

.Manifest files, what are they?

The .manifest files contain all the packages that's been added to the accompanying ISO file. Ubuntu server does get packages with a minimal of extra packages, but there are a few that are critical from the start.

Some critical packages

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Package	Versions	Description
adduser	3.113+nmu3ubuntu4	To add a user to linux
apt	1.2.29ubuntu0.1	To install new packages
cron	3.0pl1-128ubuntu2	Run commands on a schedule
dpkg	1.18.4ubuntu1.5	Also to install packages
findutils	4.6.0+git+2016012	Find Files
grep	2.25-1~16.04.1	search through command output
gzip	1.6-4ubuntu1	Unzipping and zipping files
makedev	2.3.1-93ubuntu2	Compile sources to binary
mount	2.27.1-6ubuntu3.6	Mount drives or net locations
perl-base	5.22.1-9ubuntu0.6	Perl Programming language
python3	3.5.1-3	Python Programming Language
sudo	1.8.16-0ubuntu1.5	Super user do

that was only a small part of the manifest, but you should be able to see how things like installing packages and adding users are critical to the working of the Operating system.

Manifest files can also be used to build your own unique install of Linux with all the packages you need.