



The Zen Guide to Mirth[®] Connect For Vendors

Updated for v3.9

Welcome Health Technology Vendors!

This guide will accelerate your understanding of NextGen® Connect - previously known as and still referred to here as “Mirth® Connect”. It provides helpful information, tips, and tools available for your version of Mirth Connect including the latest version 3.9.

Important Mirth Connect v3.9 News: This guide has been updated to reflect v3.9 compatibility information on essential Mirth extensions and add-ons.

Topics Included in the Guide:

- Quick Reflection on Mirth Connect Free Model – What’s the Catch?
- What are Mirth Commercial Licensing Options?
- What are the differences between Mirth Connect Open Source and Commercial Versions?
- What are the Top Five Extensions and Plugins you Need to Consider when Working with Mirth Connect?
- What Extensions & Services Are Available from Zen Healthcare IT?
- Is Traditional Mirth Connect Perpetual License + Support Available?
- Is an OEM License Available for Mirth Connect?
- Why Does Mirth Offer Services to the Open Source Community?
- What About Mirth Connect Training?
- Training Isn’t an Option for Us Right Now – What Can We Do?
- What are Our Options for Getting Help with Building Our Channels?
- What are Current Best Practices for Managing Mirth Connect?

Additional Mirth® Resources

[Zen’s Mirth Connect Resource Center](#)

[Zen’s Hosting, Development, and Fully Managed Mirth Connect Tech Stack](#)

Mirth Connect is free – what’s the catch?

The founders of Mirth® (now a part of NextGen® Healthcare) wanted to get quick traction for Mirth® Connect when it was first released. As big supporters of open source technology in general, an open source approach for Mirth® Connect was a comfortable strategy for them. In addition to speeding user adoption, the open source strategy gave them access to open source user feedback, speeding product development, and helping them deliver a robust healthcare integration engine that works well even in large enterprise environments.

Thus, no catch! Mirth® Connect open source users have access to a robust FREE integration engine platform. There are some limitations for Healthcare IT vendors to be aware of but more on that topic in the next section.

The Mirth® / Nextgen executive team seems to have a long term commitment to the “freemium” strategy for Mirth® Connect, even post acquisition by NextGen Healthcare (QSI). While some in the industry are concerned about the long term future of the Mirth® Connect open source strategy, there is no hard evidence that a change in strategy is imminent. New versions of Mirth® Connect continue to be routinely released.

What are the Mirth® Commercial Licensing options?

To commercialize Mirth® Connect and create a recurring revenue stream Mirth® created proprietary advanced plugins and extensions that are installed on top of the open source version. Mirth® bundled these proprietary plugins with support SLA’s into an annual subscription model. It was an early example of the “freemium” software model. They also created the Mirth® appliance platform. Mirth® Appliances offer an “easy to deploy” server environment available in hardware, virtual or Mirth® hosted formats.

Today the most current information on the various commercial bundled offerings for Mirth® Connect are available via [Mirth.com](https://www.mirth.com) (now redirecting to NextGen Healthcare site). Mirth® continues to add new proprietary plugins and extensions to their offerings just as they also add new features to the base (open source) version of Mirth® Connect.

Licensing is based on the number of Mirth® Connect production instances, not the number of users or channels (interfaces).

Zen's engineering team can spin-up a Mirth Connect instance for you and your team in no time! Need one for testing, staging, or production? Let us help!

What are the differences between Mirth® Connect open source and commercial versions?

There are really three main potential “gotchas” to consider when using the Mirth® Connect open source version:

#1 – Mirth® Support: Mirth® only provides Help Desk services for commercially licensed customers. They do not offer “support only” type contracts for open source users. Any bugs you find in the open source version can be reported via the [Forums](#), but there are no SLA's on fixing them.

