

Mike Nelson – SV article

A Couple VMware Fusion Tips from the Field

Being an avid VMware Fusion user, I am always on the lookout for some interesting and productive ways to use my virtual machines to their fullest potential, for both my professional work and my personal curiosity. Let's take a look at a couple of things that I do with Fusion that really makes more efficient and fun for me, and maybe you will too.

Snapshots - When I'm running Fusion on my Mac, I am always running a couple of virtual machines at once. Usually it is a mix of a Windows XP and a Windows Server OS, with maybe a CentOS client or a virtual appliance like a Citrix VPX Netscaler thrown in depending on what I'm working on or playing around with at the time. Depending on what I am working on, all of these machines at some point or another require different configurations such as networking and resource requirements to be changed. This is where the Snapshot feature comes in. By using snapshots, I am able to revert to any configuration of a machine that was specific to a task, upgrade, or a point in time. With version 4 of Fusion, the developers have made it even easier with the addition of the Snapshot Manager, similar to the one that has been in VMware's vCenter product for a long time. But, let's take them a bit further.

Since I run my Fusion virtual machines on a couple of different Mac's, one being a MacBook Pro laptop, the other a desktop iMac, portability of machines is a must for me. That is why I choose to store and run my VM's from a portable USB drive. While the obvious drawback is speed (I have SSD drives in my Mac's), it does not outweigh the fact that I can easily use the machines, including their snapshots, between my Mac's without so much as a hiccup. It is a pretty simple, efficient, and very productive solution for folks like me that move between hosts consistently.

USB Devices – This is specifically talking about the “built-in” Mac devices (Fusion uses them as USB devices) that can be used in a VM, the iSight camera and the IR Receiver. To make these devices available in the Windows VM, you have to install the Boot Camp drivers in the VM, as shown in this [article](#). I actually stumbled across this tip while I was playing around with some new Windows based camera motion software.

The software I was using had the capability to do all sorts of things with a couple of remote network IP cameras or one that is directly connected to the PC. The two features I wanted to get working within my Windows VM were Pan and Tilt, and motion detection. It was easy enough to get the motion detection working with the built-in iSight camera on my Mac, with the software readily recognizing the new “USB” device that Fusion presented to it. That was the easy part. Getting the Pan and Tilt to work was also somewhat simple, but I had to use the Control and arrow keys to move the remote cameras and for whatever reason, it would not respond to the keys while I was in Unity mode. I wanted to do away with having to use the mouse to

do this, and I knew the Apple IR Receiver could be the solution, but how to make it work with the application?

In my quest (and feverish curiosity) to make this work, I stumbled upon a little piece of ingenious software called [EventGhost](#). EventGhost is a small, open-source project (and, as anyone who knows me, I love open-source) that allows for the creation of scripts to automate tasks within Windows. It specifically does a good job of allowing the ability to use USB and Infrared devices to control and automate applications. It was rather simple to install the application, install the HID plugin available on the download site, and use a few examples of code from the [Forums](#) to activate the IR Remote. It worked flawlessly and I was able to pan, tilt, and perform motion detection on all the cameras at once, within the Windows OS VM, all by using the IR Remote while casually lounging in my chair. I even took it a bit further and used it to turn my Apple IR Remote into a Windows 7 Media Center remote in another virtual machine, all by just using Fusion and EventGhost, two really great pieces of software. A simple [Google search](#) turned up all kinds of cool things that you can do with them.

I hope to bring many more Fusion tips in the future, so until then, be curious and have fun.