

DataDirect Connect for .NET, release 1.1

from DataDirect Technologies

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Specifications:
 Windows 98, NT, 2000,
 ME, and XP
 Compatible with Sybase
 v11.5 and higher; Oracle
 v8.1.6 and higher

Test platform:
 Windows XP
 Professional, testing
 against version 12.0 of
 Sybase



I was recently called in as a consultant on a project requiring .NET connectivity to a Sybase 12.0 database. I had no idea where to find a driver for this database, but was quickly referred to DataDirect Technologies as a potential source for “this kind of thing.” Much to my delight, I was soon able to download an evaluation copy of DataDirect Connect for .NET. Put simply, I was blown away.

The first thing that I love about this product is that it uses no native code whatsoever. Within the driver itself, everything is 100% managed code. This has the obvious benefit that, since everything is running through the CLR, code that leverages these drivers will be able to leverage the significant security advantages of the CLR as well. No more buffer overruns or other manner of pointer-based attacks against your database code!

Better yet, the DataDirect Connect for .NET product doesn't require the installation of native client software on the machine in order for it to work. Those of you who may have previously worked with so-called “thick” drivers might be familiar with this requirement. Drivers that do this may, themselves, be 100% managed, but their dependencies on native code within the database client software make them every bit as vulnerable as native drivers. Thankfully, DataDirect Connect for .NET steers well clear of this shortcoming.

In terms of actual functionality, I was pleased to see support for outer joins and scalar functions – features typically missing from other .NET database providers. An associate of mine who used the same product against an Oracle database at the

same site was happy to find support for native Oracle data types such as NCLOBs and ROWIDs.

A problem I have encountered with other drivers for Sybase (on both the .NET and J2EE platforms) is a need to establish some repository for connection information other than the simple Interfaces file that Sybase natively uses by default. I am happy to say that this is not the case with DataDirect Connect for .NET. Under Sybase I was able to access the connection information stored in my Interfaces file the same way that many drivers (DataDirect Technologies included) allow Oracle developers to work directly with connections stored in a TNSNames configuration file.

The driver's performance seemed incredibly speedy, although I lacked the hardware needed to perform any benchmarks. A quick read-through of the documentation indicated that connection pooling is performed by the driver, though, which undoubtedly contributed greatly to the performance of the application on which I was working (which was for the back end of a

massive e-commerce Web site).

In this project I did not need distributed transaction processing. However, I have worked on several projects recently where this has been a requirement, and achieving it on multiple, heterogeneous databases using .NET has not been easy. I can, therefore, easily see value in DataDirect Technologies' support for Microsoft's Distributed Transaction Coordinator in this product. I can only hope that other vendors in the industry will follow DataDirect Technologies' lead in this regard!

Finally, in terms of productivity I found the built-in tracing and CommandBuilders to be of the utmost usefulness in creating my e-commerce back-end software. A particular task in this project, for example, which had been estimated to require two weeks' worth of effort, wound up taking only a few days. This was thanks entirely to the extreme flexibility that DataDirect Connect for .NET showed in accessing data in real-world scenarios.

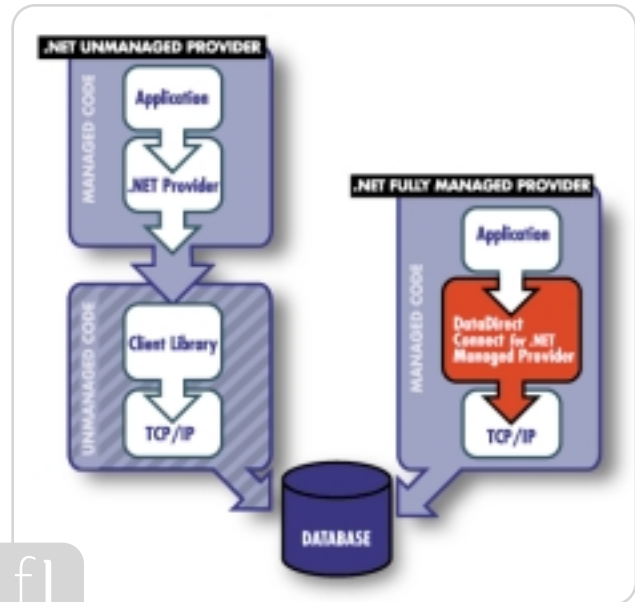


Figure 1: DataDirect Connect for .NET stays completely within the .NET managed code environment, which improves security.

BY ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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