

NRG: Mac & FileMaker Shipping Software

How does UPS for FileMaker compare against connecting to WorldShip with ODBC?

For years, FileMaker Pro users have connected with WorldShip via ODBC.

Now, imagine how simple order processing could be if you had a Ship button directly on an Order or Invoice layout. Because UPS for FileMaker is built in FileMaker Pro, it can be integrated directly with your FileMaker Pro Database to allow for automation that is impossible using other methods.

How hard is it to integrate? It really depends on the complexity of your solution. A FileMaker scripting novice should be able to integrate in less than an hour. First, you create a relationship from your data to the UPS for FileMaker tables. Next, you create a script which "pushes" the data from your table to ours. Then, you add a script step to invoke the Ship process. Afterwards, you can "pull" back the tracking number and ship cost. Using this method, your end users can generate a ship label in just a few seconds.

Why shouldn't I use WorldShip with FileMaker Pro? First off, WorldShip requires a PC. If you're a Mac-based business, why subject your computers to the worries of spyware, viruses and other malware. (UPS for FileMaker is the only UPS Ready product which runs on Mac OS X with full support for UPS hardware like thermal printers and digital scale.) Even if you have a PC-based business, UPS for FileMaker provides for a more seamless integration without the need for ODBC.

What about Parallels/BootCamp/Fusion? All of these allow you to run PC applications like WorldShip on your Intel Mac. In addition to this software, you must also purchase a copy of Windows XP. You may also need to purchase a memory or hard drive upgrade in order to get acceptable Windows performance.

What's wrong with ODBC? ODBC requires that you run FileMaker Server Advanced, which is priced \$2000 USD (SRP) above the standard cost of FileMaker Server. ODBC can be slow, and requires that your field names conform to specific naming conventions. Many times you must also create "shadow tables" of your data to improve performance. Once you have setup your FileMaker database for ODBC, you then need to create queries on the PC side to extract your FileMaker data.

I could just export my FileMaker data. This will work, assuming your data is in the proper format. You must have a stringent workflow to insure that export files are not "mixed up" and you will lose the ability to do ad-hoc shipments.

As you can see, UPS for FileMaker is by far the most cost-effective solution for shipping from FileMaker Pro.

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