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Course/Section: CPE212- CPE31S2	Date Submitted: 9/3/25
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Activity 4: Running Elevated Ad hoc Commands

1. Objectives:

- 1.1 Use commands that makes changes to remote machines
- 1.2 Use playbook in automating ansible commands

2. Discussion:

Provide screenshots for each task.

Elevated Ad hoc commands

So far, we have not performed ansible commands that makes changes to the remote servers. We manage to gather facts and connect to the remote machines, but we still did not make changes on those machines. In this activity, we will learn to use commands that would install, update, and upgrade packages in the remote machines. We will also create a playbook that will be used for automations.

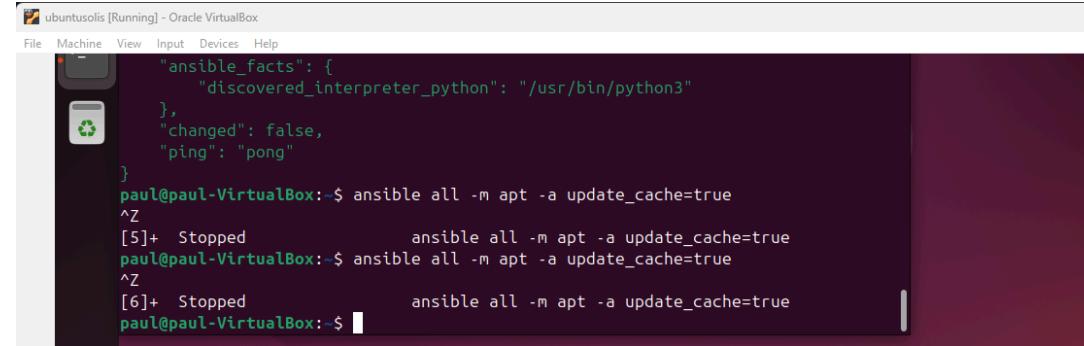
Playbooks record and execute **Ansible**'s configuration, deployment, and orchestration functions. They can describe a policy you want your remote systems to enforce, or a set of steps in a general IT process. If Ansible modules are the tools in your workshop, playbooks are your instruction manuals, and your inventory of hosts are your raw material. At a basic level, playbooks can be used to manage configurations of and deployments to remote machines. At a more advanced level, they can sequence multi-tier rollouts involving rolling updates, and can delegate actions to other hosts, interacting with monitoring servers and load balancers along the way. You can check this documentation if you want to learn more about playbooks. [Working with playbooks — Ansible Documentation](#)

Task 1: Run elevated ad hoc commands

1. Locally, we use the command ***sudo apt update*** when we want to download package information from all configured resources. The sources often defined in ***/etc/apt/sources.list*** file and other files located in ***/etc/apt/sources.list.d/*** directory. So, when you run update command, it downloads the package information from the Internet. It is useful to get info on an updated version of packages or their dependencies. We can only run

an apt update command in a remote machine. Issue the following command:

```
ansible all -m apt -a update_cache=true
```

