

KEPServerEX Client Connectivity Guide

For Kepware's OPC Quick Client



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32 Bit KEPServerEX Connectivity Guide

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION TO KEPSERVEREX.....	1
ACCESSING KEPSERVEREX.....	1
USING KEPSERVEREX DRIVERS.....	2
KEPWARE'S OPC QUICKCLIENT AS AN KEPWARE OPC CLIENT	3
CONNECT TO KEPSERVEREX FROM KEPWARE'S OPC QUICK CLIENT	3
<i>Auto Launch and Generate a Quick Client Project</i>	3
<i>Manually Create a Quick Client Project</i>	4
Browse for KEPServerEX	4
Add a Tag/Item Group.....	5
Set Group Properties.....	5
Add Tags/Items.....	5
Check OPC Connection.....	6

Introduction to KEPServerEX

KEPServerEX is a 32 bit windows application that provides a means of bringing data and information from a wide range of industrial devices and systems into client applications on your windows PC. KEPServerEX falls under the category of a "Server" application. It is very common to hear the term "client/server application" in use across many software disciplines and business segments. In the industrial market, it has usually come to mean the sharing of manufacturing or production data between a variety of applications ranging from human machine interface software and data historians, to large MES and ERP applications.

Regardless of the business segment served, client/server applications have one thing in common: a standardized method of sharing data. In the industrial segment, many client/server technologies have been developed over the last ten years. Initially, some of these technologies were proprietary. In many cases these proprietary client/server architectures were in wide use but remained unavailable to third party applications. Early in the development of windows, Microsoft provided a generic client/server technology called DDE or Dynamic Data Exchange. DDE did provide a basic architecture that would allow many windows applications from a wide range of vendors to share data, but there was one problem. DDE was not designed for the industrial market. It lacked much of the speed and robustness desired in an industrial setting. However, this did not stop DDE from becoming a dominant client/server architecture, largely due to its availability in most windows applications. In time, variations on Microsoft's DDE were developed by some of the leading vendors in the market. These variations addressed some of the speed and reliability issues of DDE but many people in the industrial segment agreed that a better system needed to be developed.

With the advent of 32 bit Operating Systems, and the use of Ethernet to provide communications between devices, there was a need for quicker and cleaner data transfer between software applications. This is where OPC saw its birth into the industry.

OPC (OLE for Process and Control) servers provide a standardized method of allowing multiple industrial applications to share data in a quick and robust manner. The OPC server provided in this package has been designed to meet the demanding requirements found in the industrial environment.

This OPC server has been designed as a two-part program. The primary component provides all of the OPC and DDE connectivity as well as the user interface functions. The second part is comprised of plug-in communications drivers. This two-part design allows you to add multiple communications options to your SCADA application while utilizing a single OPC server product thus reducing your learning curve as your project grows.

OPC technology reflects the move from closed proprietary solutions to open architectures that provide more cost-effective solutions based on established standards.

Accessing KEPServerEX

A Windows based client application must be used to view data from the KEPServerEX application. In this section we will cover the basics of connecting a number of common OPC clients to KEPServerEX. While we cannot possibly cover every client application that exists, we believe that after reviewing this document you should be able to deal with most client applications.

The intention of this section is to show connectivity to KEPServerEX. It is assumed that you have already either configured your KEPServerEX application by selecting the appropriate driver and settings or you have run the Simulator demo (Simdemo.opf) which is included with KEPServerEX. For simplicity, the Simdemo project will be used for all examples contained in this section.

Before beginning any of the examples, start the KEPServerEX application by selecting it from your Start Menu or from its desktop icon. Once the server is loaded, use the File|Open command to load the “Simdemo” project. The KEPServerEX application is always active once you have opened an existing project or configured at least one channel and device in a new project. After you have selected a project, in this case the Simdemo project, KEPServerEX will automatically load this project when an OPC client application invokes KEPServerEX’s OPC server component.

