



Bill Gallop Under the Hood



It's all about the workflow

Apple has a dirty little secret, one that they don't talk much about but I'm ready to spill the beans...

It doesn't always work right out of the box

Apple make some really great products, and the marketing makes them seem really simple to use, however whilst it is very easy to get products like Mac OS X Server, Podcast Producer, Xsan or Final Cut Server installed what the marketing fluff doesn't tell you is what you will need to do in order to use many of the features that are trumpeted on Apple's website.

Here's what Apple say about part of Mac OS X server; "Podcast Producer includes a dozen built-in workflows to automate publishing of podcasts to blogs, iTunes, iTunes U, or even multimedia-enabled cell phones over high-speed wireless networks using QuickTime Streaming Server."

Here's the reality; if you want to do anything other than the very simple workflows that Apple ship with Leopard Server you will need to edit the workflow file and here is a snippet of the standard workflow to post a podcast to a blog:

```
template_groupblog = {
  dependsOnTasks = (publish_ipod,
  publish_audio);
  command = "/usr/bin/pcastaction";
  arguments = (
    template,
    "--basedir=$$Base Directory$$",
    "--template=$$Workflow Resource
    Path$$/Templates/groupblog.html.erb",
    "--output=groupblog.html"
  );
};
```

Now if you want to modify the template for the blog pages you will need to know the Ruby language, e.g. the bit that contains the video looks like:

```
% ipod_publish_width = (ipod_publish[:width].to_i
<= 480 ?
ipod_publish[:width].to_i : 480).to_s
% ipod_publish_height = (ipod_publish[:width].to_i
<= 480 ?
ipod_publish[:height].to_i : (480.0/
ipod_publish[:width].to_f*ipod_publish[:height].to_f).to_i).to_s
%
```

It really doesn't help that Apple don't ship much in the way of printed manuals. Final Cut Studio comes with

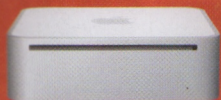
"OS X Server has over 2670 pages of documentation, only 143 pages of which are actually about file sharing and over 300 are about using the command line"

about 2000 pages of manuals in the box, however they just cover Final Cut Pro. If you want manuals for the rest of the products in the suite you need to wade through another 3400 pages of PDF documentation. OS X Server has over 2670 pages of

documentation, only 143 pages of which are actually about file sharing and over 300 are about using the command line and Final Cut Server has about 400 pages of documentation.

Easy Set-up?

You can use the easy set-ups that come in-box, so long as they fit your business or you are prepared to adapt your business to fit them. In the real world, however, what you should be doing is to customise the product to fit the workflow that suits your business.



Before you do that though you will need to understand exactly what your current workflow is and then map that onto the features that each piece of new software brings.

Having mapped out the workflow that you are going to implement you will need to build it, potentially through hand editing a variety of workflow, config

or script files. To do this you may need to know Ruby, Perl, PHP, Python, YAML, bash scripting or the wide range of syntaxes that the various open source projects within Mac OS X use for their config files.

You'll then need to look at what implications your decisions have on hardware and software, for example if you have 5 workstations editing high def video with Final Cut Server managing the workflow you are likely to need a SAN, 3 or 4 servers, plenty of storage, fibre channel switches and 9 licenses of Xsan before we even start looking at the right spec of Mac Pro to do the actual editing.

"you may need to know Ruby, Perl, PHP, Python, YAML, bash scripting or the wide range of source projects within Mac OS X use for their config files."

Amazing Products

Apple do make some truly amazing products, but you will only be scratching the surface of what they can do

for you if you simply buy the product and attempt to struggle through on your own. Not only will you be spending a lot of time that you could no doubt be better using to do something productive for your business but you may struggle to

see the product matching up to the marketing and end up giving up on it as a bad job.

Many customers don't know what problem is that they are trying to address, they get caught up in the marketing hype and buy into a product without knowing how, or even if, it will benefit their business. If you don't understand your current workflow, including where the pinch points are, then it is very difficult to make the correct decisions about what you should be doing and how much you should spend on doing it.

If you want to get the best value out of Apple's amazing products you will need to talk through what you want to do, understand the possibilities and the limitations, have a proper solution developed and then have it deployed by someone who knows what they are doing and who doesn't sell you short by cutting corners.

The Right Team

With our team of consultants MacWarehouse can work with you right from the earliest stages of a project, before you even know what it is that you want to do. We can work with you to address the challenges that your business presents and steer you through to a successful outcome.

See pages 4-5 for more about our team of consultants.