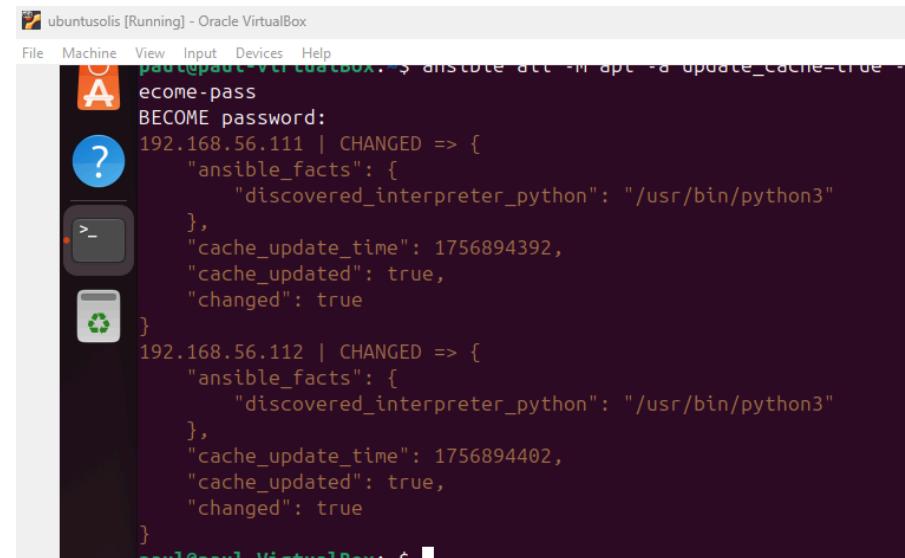


The screenshot shows a terminal window titled "ubuntusolis [Running] - Oracle VirtualBox". The command "ansible all -m apt -a update_cache=true" is run twice. The first run fails with status code 128, while the second run succeeds with status code 0. The output shows facts about the remote host and the results of the apt update command.

```
ubuntusolis [Running] - Oracle VirtualBox
File Machine View Input Devices Help
[5]+  Stopped      ansible all -m apt -a update_cache=true
^Z
[5]+  Stopped      ansible all -m apt -a update_cache=true
^Z
[6]+  Stopped      ansible all -m apt -a update_cache=true
^Z
paul@paul-VirtualBox: ~$ [1]
paul@paul-VirtualBox: ~$ [2]
```

What is the result of the command? Is it successful?

Try editing the command and add something that would elevate the privilege. Issue the command `ansible all -m apt -a update_cache=true --become --ask-become-pass`. Enter the sudo password when prompted. You will notice now that the output of this command is a success. The `update_cache=true` is the same thing as running `sudo apt update`. The `--become` command elevate the privileges and the `--ask-become-pass` asks for the password. For now, even if we only have changed the packaged index, we were able to change something on the remote server.