Users have always had the ability to create what we refer to as “user defined tags” in their KEPServerEX application. Prior to OPC, defined tags gave a DDE application designer the ability to create a label for device data. Assume register 1000 contained the value of parts made, without defined tags a DDE application would have directly accessed register 1000. Using defined tags a label can be created like “PartsMade”. Now the DDE application could access the data via this new label, removing the machine level knowledge from the client application and keeping it at the server level where it belongs. This label, while useful for DDE is a necessity for OPC clients. For OPC clients, defined tags take on a greater role. Like the DDE example, defined tags allow you to create labels for your device data and keep the configuration of those tags in the server. OPC clients have a major advantage over DDE clients. OPC clients can browse the defined tags you create in your KEPServerEX application, which allows you to simply point and click on a tag to add it to your OPC client project.

OPC Tag Browsing allows you to see a list of the defined tags you have created in your KEPServerEX application, directly within your OPC client application.

For more information on defined tags see the “Designing a Project” section of the KEPServerEX help file, which can be accessed from the Help/Contents menu selection of the KEPServerEX application.

Using KEPServerEX Drivers

Part of the innovative design of Kepware’s OPC/DDE Server Technology is the separation of the Hardware Protocol Driver from the Server Technology. This separation allows the user to use one or more drivers in the server at the same time. Each driver has its own help file which provides information on devices supported, communications parameters, cabling, addressing, and error messages.

The driver help file should contain all of the information you will need to connect your device to the PC so that the server can communicate with it. If the server cannot communicate with the device, be sure to check the error messages and look up their meaning in the help file.


Kepware's OPC QuickClient as an OPC Client

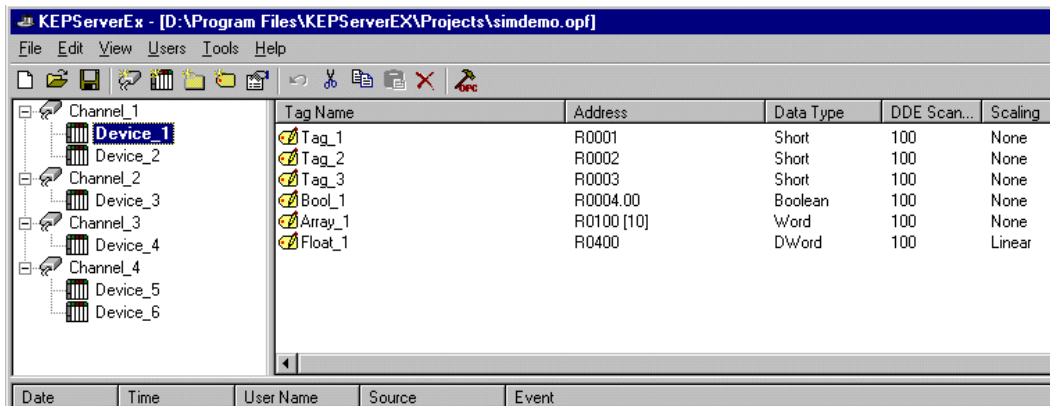
Connect to KEPServerEX from Kepware's OPC Quick Client

Kepware's OPC Quick Client is an interface that can be used to connect to KEPServerEX. For this example, the OPC Server Version used is V4.41.163 and the OPC client version used is version 4.20.66. The following steps will show you how to create an OPC connection to the KEPServerEX from the Test Client either by using the auto project launch form the server or by manually starting the client and creating a project. Both examples use the "SimDemo.opf" project provided with the server install.

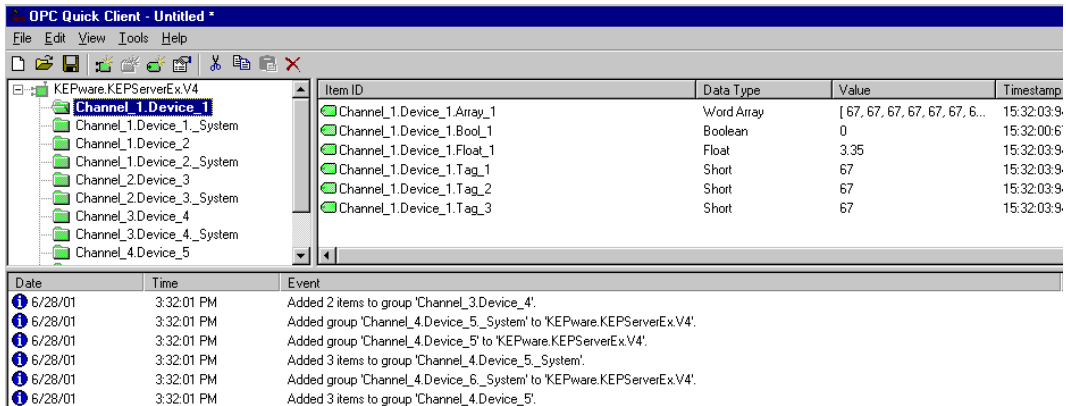
Auto Launch and Generate a Quick Client Project

In most cases when you are using the Quick Client you are testing to see if you can see all of the tags you have defined in the server. To aid in this process we provide the ability to launch the client from the server and automatically generate the client project.

