



Meet the ScreenFlow-er: David Chartier, AgileBits

ScreenFlow for Software Demos/iPhone App Demos

We're pleased to introduce David Chartier from **AgileBits**. AgileBits has some very cool, very professional screencasts of their 1Password products, and David is the man behind all those screencasts. In this interview, David shares some fantastic tips and ideas from his screencasting process.

How long have you been screencasting?

I've been making screencasts for around four years now. I originally started when I worked at TUAW, as I began a series of video demos and reviews of great Mac software. I've made probably 30 screencasts over these last couple of years, and I'm making them again for my work with **AgileBits**.

At first I used a clunky handful of apps to make my screencasts, using QuickTime or GarageBand to record the audio narration, then something like iShowU to record the video, then iMovie or, sometimes, even After Effects to put it all together (I was in school for motion graphics back then, so it was a familiar tool). I discovered ScreenFlow towards the end of my time at TUAW, and I immediately wished that I could just make videos for the rest of my career. ScreenFlow dramatically simplified so many things about the way I create screencasts, switching was a slam dunk.

For what purpose to do you make your screencasts?

I now use ScreenFlow for demonstrations of AgileBits: 1Password and 1Password touch.

What kind of studio or set up do you have?

I use a Blue Snowball I have both a Mac Pro and a 17-inch MacBook Pro, though I do most of my ScreenFlow work on the Mac Pro. It has two displays so I can keep my script, images, or other notes on the second display if I need them while recording audio or actually going through





The Setup

the demonstration. For audio recording I use a Blue Snowball, which came highly recommended when I was doing research a few years ago for a “good podcasting mic.”

I didn’t try any others because I was a student at the time and basically couldn’t afford to. But folks like Leo Laporte and lots of indie screencasters recommended it, and it retails for \$140, though you can usually get it for around \$75-100 at Amazon on a good day.

The Blue Snowball comes with a decent table stand that can be raised to a good height if you’re sitting at a desk. There’s no setup, it “just works” on Mac OS X, and if you angle it properly, you can get pretty good pop filtering for those nasty “p’s” and “b’s” that you don’t want to stab your listeners’ ears with.

What do you find to be the most challenging aspect of creating your screencasts?

Telling a good story. I know I’m not doing Shakespeare here, but knowing how to use software is very different from teaching someone else how to use it, let alone why. I spend a lot of time trying to step out of my own shoes while watching a cut of the screencast and asking myself if it’s informative, entertaining, and effective. A screencast can fail very easily if the pacing is too fast or you don’t properly represent the core appeal of the software or a particular feature.

What’s the process you use for creating your screencasts?

First I spend some time thinking about the features I need to show off, and who the audience will be. It could be existing 1Password users who already know their way around, or potential customers who have never used it. I then draft an outline of the topics I need to discuss, and rehash it a couple of times to make sure I’m stepping through the process in the right order. When it’s time to start producing the screencast, I use

ScreenFlow to record just the audio narration, nothing more. I write an actual script from the outline, and read it word-for-word to make sure I get pacing right and eliminate “uhm’s.” This is a trick I learned in my multi-media design studies only after I’d created my first handful of screencasts at TUAW: always cut the audio first. Always. It takes an enormous monkey off your back when it comes to actually demonstrating the software, so you don’t have to concentrate on nailing your lines and making sure you hit all the right marks, all at the same time.

To create the visual portion of the screencast, I play the audio track back while I actually record the motions with ScreenFlow. This way the audio acts as killer queue system to keep my visual movements on pace so the viewer can digest the final product.

Once both the audio and video are recorded, I edit out the bloopers, add a few transitions to smooth it all over, and export to various formats depending on where it’s going to be published.

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What other programs/accessories do you use besides ScreenFlow to create your screencasts?

I use SimFinger for iPhone screencasts, but that’s about it. If I ever need to create or crop graphics, I’ll use a mix of Acorn, Pixelmator, and Skitch.

What advice would you give to someone just starting out screencasting?

Besides the bit about recording your audio narration first, video second, I think I’d say: there is an art to screencasting. Watch and listen to your favorite screencasts carefully. Find screencasts that grab and engage you and keep you interested, or the one that made you want to go out and buy the product at the drop of a hat, because those are the ones that rocked it. Watch them over and over, pause and replay sections to figure out how they highlighted a particular area or pulled off something cool. If you need to know more, try and get in touch with the creator—usually they’re happy to chat about their tools and techniques.