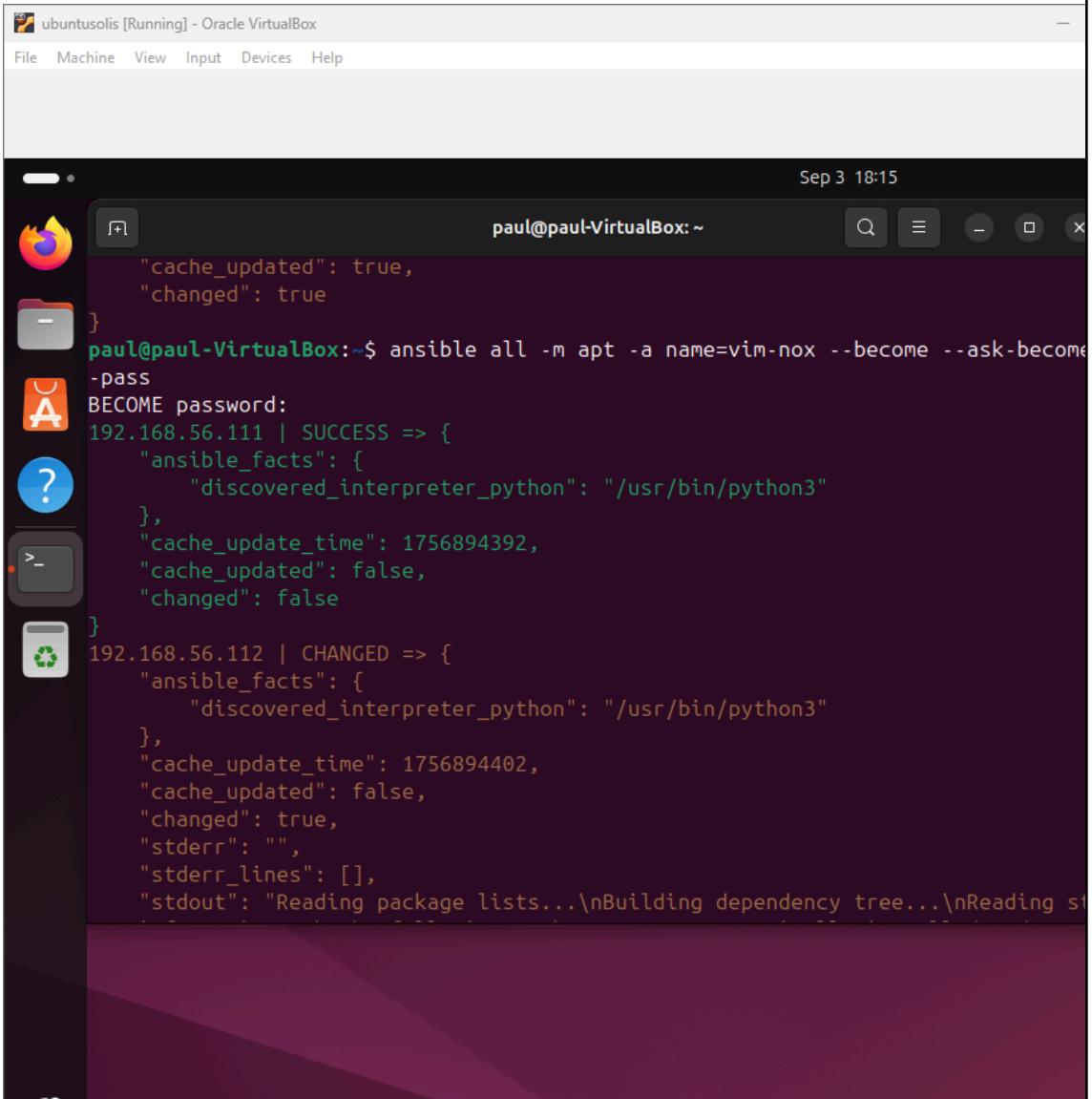


The screenshot shows a terminal window titled "ubuntusolis [Running] - Oracle VirtualBox". The command "ansible all -m apt -a update_cache=true --become --ask-become-pass" is run. It prompts for a BECOME password. After entering the password, the command runs successfully, updating the cache on two hosts (192.168.56.111 and 192.168.56.112) and changing their status from FAILED to CHANGED.

```
ubuntusolis [Running] - Oracle VirtualBox
File Machine View Input Devices Help
paul@paul-VirtualBox: ~$ ansible all -m apt -a update_cache=true --become --ask-become-pass
BECOME password:
192.168.56.111 | CHANGED => {
    "ansible_facts": {
        "discovered_interpreter_python": "/usr/bin/python3"
    },
    "cache_update_time": 1756894392,
    "cache_updated": true,
    "changed": true
}
192.168.56.112 | CHANGED => {
    "ansible_facts": {
        "discovered_interpreter_python": "/usr/bin/python3"
    },
    "cache_update_time": 1756894402,
    "cache_updated": true,
    "changed": true
}
```

You may notice after the second command was executed, the status is CHANGED compared to the first command, which is FAILED.

2. Let's try to install VIM, which is an almost compatible version of the UNIX editor Vi. To do this, we will just changed the module part in 1.1 instruction. Here is the command: `ansible all -m apt -a name=vim-nox --become --ask-become-pass`. The command would take some time after typing the password because the local machine instructed the remote servers to actually install the package.



The screenshot shows a Linux desktop environment with a terminal window open. The terminal window title is "ubuntuusolis [Running] - Oracle VirtualBox". The terminal content shows the execution of an Ansible command to install the "vim-nox" package on two hosts:

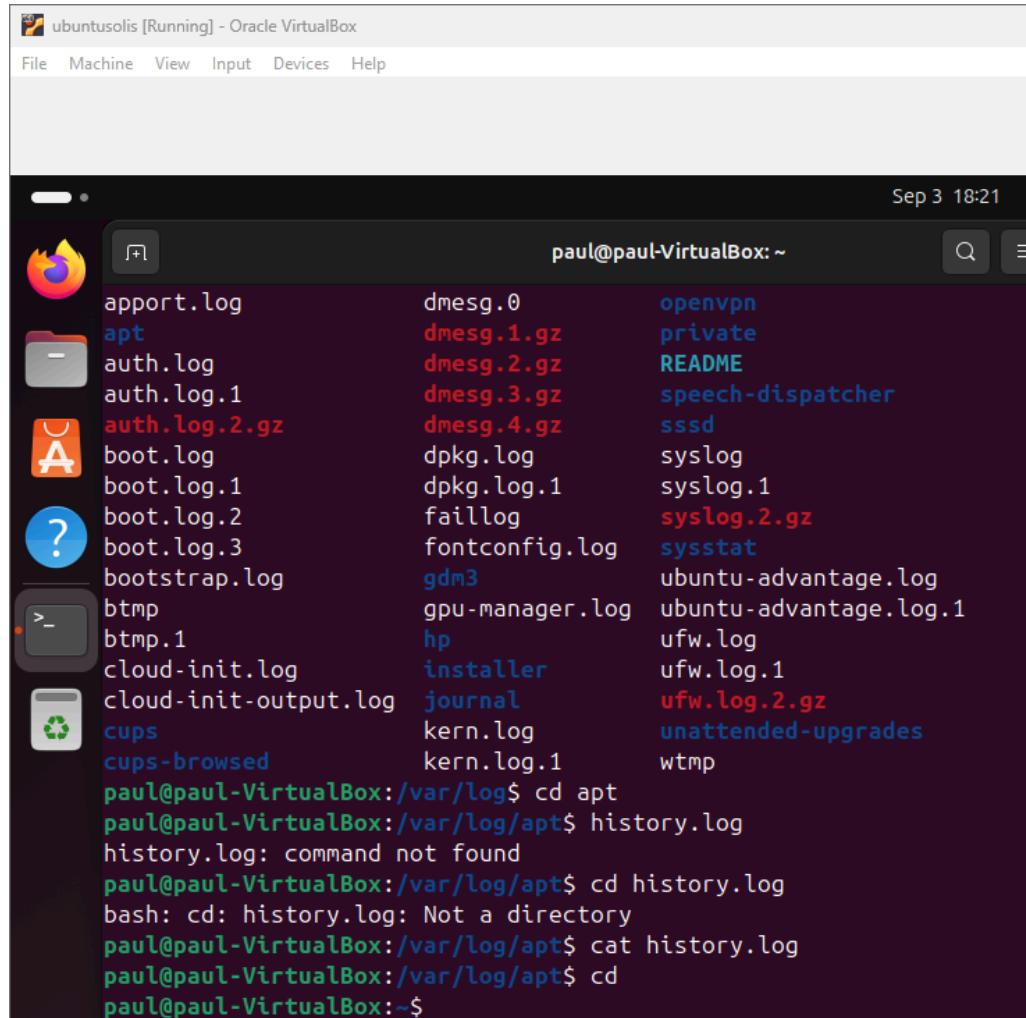
```
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$ ansible all -m apt -a name=vim-nox --become --ask-become-pass
BECOME password:
192.168.56.111 | SUCCESS => {
    "cache_updated": true,
    "changed": true
}
192.168.56.112 | CHANGED => {
    "cache_update_time": 1756894392,
    "cache_updated": false,
    "changed": false
}
```

2.1 Verify that you have installed the package in the remote servers. Issue the command `which vim` and the command `apt search vim-nox` respectively. Was the command successful?

```
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$ which vim
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$ apt search vim-nox
Sorting... Done
Full Text Search... Done
vim-nox/noble-updates,noble-security 2:9.1.0016-1ubuntu7.8 amd64
  Vi IMproved - enhanced vi editor - with scripting languages support

vim-tiny/noble-updates,noble-security,now 2:9.1.0016-1ubuntu7.8 amd64 [installed]
  Vi IMproved - enhanced vi editor - compact version
```

2.2 Check the logs in the servers using the following commands: `cd /var/log`. After this, issue the command `ls`, go to the folder `apt` and open `history.log`. Describe what you see in the `history.log`.

A screenshot of a Linux desktop environment. At the top, there's a menu bar with options like File, Machine, View, Input, Devices, and Help. Below the menu is a terminal window titled "ubuntusolis [Running] - Oracle VirtualBox". The terminal shows the user's command-line session:

```
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$ cd /var/log
paul@paul-VirtualBox:/var/log$ ls
apport.log          dmesg.0           openvpn
apt                dmesg.1.gz        private
auth.log            dmesg.2.gz        README
auth.log.1          dmesg.3.gz        speech-dispatcher
auth.log.2.gz       dmesg.4.gz        sssd
boot.log           dpkg.log         syslog
boot.log.1         dpkg.log.1      syslog.1
boot.log.2         faillog          syslog.2.gz
boot.log.3         fontconfig.log   sysstat
bootstrap.log      gdm3             ubuntu-advantage.log
btmp               gpu-manager.log  ubuntu-advantage.log.1
bttmp.1            hp               ufw.log
cloud-init.log     installer        ufw.log.1
cloud-init-output.log journal        ufw.log.2.gz
cups               kern.log        unattended-upgrades
cups-browsed       kern.log.1      wtmp
paul@paul-VirtualBox:/var/log$ cd apt
paul@paul-VirtualBox:/var/log/apt$ history.log
history.log: command not found
paul@paul-VirtualBox:/var/log/apt$ cd history.log
bash: cd: history.log: Not a directory
paul@paul-VirtualBox:/var/log/apt$ cat history.log
paul@paul-VirtualBox:/var/log/apt$ cd
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$
```

The desktop environment includes icons for the Dash, Home, and Help, and a trash can icon.

