Preference Manifests and “Raw” Preferences

In Chapter 5, we introduced the use of Apple’s Workgroup Manager application for creating managed preference .plist files. Workgroup Manager covers a lot of ground, but at its heart it is a tool for working with directory service data. There are panes for working with user accounts, user groups, computer accounts, and computer groups. Since preferences can be managed for each of these types of directory objects, Workgroup Manager also features a managed preferences editor.

The editors provided by Apple are very helpful for the preferences they cover. But what if you want to manage additional preferences beyond those covered by the Workgroup Manager Preferences overview? In this chapter, we'll explore ways to use Workgroup Manager to edit even more managed preferences. First, we'll look at using “preference manifests,” which provide a useful guide to manageable preferences. Finally, we’ll show you how to manage preferences for any application that stores its preferences in Apple’s .plist format. For this, we'll import “raw” preference files.

First, let’s review the editors provided by Apple in the Workgroup Manager Preferences Overview.

Preferences Overview

The Preferences Overview, shown in Figure 10-1, provides a friendly, easy-to-understand user interface for managing various preferences.
Figure 10-1. Workgroup Manager Preferences Overview

NOTE: You may not see every preference that is shown in Figure 10-1. If you are editing managed preferences for a user object or group of users, Energy Saver and Time Machine will not be displayed as they can be managed only for computers of computer groups.

Here, preferences are placed in logical groups. When you select a preference group, such as Login, you’ll see a set of controls (i.e., editors) specifically designed for that group of preferences, as in Figure 10-2.