1. In the Server, once you have added all of the tags you currently want, click on the Launch button  or select "Tools|Launch OPC Quick Client".

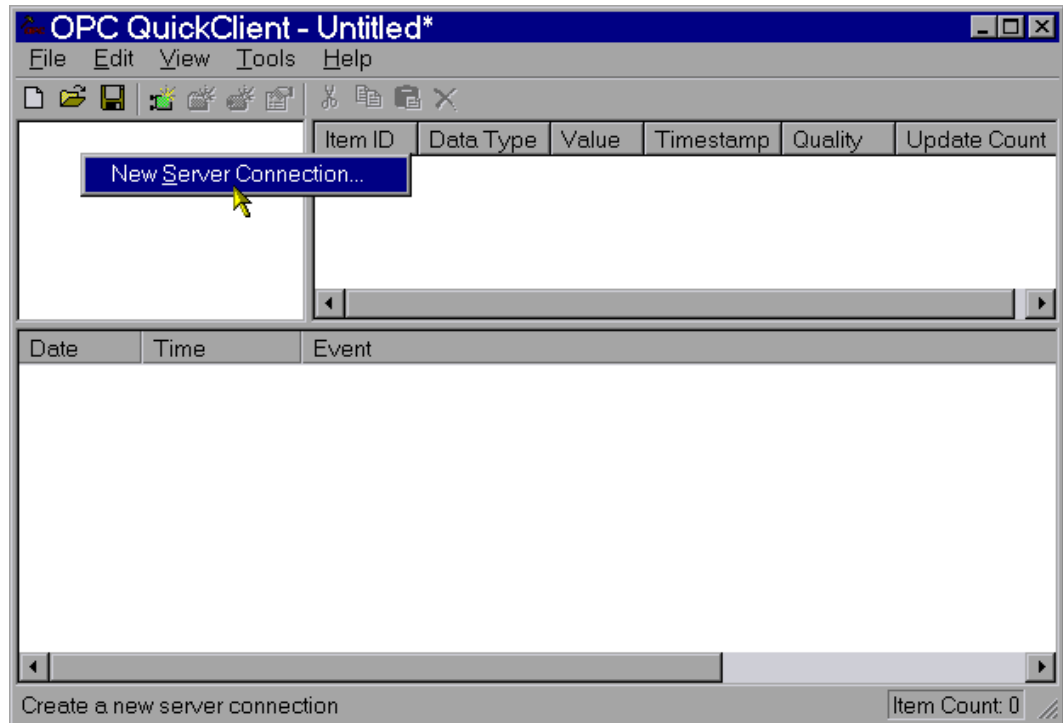


2. You will notice that the client project automatically opens to display the tags in the first Device group.



Manually Create a Quick Client Project

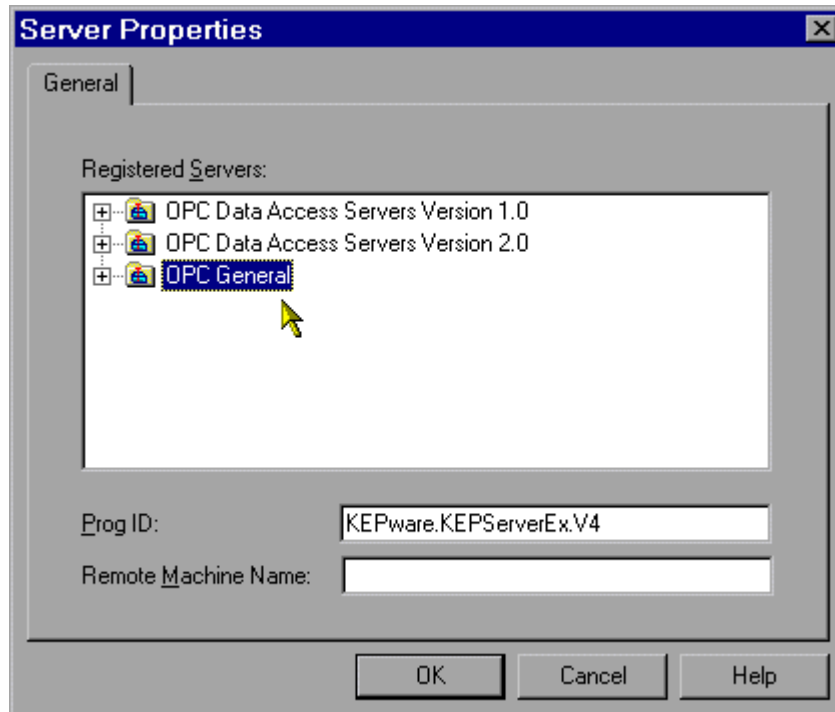
1. To start a new project, select New Server Connection... from the Edit menu or right click in the upper left display box and select New Server Connection...(shown below).