3. This time, we will install a package called snapd. Snap is pre-installed in Ubuntu system. However, our goal is to create a command that checks for the latest installation package.

3.1 Issue the command: `ansible all -m apt -a name=snapd --become --ask-become-pass`

```
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$ ansible all -m apt -a name=snapd --become --ask-become-pass
BECOME password:
192.168.56.111 | SUCCESS => {
    "ansible_facts": {
        "discovered_interpreter_python": "/usr/bin/python3"
    },
    "cache_update_time": 1756894392,
    "cache_updated": false,
    "changed": false
}
192.168.56.112 | SUCCESS => {
    "ansible_facts": {
        "discovered_interpreter_python": "/usr/bin/python3"
    },
    "cache_update_time": 1756894402,
    "cache_updated": false,
    "changed": false
}
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$
```

Can you describe the result of this command? Is it a success? Did it change anything in the remote servers?

3.2 Now, try to issue this command: `ansible all -m apt -a "name=snapd state=latest" --become --ask-become-pass`

```
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$ ansible all -m apt -a "name=snapd state=latest" --become --ask-become-pass
BECOME password:
192.168.56.111 | SUCCESS => {
    "ansible_facts": {
        "discovered_interpreter_python": "/usr/bin/python3"
    },
    "cache_update_time": 1756894392,
    "cache_updated": false,
    "changed": false
}
192.168.56.112 | SUCCESS => {
    "ansible_facts": {
        "discovered_interpreter_python": "/usr/bin/python3"
    },
    "cache_update_time": 1756894402,
    "cache_updated": false,
    "changed": false
}
```

Describe the output of this command. Notice how we added the command ***state=latest*** and placed them in double quotations.

4. At this point, make sure to commit all changes to GitHub.

Task 2: Writing our First Playbook

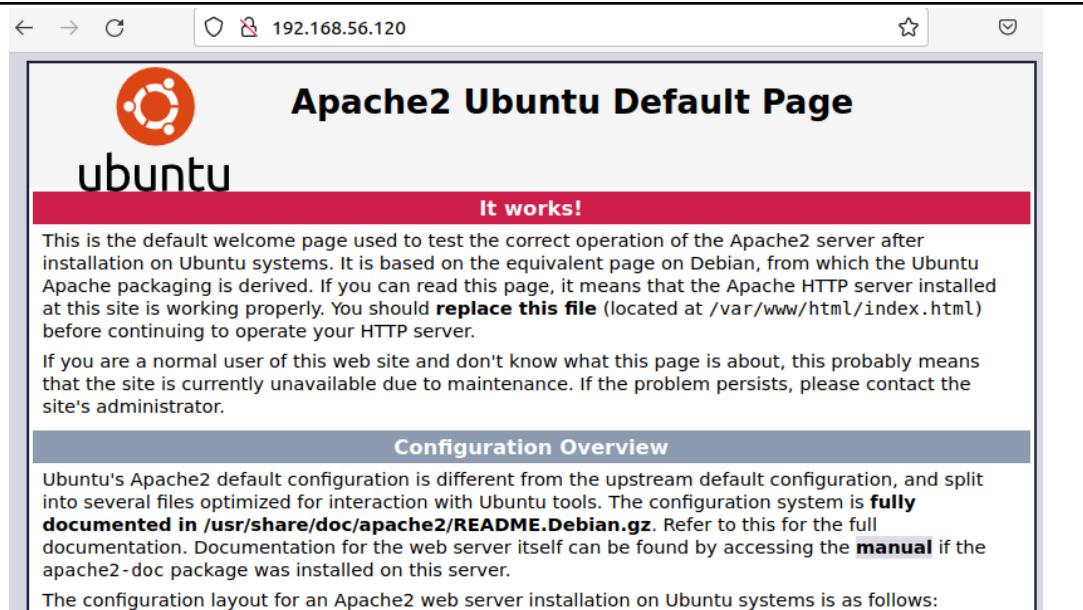
1. With ad hoc commands, we can simplify the administration of remote servers. For example, we can install updates, packages, and applications, etc. However, the real strength of ansible comes from its playbooks. When we write a playbook, we can define the state that we want our servers to be in and the place or commands that ansible will carry out to bring to that state. You can use an editor to create a playbook. Before we proceed, make sure that you are in the directory of the repository that we use in the previous activities (***CPE232_yourname***). Issue the command ***nano install_apache.yml***. This will create a playbook file called ***install_apache.yml***. The .yml is the basic standard extension for playbook files.

