



UCISA-Infrastructure Group Case Study

UCLanMac Deployment using JAMF Software – The Casper Suite

1. Introduction

The University of Central Lancashire first started deploying Apple Macs on its corporate network in 2007. This brought a new challenge to the business, as the existing Windows deployment method was not compatible. In the first year we used a standard monolithic deployment method together with Apple Remote Desktop to install additional software. However maintaining and reimaging the Macs was a long and laborious process as well as not being user friendly and involved plenty of custom scripts. Therefore we required a new method for deploying the Mac image together with an asset management and maintenance solution that would make it easier for our customers to re-image a client as well as make it easier for us to maintain them. To solve this we deployed the Casper Suite. The Casper Suite by JAMF Software is a package-based deployment solution together with inventorying, asset management, licence management, software distribution, VNC and client maintenance. It comprises of a MYSQL backend with Tomcat and a suite of software tools.

2. Description of the work

The work involved two stages, a development and testing stage and then a live deployment stage.

Development / Testing Phase

Before we could begin the testing phase we attended a two day Casper introduction jump start course. We then setup a test Casper server and created OS images, as well as software packages for deployment. We tested the Casper NetInstall Creator to create our NetInstall image. We successfully tested the inventorying of machines as well as the deployment of the OS and various software packages. We tested the imaging of clients in a small laboratory. We also tested various scripts to bind to an Open Directory and an Active Directory structure. We tested Casper's Adobe install feature to deploy Creative Suite 3, as well as the new Self Service feature in Casper 6.

Deployment Phase

For live deployment we created a live Casper server, inventoried all existing client machines as well as setting up PreStage Imaging details for future client purchases. We created a final Base OS image as well as all the software packages ready for distribution. We created different deployment configurations for various client setups and created different Self Service items for the available software. We then deployed the base image and software to over 200 client Macs for the start of the new academic year.

3. Conclusion

The Casper Suite was a great solution to our problems, it enables us to deploy the OS and software to all our clients with ease and it allows us to empower our customers to install and reimage their computer without the need to grant them any special privileges. We can maintain the clients with policies that run automatically and can deploy updates and new software easily. The support we get from JAMF is exceptional. We found that for performance we needed to add 32GB of RAM to the Casper server.

Future Plans

We are currently looking at adding an extra live Casper server for load balancing as well as upgrading the hardware to 3Ghz Quad Core Xeon XServes. We are also looking at methods of improving performance with fibre cards and possible multi-casting.

4. Contact

For more information contact Criss Myers cmyers@uclan.ac.uk