Browse for KEPServerEX

2. In the Server Properties window, click OK because the KEPServerEX is set as the default server. If you were going to connect to the server running on another PC then you would enter the name of that PC in the Remote Machine Name field of the Server Properties window without any back slashes "\\".

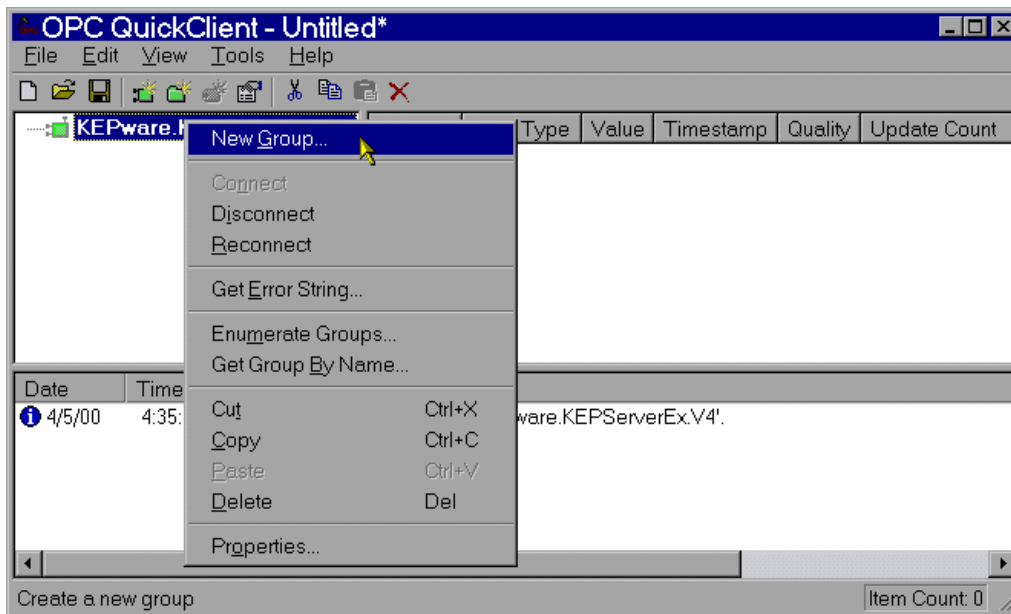
For remote connections you have to be sure that you have DCOM properly configured. For information on how to configure DCOM see the two guides located either on the installation CD or at the Kepware web site.