#2 – Professional Services: Mirth® enters into professional service engagements only with commercially licensed clients. You'll need to look to other 3rd party companies to get channel engineering or consulting help if you are using the open source version of Mirth® Connect. (Like us here at Zen Healthcare IT or, as our friends call us, “Zen”)

#3 – Advanced Features: As we discussed earlier, Mirth® offers a number of licensed plugins and extensions for Mirth® Connect that are bundled into their subscription offerings. These annual subscription offerings include a set of plugins and a specified level of support. Visit [Mirth.com](https://www.mirth.com) (now redirecting to NextGen Healthcare site) for detailed information on pricing, bundled plugins/extensions and support levels.

What are the top five extensions and plugins you need to consider when working with Mirth Connect?

#1 – A Secure SSL Extension (Must Have; Priority 1)

There are tools on the market to enable and configure certificate-based SSL connectivity for socket-based connections such as the HTTP Listener / Sender, Web Service Listener / Sender, and FTP Reader / Writer. Without tools like these extensions, you will need to be very confident you have a solid strategy to address encryption for web service type connections. The best SSL tools will already be v3.9 and backward compatible. They will also give Mirth admins and engineers the tools within Mirth Connect for SSL visibility, monitoring, and proactive notifications about expiring certificates and keypairs.

[Learn more about Zen's affordable SSL extension \(compatible with v3.9\), view screenshots, and view pricing.](#)

#2 – Roles Based Access Control (Must Have; Priority 1)

Mirth provides a roles based access control extension to give you the ability to set permissions on access. Without it all of your users will have full admin privileges.

#3 – Channel History (Must Have; Priority 2)

View and compare past revisions of the Mirth Connect channel configurations and identify the user making changes. This

extension also gives the ability to revert to a past revision of the embedded viewer. If you are doing a lot of channel development, this extension is a must have.

In fact, if you are doing a lot of channel development, consider transitioning your Mirth connect platform to a fully-managed platform from Zen. Learn more about our [Gemini Integration as a Service platform](#) and speak with us about how the platform stills gives you autonomy and control of channel development.

#4 – Advanced Alerting (Must Have; Priority 1)

The great news about advanced alerting and monitoring for Mirth Connect is that you have options to consider. Generally, these type of extensions provide metric, exception, and state-based monitoring of all Mirth Connect channels and connectors.

When researching your options, be on the lookout for extensions that provide alerts to your email inbox and give you the tools to set the criteria for the types of alerts and thresholds you believe are important.

The best extensions for alerting and monitoring tools will provide three critical capabilities including (i) hot-spot error dashboards to show errors across channels based on your customer preferences, (ii) trending and troubleshooting graphs showing statistical analysis of your server and channels over time, and (iii) the custom email alerts based on trigger events like queue size, errors, and message count.

[Learn more about Zen's monitoring and alerting extension called Zen Insight, see screenshots, get pricing, and read through very helpful FAQs.](#)

#5 – Message Generator (Must Have; Priority 1)

With this extension, you will be able to quickly and easily generate HL7 v2.X messages for use as a transformer's inbound or outbound template for sending to a channel or for testing. This tool is especially useful if you are doing a lot of channel development.

Learn More About Zen's Technology Additions to Mirth Connect

- [Zen's SSL Extension for Mirth Connect](#)
- [Zen Insight Performance Monitoring and Alerts](#)

Is a more traditional perpetual license + Support available for Mirth® Connect?

Yes, a perpetual license for Mirth® Connect is available for Healthcare IT vendors, but only for the Platinum Version. You pay a one-time license fee plus annual support for one year.

Check [Mirth.com](https://www.mirth.com) (now redirecting to Nextgen Healthcare site) for pricing details. There is an additional “per instance fee” if you are not using the Mirth® appliance platform.

After the first year, you may choose not to renew support, but you would also lose the ability to get upgrades for the commercially licensed plugins. This could cause version compatibility issues later.

Is an OEM license available for Mirth® Connect?

