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/coldfusion-builder-extension-for-visual-studio-code/get-started-coldfusion-builder-extension-visual-studio-code.html#install*
- Again, some features won’t work unless CFB “project” is defined, others need “server”
- VSCode “Restricted mode”
  - If you open a folder that vscode does not yet recognize, it will be in “restricted mode”
  - CFB features won’t work because all extensions will be enabled or limited
  - Can choose to “trust” (the authors of) the folder in question or its parent
- Other extensions may cause conflict
  - Can “disable” for all of VSCode, or a specific workspace (no need to “uninstall”)
- …

SOME FREQUENT CFB/VSCODE CHALLENGES

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- CFB sometimes forgets/does not preserve display of projects
    - Only affects features that require that be configured, can “import” project definition
- VSCode features that may annoy you:
    - “sticky scroll”: right-click when it appears, to disable
    - “minimap” (on right): right-click and select “minimap” (to disable)
    - AI/copilot feature popups: *file>preferences>settings>disableai*
- Beware: if you open a different folder (*file>open folder*), will be prompted to save unsaved tabs
    - Doesn’t happen if you open just a file
    - What if you don’t want to lose tabs? Can instead open a new window…

SOME FREQUENT CHALLENGES (CONT.)

- You can open a new window: *File>New Window*; then *File>Open Folder*
  - Also, if that folder has no extensions associated with it yet, can choose to enable any
  - Allows you to try different extensions (no need to "uninstall" one you don't want)
- Can also open new window with new "profile" (giving it a name), and enable only some extensions
- Note when viewing files in file explorer (top left icon in vscode):
  - If you single-click a file, it opens in a tab but does not STAY open if you click another
  - If you double-click a file, it opens in a tab and stays open until you close it
- Like many modern editors, can close without saving text. Still there on re-open
- …

SOME MORE VSCODE TIPS

SOME MORE VSCODE TIPS (CONT.)

- Can sync VSCode settings across machines (where you log in)
- Can opt out of VSCode collection of telemetry/usage data
- Can enable emmet text expansion for html, css, js
  - To enable that within CFML files, add to vscode settings.json:

```
"emmet.includeLanguages": {
        "cfml": "html"
}
```

- And again really so much more I COULD point out

- Snippets?
  - *File>Preferences>Configure Snippets*
  - Select “cfml.json”, see comments in the file for how to configure your own snippets
  - Insert them using Command Palette: *Snippets: Insert Snippets*
- FTP?
  - CFB offers no features for that, but extensions exist (consider SFTP, SSH, RDS)
- Wysiwyg html editing?
  - VSCode does not offer that natively
- Configuring quick-access buttons?
  - CFBuilder enables several actions on top right, not configurable it seems

WHAT ABOUT…?

- I realize some have long stuck with older CFML editors
  - DW: support for CF (and ASP, JSP) dropped in 2013, never updated for newer CFML
  - CF Studio (dropped in 2001), HomeSite+ dropped in 2009
- Many still favor Notepad++, Sublime Text, others
  - CFML support for them ended (2011 and 2012, respectively)
- Still, folks love how they open fast, are straightforward
  - Still, each has their own ways of doing things (keystroke, Uis, snippets, etc.)
- Note that there are VSCode extensions to ease NP++, Sublime transition

TO DIEHARD USER OF OLDER EDITORS

- Consider VSCode, CFB logs
  - Open Palette (F1), then type Developer: Open Extension Logs Folder
- There have been 4 CFB updates (in 2025, 2024, and 2023)
- Can log bugs, feature requests in *tracker.adobe.com*
  - select "ColdFusion Builder Extension for VSCode" as product
  - Currently only 17 filed (just 5 from 2025); 11 marked "to fix"
- Seek help from community: *cf411.com/cfsocialhelp*
- Can email Adobe: cfsup@adobe.com
- Reach out to me directly, will help where I can (free or perhaps as consulting)

RESOLVING PROBLEMS

- I get it: some are happy with the CFML extension they use
  - Or they've tried CFB and hit problems, and may still not be motivated to seek solution
- Maybe you just prefer older editors, whether they support CFML or not
  - I'll just note that you could just as readily use VSCode to edit CFML without CFB, etc.
- Even for both audiences, consider that you could STILL use CFB
  - Such as to perform the CF Code Security Analyzer feature
  - Or perhaps the PMT profiler feature, or even the CFML step debugger feature, etc.

WHAT IF YOU'RE STILL NOT SOLD ON CFB?

- See front page when extension is selected, offers reminders, doc links, or see:
  - *helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/cfb-extension-vs-code-plugin-user-guide.html*
  - Many sections/docs below that (expand left nav bar). Let's visit…
- Beware search engines/Ais/posts pointing to docs for OLD CFBuilder…
  - Not:
    - *helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/using-coldfusion-builder/managing-projects.html*
  - But:
    - *helpx.adobe.com/coldfusion/coldfusion-builder-extension-for-visual-studio-code/project-manager.html*

FINDING MORE INFO ON CFB

FINDING MORE INFO VSCODE

- *Help>Open Walkthrough* (also offers videos)
- *Help>Editor Playground* (guides)
- *Help>Documentation (code.visualstudio.com/docs)*
- *Help>Keyboard Shortcuts Reference*
- *code.visualstudio.com/docs/getstarted/introvideos*
- *code.visualstudio.com/docs/getstarted/getting-started*
- *code.visualstudio.com/docs/getstarted/tips-and-tricks*
- Many community resources: blog posts, videos, courses (LinkedinLearning, Udemy, etc.)

- I'll add that I am contemplating creating an online course
  - Send email to support@carehart.org, subject "course", if interested to be notified
- Adobe has offered speakers a $25 gift card to giveaway
  - I'll offer it to the 5th person to send that email now ☺
- If time remains, some quick demos
  - Otherwise, while we await emails, let's move on to conclusion

FINALLY…

SUMMARY

- CFB is more than just Adobe’s extension: also all of VSCode (and its abilities)
  - CFB adds many features that other CFML extensions don’t support (for better or worse)
- Ample resources exist to learn more about both CFB and VSCode
  - Many concerns/complaints have been/can be resolved, or can reach out to Adobe
- Again, my contact info for follow-up:
  - Charlie Arehart
  - charlie@carehart.org
  - @carehart (Slack, Github, X, FB, LinkedIn, etc.)
  - Slides: *carehart.org/presentations*
- With that, hope you enjoyed the talk!
  - Use QR code for slide deck
- ...time for questions?