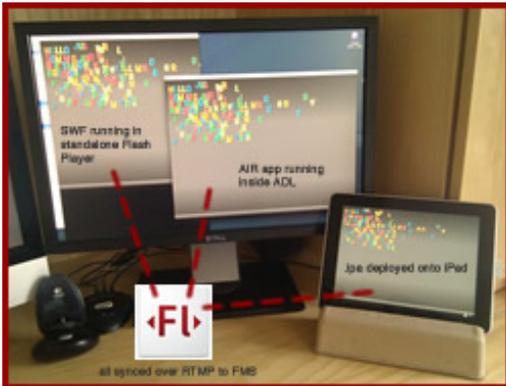


Having Fun With Flash and iPad

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I know I should be doing 'proper' work but right now I am having way too much fun playing with the Flash CS5 iOS packager. Two days ago I started porting my Just Letters game (yes, that old chestnut) to iPad and I was pleasantly surprised how easy it was, even after deciding to rewrite the game in plain AS3 (plus a few graphical assets which I packaged into a .swc file). In total it must have taken me only 4 - 6 hours before the game was running on the iPad, and this included the logic for the NetConnection and ShareObject syncs.

But the point of this post isn't about the game, it's about how much fun Flash suddenly is again. The combination of AS3, RTMP and a tablet form factor is ~~magical~~ just great, and I've already got a few ideas for some further, more useful applications.

Say what you like about Flash, but Adobe is onto something here with AIR and Flash Player for devices, and that even includes TVs now. I cannot help but get excited about that.

The purists amongst you may point to performance issues and advocate native apps above all else. Sure, packaged Flash apps do not perform as well as native applications, but they sure become attractive when it comes to price. Also usually often perform well enough, and are likely to get better as time goes on. AIR for Android is showing what's possible, and I am sure the iOS packager will catch up.

As yourself this: How many companies really have the budget to build an iPhone app, an Android app, port those to tablet factor, and then possibly throw in a BlackBerry app for good measure? And how many developers can afford the time to learn all the native languages involved? Sure, you can get so far pretty quickly, after all AS3 has taught us many useful programming concepts, but to reach the level of expertise that you may already have in AS3 will take serious time - ever heard of the **10,000 hour rule**?

I'm not advocating against native apps though, far from it, it's more a feeling of empowerment that anyone with some decent AS3 skills can now roll out a mobile app. This can and will translate into some new revenue opportunities, no doubt about it.

I'm also happy that the workflow as I see it does not limit you to an installable app. After all, why build a native app if a web app will do the job? Want to publish a SWF at the same time and serve that to browsers? Go ahead. For Just Letters the SWF that is produced during the compilation to iOS's .ipa is ready to deploy to the web as is, no further actions needed. For other form factors you may need to re-jig the view of your application, but we all know that that is (often) easily done, especially for simple apps such as this game. But then, most mobile apps must be simple by default, concentrate on one specific task and try to accomplish that task well. Whether they succeed or not is down to the developer, but let me push the boat out here and say that the underlying development platform plays only a small role in any failure or success. An application is judged by its users, and looking back at the only iPhone application I

have released to date I can say that I could have done a lot worse, and have done a lot better than thousands of native applications in the store. And you know what: Just like the tools I use I'm bound to get better too as I work hard on putting in those 10,000 hours - not necessarily learning new programming languages but gaining new experience on new platforms in using the tools I know best.

Rock on Flash. More to come.