

Flash Media Server 2 is now shipping!

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UPDATE The licensing outlined below is likely to change, see [this post](#).

**** FURTHER UPDATE NOW HERE *****

Macromedia has (quietly) started shipping the next release of Flash Communication Server. It is now called **Flash Media Server 2**. I am really excited about this new release and it is packed full of new and improved features.

Many people are keen to find out about the licensing and pricing and I must say that there is some good news as well as some bad news in this area. The good news is that there still is a free Developer Edition which allows for a maximum of 10 connections, regardless of bandwidth consumption.

There will be no Personal Edition anymore and this may disappoint some users. However the Professional Edition (still priced at US \$4500) is now unlimited in bandwidth. This is great news for high bandwidth applications such as streaming high quality video.

But - and it's a big but - the Professional Edition is also limited in the amount of connections it can accept simultaneously. The limit is set at 100 connections.

While this is a positive change for streaming video applications (the Flash Media Server Pro Edition can push more video than the FCS Pro Edition could if you base it on an average size stream) it is a severe blow for anyone running Flash Media Server as a game server, utilizing shared objects and generally low bandwidth games - this includes myself. 100 connections will basically mean that I can no longer use Flash Media Server for serving games. It will simply become unaffordable if I want to serve 300 to 400 users at once - it would mean stacking 3 to 4 Pro Licenses totalling US \$18,000... For these kind of deployments I am better served (no pun intended) sticking to FCS 1.5 for the foreseeable future.

Then there are the what I call Enterprise licenses capable of forming an Origin and Edge setup. The Origin Edition costs US \$45,000 and is capable of serving up to 5000 connections while the Edge Edition costs US \$15,000 and is basically an extension to the Origin. These licenses should only be interesting to large scale video deployments and they are certainly priced that way.

It seems obvious that Macromedia is steering heavily towards the streaming video market. I personally feel a bit sad about this. While I welcome the unlimited bandwidth options I feel that the connection limit especially that of the Professional Edition is very tight. We now do have unlimited bandwidth yet we may still not be able to push our hardware to the limit without stacking at least 2 Professional Licenses. The days of running Flashcom/Media Server as an affordable multiuser game server may be over, yet other applications will very likely benefit from the new pricing.

I have made it clear in the past that a CPU based licensing would be great. I accept that connections may need to be limited yet I am disappointed that the limit has been set so low. I will have to think about this a bit longer and let the new pricing sink in. I am not sure if this new release will make things cheaper or more expensive for us yet it can work either way depending on what you use FMS for.

Dropping the Personal Edition also means that FMS is now a product less accessible to 'small' developers and projects. The entry price for this platform has just risen sharply.

I hope I do not sound too negative here. FMS is a fantastic product and I have been able to familiarise with its features already. The team has delivered a stable and feature packed server and I congratulate them for their efforts. The pricing and licensing was not something I know anything about until this morning and I am still digesting it right now.

I am keen to hear your comments.