Add a Tag/Item Group

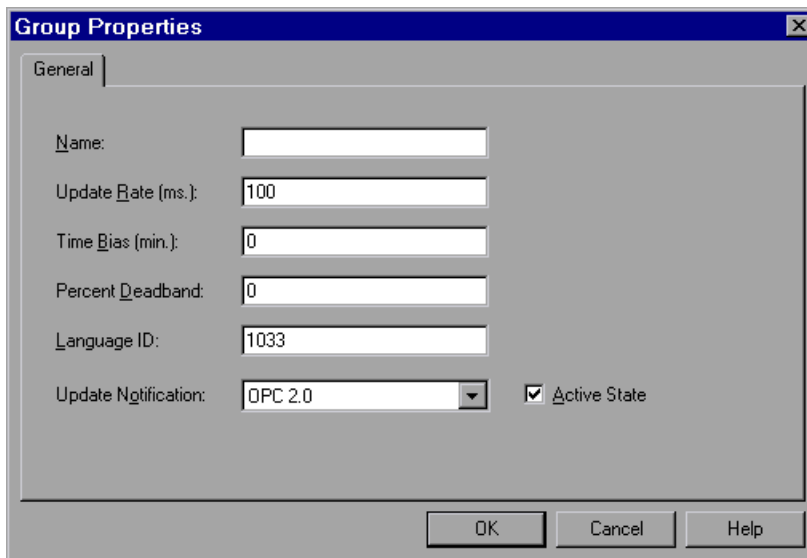
After choosing KEPServerEX, there should be a visual representation of the client connection to the server provided in the upper left-hand display.

3. Right click on this connection and choose New Group or select New Group from the Edit menu.



Set Group Properties

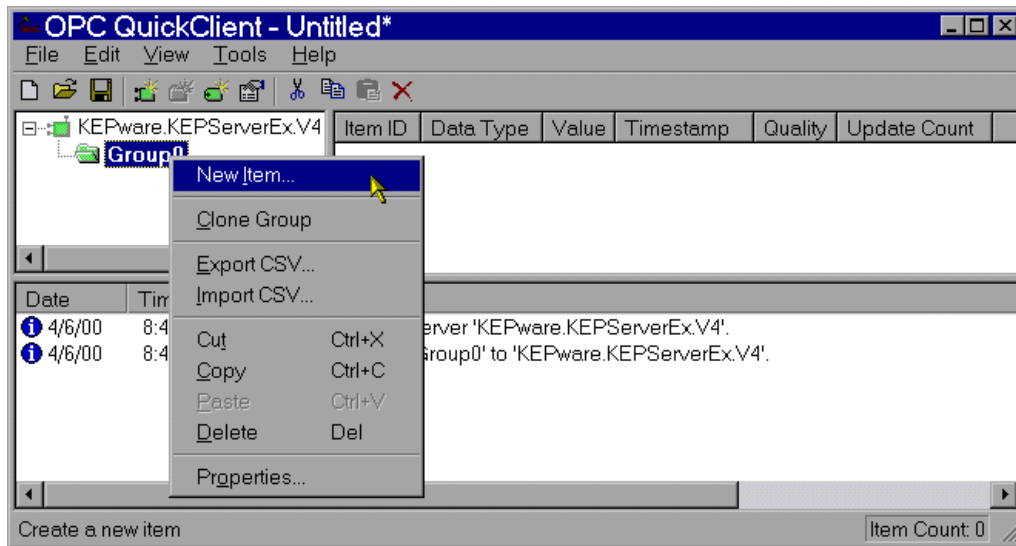
4. In the Group Properties window, enter a Name to identify the group. If no group name is entered, the server will generate a unique name for you. Also, make sure the Active State is enabled so the client will show active items for the group. Finally, click OK.