When the editor appears, type the following:

```
GNU nano 4.8          install_apache.yml
---
- hosts: all
  become: true
  tasks:
    - name: install apache2 package
      apt:
        name: apache2
```

Make sure to save the file. Take note also of the alignments of the texts.

2. Run the yml file using the command: ***ansible-playbook --ask-become-pass install_apache.yml***. Describe the result of this command.
3. To verify that apache2 was installed automatically in the remote servers, go to the web browsers on each server and type its IP address. You should see something like this.



4. Try to edit the *install_apache.yml* and change the name of the package to any name that will not be recognized. What is the output?
5. This time, we are going to put additional task to our playbook. Edit the *install_apache.yml*. As you can see, we are now adding an additional command, which is the *update_cache*. This command updates existing package-indexes on a supporting distro but not upgrading installed-packages (utilities) that were being installed.

```
---
- hosts: all
  become: true
  tasks:

    - name: update repository index
      apt:
        update_cache: yes

    - name: install apache2 package
      apt:
        name: apache2
```

Save the changes to this file and exit.

6. Run the playbook and describe the output. Did the new command change anything on the remote servers?
7. Edit again the *install_apache.yml*. This time, we are going to add a PHP support for the apache package we installed earlier.

```
---
- hosts: all
  become: true
  tasks:
    - name: update repository index
      apt:
        update_cache: yes
    - name: install apache2 package
      apt:
        name: apache2
    - name: add PHP support for apache
      apt:
        name: libapache2-mod-php
```

Save the changes to this file and exit.