Mirth® does offer OEM licenses for Mirth® Connect. However, they do not publish any pricing for OEM agreements. OEM licenses are offered under custom pricing arrangements based on a number of factors. You should consider asking the Mirth® sales team about an OEM license if the following circumstances apply:

1. You want to use one or more of their commercial plugins and,
2. You will need to have multiple production instances (not on a Mirth® appliance)
3. You want to be able to access Mirth® Help Desk services

Why doesn't Mirth® offer services to the open source community?

There are number of motivations for this policy. First, their own engineering team routinely takes advantage of the Mirth® proprietary plugins when they build channels. Second, it is an incentive for open source users to become a paying customer. Third they consider Help Desk support an important element of providing channel engineering services.

We recommend that you take full advantage of the Mirth® Connect Community [Wiki](#) and [Forums](#). These resources are open to the open source community and have a lot of great information. The lead Mirth® Connect developers are very active on these sites and enjoy interacting with open source users.

Would you rather not figure out all of the Mirth Connect setup, management, and development on your own? Our Gemini Integration Platform and team are ready to help!

What about Mirth® Connect Training?

Mirth® Connect training is available for open source users! We highly recommend it. Today Mirth® offers a basics class and an advanced class for Mirth® Connect. Each class is four days on-site in Costa Mesa, CA, Atlanta, GA or London. For a current listing of Mirth® Connect training classes please refer to [Mirth.com – Training](#) (now redirecting to NextGen Healthcare site).

Training isn't an option for us right now. What can we do?

Consider using a company like Zen. We provide certified Mirth® Connect engineers who can consult with you, do some basic training and help get you up and running faster on Mirth® Connect.

What are our options for getting help with building our channels?

Companies like us! We offer initial and/or ongoing help designing and building channels. Our engineers are also well versed in Java, JavaScript, databases and other programming languages so our channel engineering skills go way beyond setting up basic HL7 channels. We also have experience with other healthcare integration engines.

What are current best practices for managing our Mirth Connect tech stack in these times of increasingly rapid data exchange demands?

To handle the increasing demands on data flow and endpoint expansion, leaders in charge of their Mirth Connect infrastructure are faced with answering a fundamental decision – can the Mirth Connect integration engine continue to run, grow, and perform well within its existing environment or must it migrate to a more scalable, secure environment?

For many organizations the reality is their current environments will NOT do the job that will be required in the future – literally in the next 3 – 6 months of “future.” That’s why integration leaders are evaluating alternatives such as private cloud hosting, fully managed hosting, or even tech stack migration to AWS or Azure - **which we don’t recommend; please ask us why!**

Five Critical Questions Integration Leaders are Asking:

As you consider the scale, security, and performance needs of your Mirth Connect tech stack, answer these mission-critical questions:

#1 – Will a new tech environment reduce or free your staff from the distraction and burden of creating integrations?

#2 – Allow your development team to continue to create, deploy and manage channels?

#3 – Give you the option to have a fully managed, Mirth certified resources who will create, deploy, and manage channels along side or in replacement of your IT team?

#4 – Does the infrastructure change come with the must have extensions for security and performance monitoring required for today's interoperability demands?

#5 – Will the infrastructure migration put you in a better position to meet the security and regulation requirements of information blocking initiatives, TEFCA, and connectivity to national trusted exchange networks?

We find that integration leaders have been searching for good answers to these questions. That's why we created Zen's [fully-managed integration as a service \(iaas\) platform called Gemini](#). It answers these questions and gives one of the most cost effective and efficient options for anyone who has been using the Mirth Connect integration engine. [Schedule a time with one of our interoperability experts here.](#)

Before you go...

How can we help you? Simplifying healthcare interoperability is what we do, period. We are committed to leveraging technology, services, and innovations to make your job of managing integrations and data exchange easier. Lean on our team and our platforms to reduce the burden and overhead you are managing. Lean on our team to solve complex data exchange uses cases. Lean on our team to help you achieve the performance and scalability you need in these very data-demanding times. We can't wait to help you!

Call Zen at (949) 396-0361 today!