Add Tags/Items

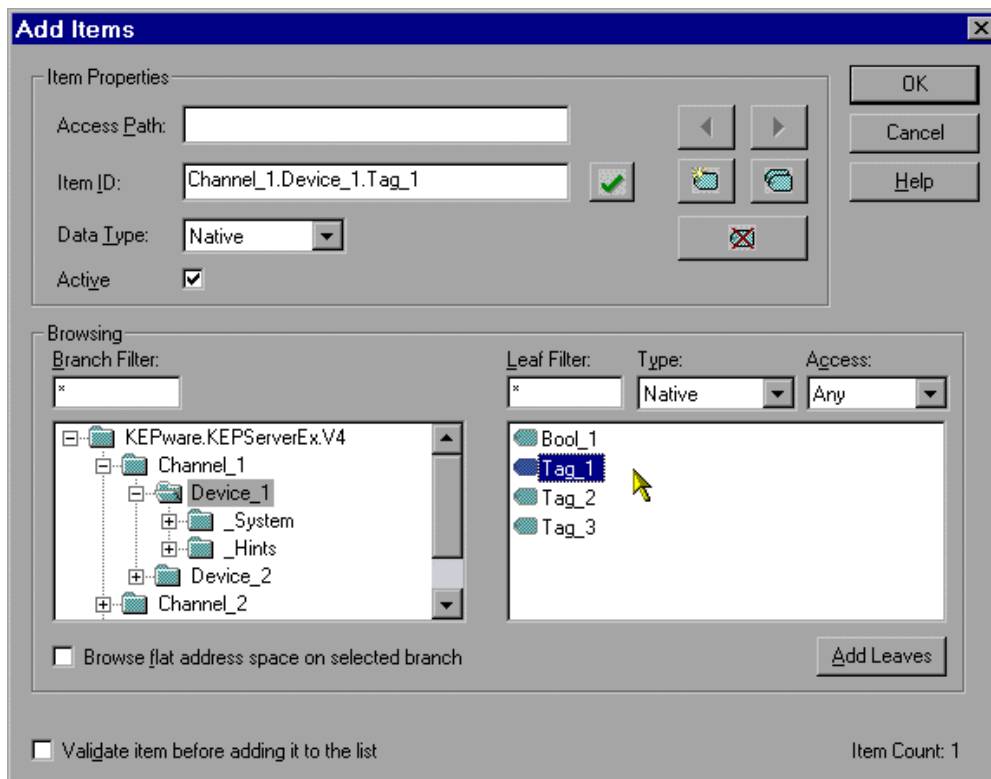
Now that a group has been created it is possible to add items.

5. Right click over the Group Name in the left display or select New Item from the Edit menu to open the Add Items window.



To learn more about using Kepware's OPC QuickClient with KEPServerEX, see the KEPServerEX help file "Designing a Project (Saving and Testing the Project)".

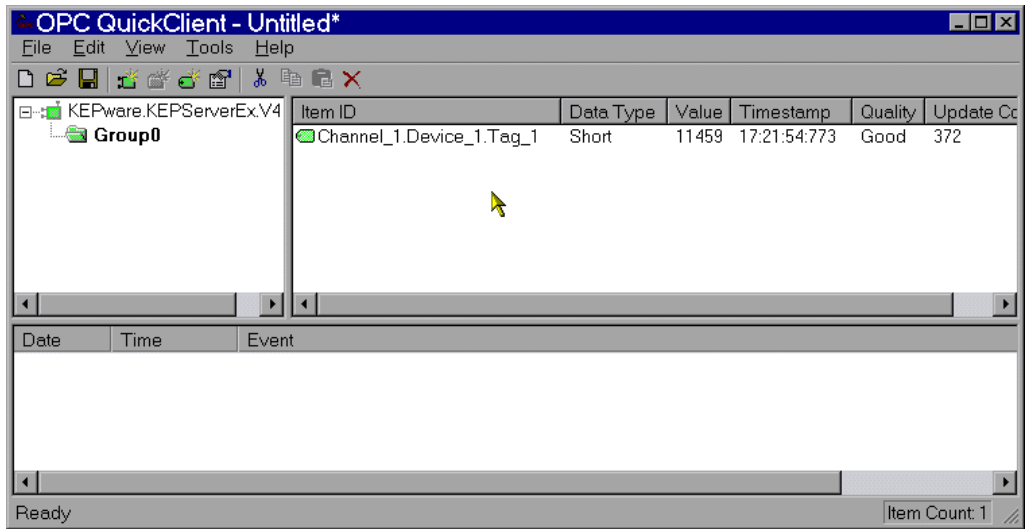
- Using the tree view in the left display of the OPC Address Browser, select the Device or Group from which you wish to select Address items/tags. In the right hand pane, double click to add an item. In this example, Tag_1 in Device_1 on Channel_1 has been selected. Remember that these are items that have already been created in our Server Demo Project (Simdemo.opf). Also, you can view all possible address types and create a dynamic item by choosing "_Hints" under the device name in the tree menu.



- Once you have selected all of the items to be displayed by the client, click OK

Check OPC Connection

- Next we are going to verify that we are getting data from KEPServerEX. You should see a Quality of "Good" in the Tag Monitor window for the tag and a Value that is ramping or incrementing very quickly.



9. You now have a good OPC connection to the Server from the OPC Quick Client.