ubuntuSol [Running] - Oracle VirtualBox

File Machine View Input Devices Help

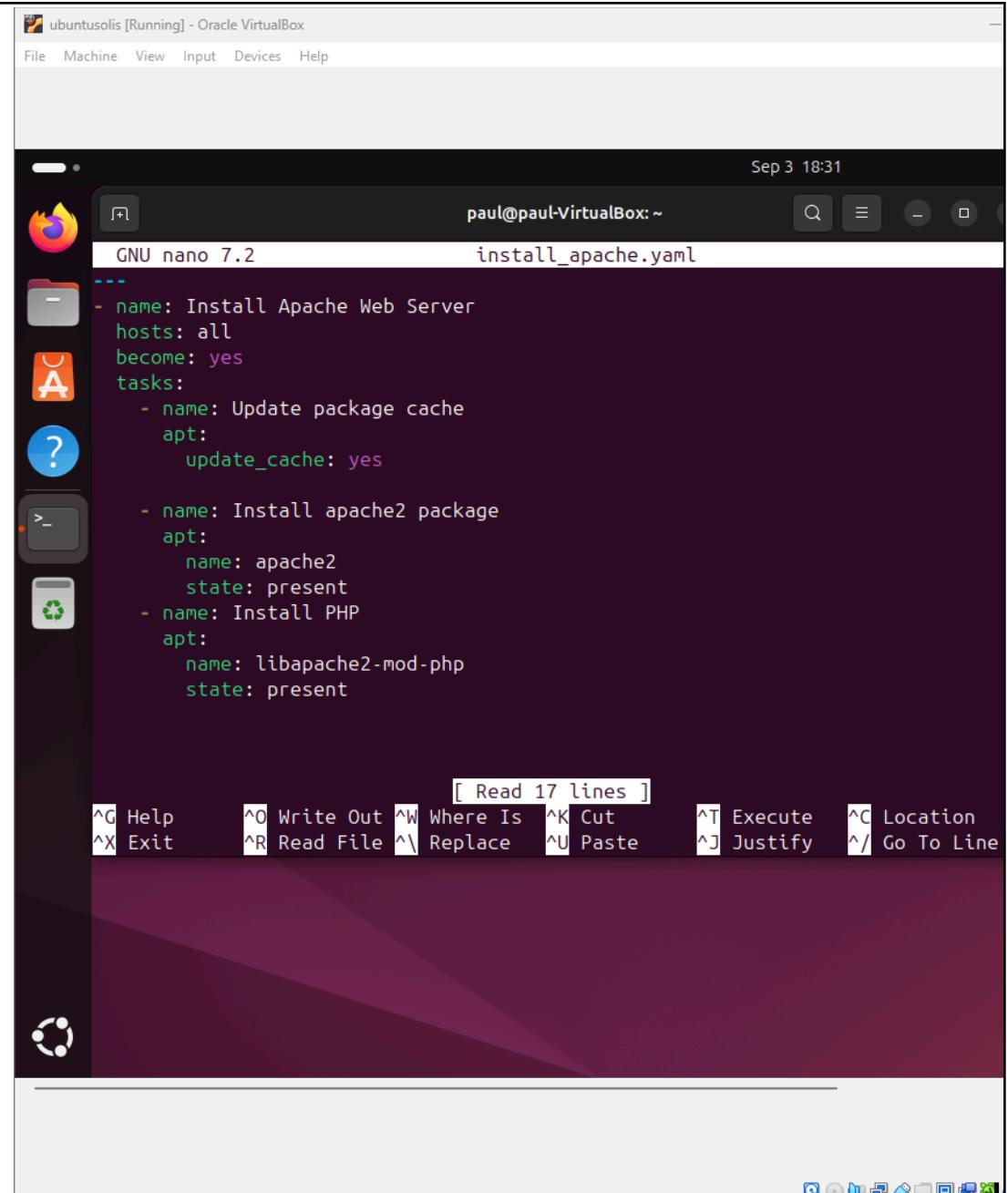
Sep 3 18:31

GNU nano 7.2 install_apache.yaml

```
--  
- name: Install Apache Web Server  
hosts: all  
become: yes  
tasks:  
  - name: Update package cache  
    apt:  
      update_cache: yes  
  
  - name: Install apache2 package  
    apt:  
      name: apache2  
      state: present  
  
  - name: Install PHP  
    apt:  
      name: libapache2-mod-php  
      state: present
```

[Read 17 lines]

^G Help ^O Write Out ^W Where Is ^K Cut ^T Execute ^C Location
^X Exit ^R Read File ^\ Replace ^U Paste ^J Justify ^/ Go To Line



8. Run the playbook and describe the output. Did the new command change anything on the remote servers?

```

paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$ nano install_apache.yaml
paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$ ansible-playbook --ask-become-pass install_apache.yaml
BECOME password:

PLAY [Install Apache Web Server] *****

TASK [Gathering Facts] *****
ok: [192.168.56.111]
ok: [192.168.56.112]

TASK [Install apache2 package] *****
ok: [192.168.56.111]
changed: [192.168.56.112]

PLAY RECAP *****
192.168.56.111 : ok=2    changed=0    unreachable=0    failed=0
                  skipped=0   rescued=0   ignored=0
192.168.56.112 : ok=2    changed=1    unreachable=0    failed=0
                  skipped=0   rescued=0   ignored=0

paul@paul-VirtualBox:~$
```

- Finally, make sure that we are in sync with GitHub. Provide the link of your GitHub repository.

Reflections:

Answer the following:

- What is the importance of using a playbook?

Allow for automation of complex multi-step processes. Provide idempotency (can be run multiple times without adverse effects) Enable version control and collaboration through code Document the desired state of systems

- Summarize what we have done on this activity.

In this activity, we learned to execute elevated ad hoc commands using Ansible's `--become` flag to perform privileged operations on remote servers, successfully installing packages like vim-nox and snapd. We verified these installations by checking remote server logs and package statuses, then progressed to creating our first Ansible playbook to automate the installation of Apache web server. We enhanced this playbook by adding tasks to update the package cache and include PHP support, while also learning to handle errors when attempting to install non-existent packages. Finally, we committed our playbook to GitHub, demonstrating the integration of version control into our infrastructure automation workflow.

