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Keynote Demo on Oct. 10

by Adam Tomash

When I agreed to do a talk on gardening for the MOFGA Common Ground Fair this year I requested the AV tent which promised to have a dark space, good digital projector and real projection screen. All I had to do was bring a laptop. I had always wanted to do a digital slide show on gardening techniques and this seemed to be a good time to jump in.

I lined up the CAMP laptop for the fair dates and went to work. I remembered that CAMP had bought a legal copy of iWork '06 when we bought the computer and that meant we had Keynote 3.0. I had bought a new digital SLR camera last winter and had been taking pictures all spring as we gardened because I knew that I wanted to do this. I got a thumb drive (4 gig) to hold the whole presentation so I had a trustworthy backup to rely on.

The entire presentation is saved in a bundle of files that the Finder presents as a single icon. All the information to present is in that one file icon. Keynote the application plus that file icon and you are good to go.

There are plenty of good resources on the web and I downloaded a few free templates that I liked and figured out how to use the program with very little problem. It is very intuitive and one can build a simple but impressive presentation with very little need to refer to documentation.

All you need are some pictures if you want them and an outline of what you want to say and you can start to build your presentation. Keynote makes it easy to build and rearrange if you need to. The CAMP demo on October 10th will show you just how simple it can be to build an impressive presentation.

Base Station Decommissioned

by Jeff Frankel

This is a sad tale. I feel like I've lost an old friend. But it had to be. I had no other choice.

I bought the Apple Extreme Base Station ("AEBS") 802.11b/g wireless router along with my G5 Power Mac in July 2005. We used its built-in modem to allow our household computers to jointly share our dial-up internet connection until our road was wired for cable internet the following September. After Adelphia (now Time Warner Cable) brought the line to the house, all I had to do was connect the cable modem to the AEBS, and voíla! Broadband internet for all. In conjunction with a wireless ethernet switch plugged into its LAN (local area network) port, the AEBS allowed the wired and wireless computers on the network to communicate, allowed any wired or wireless computer on the internet to print to the laser printer plugged into the switch, and allowed any wired or wireless Mac to print to the shared inkjet printer that was directly connected to one of the desktop Macs. (The AEBS also has its own USB printer port, but I didn't use this.) Visitors with Windows laptops were also able to join the network with no problem.

Everything was copacetic. Until now.

The fly in the ointment is the new electronic medical records system instituted by HealthReach, my wife's employer. As part of this initiative, each provider was issued a Lenovo tablet PC with a wireless card. This enables the providers to enter and access patient medical records through a wireless access point from anywhere in the office.

The records database is maintained at a central location for all health centers operated by HealthReach. The IT department also installed Cisco Systems VPN (virtual private network) software on the PCs to allow providers to log on securely outside their respective offices. This was a smart move, as the VPN permits the physician or nurse practitioner on call to securely look up a patient's medical records from home when the patient calls after hours.

The tablet PC runs Windows. The connection process outside the office is to first launch the VPN software to establish the VPN connection, and then launch the medical records database application. At home, the tablet PC appeared to establish the VPN connection. However, with rare exceptions, the tablet PC was unable to connect to the medical records database application itself. This was puzzling, as the tablet PC connected to web sites generally via Internet Explorer (i.e., no VPN) without incident. So why the problem now?

My Apple software was up to date. Time to troubleshoot further.

To my complete astonishment, the tablet PC connected just swimmingly to the medical records database from the Augusta Panera Bread hotspot. Back at home, the tablet PC also connected just fine if I plugged the ethernet cable from the cable modem directly into the tablet PC's ethernet port, by-passing the AEBS entirely. Connecting the tablet PC by ethernet cable to the ethernet switch, which is connected downstream from the AEBS, was a no-go. Sadly, I had to conclude that some incompatibility between the AEBS and the medical records database was causing the problem.

A software engineer friend corrected me. The more likely culprit, in his opin-ion, was the VPN client on the tablet PC. Even though the tablet PC estab-lished a VPN connection, he reasoned that not all the connection data was actually getting through the AEBS to the medical records database.

[Note: On a Macintosh, a VPN connection is established through Internet Connect, part of the OS X install.]

A search of Apple discussion boards turned up lots of Windows users who were having VPN-related problems with the AEBS. Some of these seemed to involve the same Cisco Systems VPN client that was on my wife's tablet PC.

One post mentioned that a newer version of the Cisco Systems VPN client had cured an incompatibility with the AEBS. HealthReach' IT department in-stalled this update on her machine, but no dice.

So the choice I faced was to disconnect my network from the internet any time Carol needed to access patient records from home, or...try a different router. My biggest hesitancy about buying a new router (other than the $$ to replace the perfectly good one that I already owned) was the risk of trad-ing one set of problems for another. Would a new router be easy to hook up? Would our Macs and printers network as reliably as they did with the AEBS?

Circuit City had a variety of 802.11b/g routers available at prices ranging from $25 to $70. After doing some research on likely Mac compatibility and ease of use, I chose the Linksys WRT54G, which cost $50. *[Note: This is the same router Sue Westlake wrote about in the August 2007* CAMP News.] I was a little more confident walking out of the store to see on the box that Linksys is a Cisco Systems brand.

In a nutshell: problem solved. Carol's tablet PC now connects to the medi-cal records database, and we have the same networking functions that were formerly provided by the AEBS. Signal strength is equivalent, and there are no dropped connections.

The router comes with PC setup software, which I ran via Virtual PC on my G5. However, you can also configure the router via a web browser (including Safari) from any wired Mac or PC on the network. Full directions on configur-ing the WRT54G via web browser are given in *Take Control of Your Airport Network (v1.2)* by Glenn Fleischman. (This title is part of TidBits' excellent series of "Take Control" books in PDF format.) There's even more info about the WRT54G in *The Wireless Networking Starter Kit (2d ed. 2004)* by Adam Engst and Fleischman. This latter book is now available as a free PDF down-load. You'll find the link by scrolling down the home page of Wi-Fi Net News.

The current version of the AEBS operates at the faster 802.11n standard, in-cludes a 4-port integrated 10/100/1 gig ethernet switch and supports either a printer or hard drive in its USB port. Those looking for a less expensive alternative might do well to consider Linksys' "N" offerings. ☼

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