

Enabling Windows Server Roles in System Image Manager

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In our new book titled *Starter Guide for Windows® System Image Manager*, we discussed how System Image Manager (SIM) can be used to automate the installation of Windows operating systems. The basic development steps and settings for all Windows operating systems are the same for either desktop or server versions. Special attention was given to Windows Embedded 8.x Industry to address the lockdown features. We mentioned SIM supports Windows Server, but we never covered the details of the server roles that can be pre-enabled.

Like Windows Desktop and Windows Embedded, SIM can be used to create an answer file for Windows Server to create a Windows Server Installer that pre-installs applications, drivers, and settings. Following the development process outlined in the book and shown in Figure 1, a catalog file can be generated from Windows Server's install.wim file. Once the catalog has been created, you can create an answer file with preset values for languages, computer names, accounts, and enable any features that the operating system supports. For Windows Server, these features include the server roles.

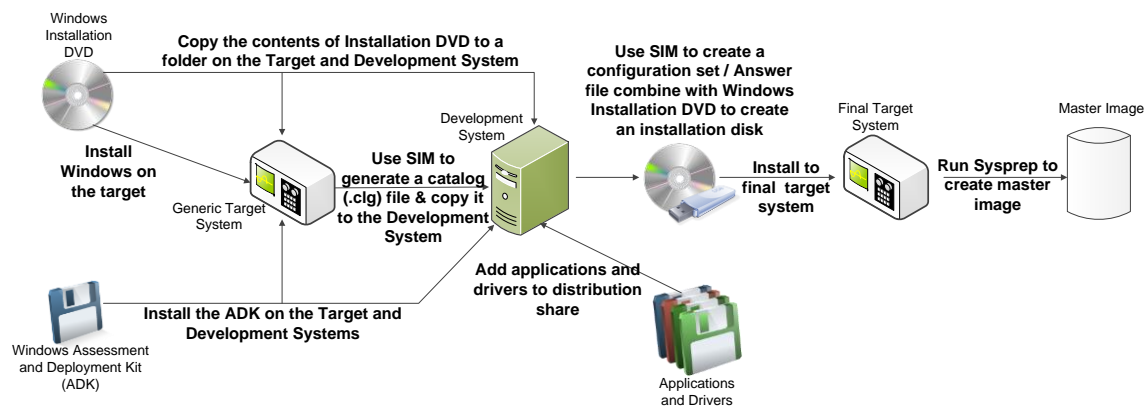


Figure 1 SIM Development Process

For most administrators, adding server roles is nothing new. Just launch Server Manager and select the roles and servers from the list as show in Figure 2. Of course, further configuration will be required once the role has been enabled, but these operations can be scripted in PowerShell.

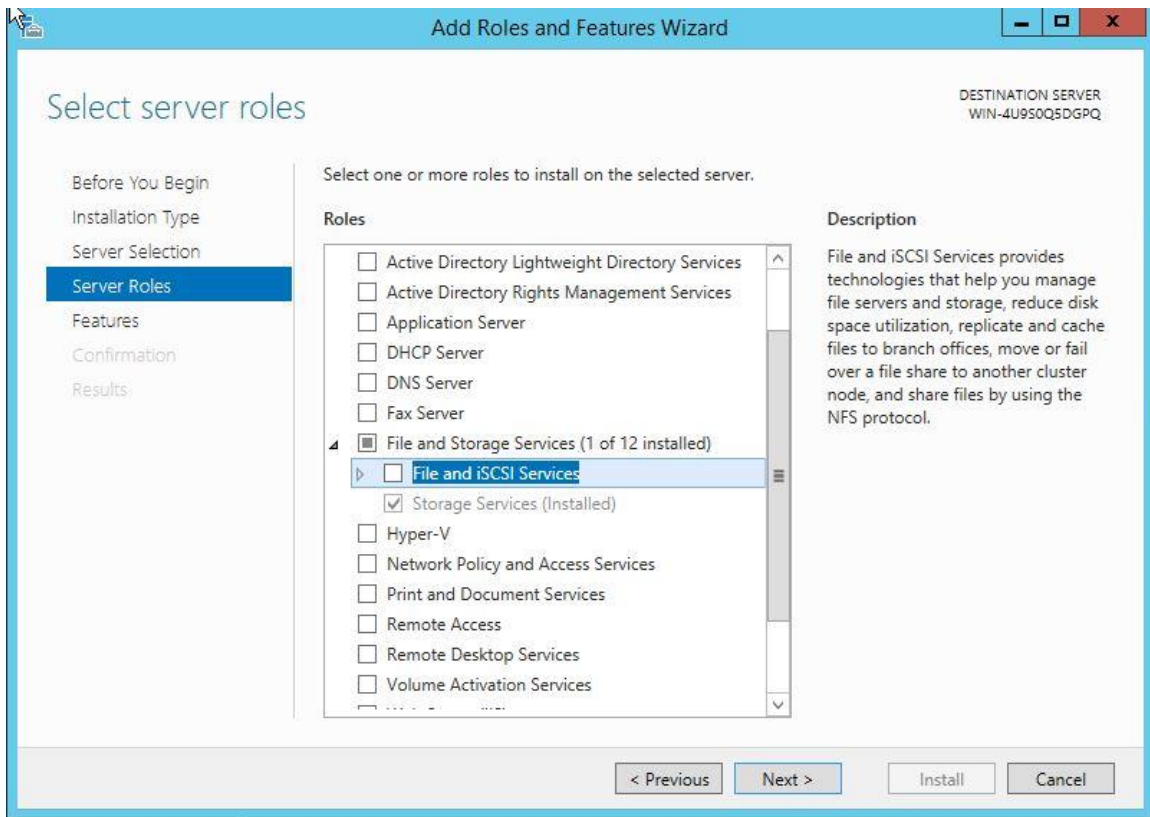


Figure 2 - Adding Server Roles

When you add the Microsoft-Windows-ServerCore-Package to the answer file in SIM, you can enable or disable different features included in the server roles as shown in Figure 3. Synchronous commands can be used to call PowerShell scripts to configure the server role further.

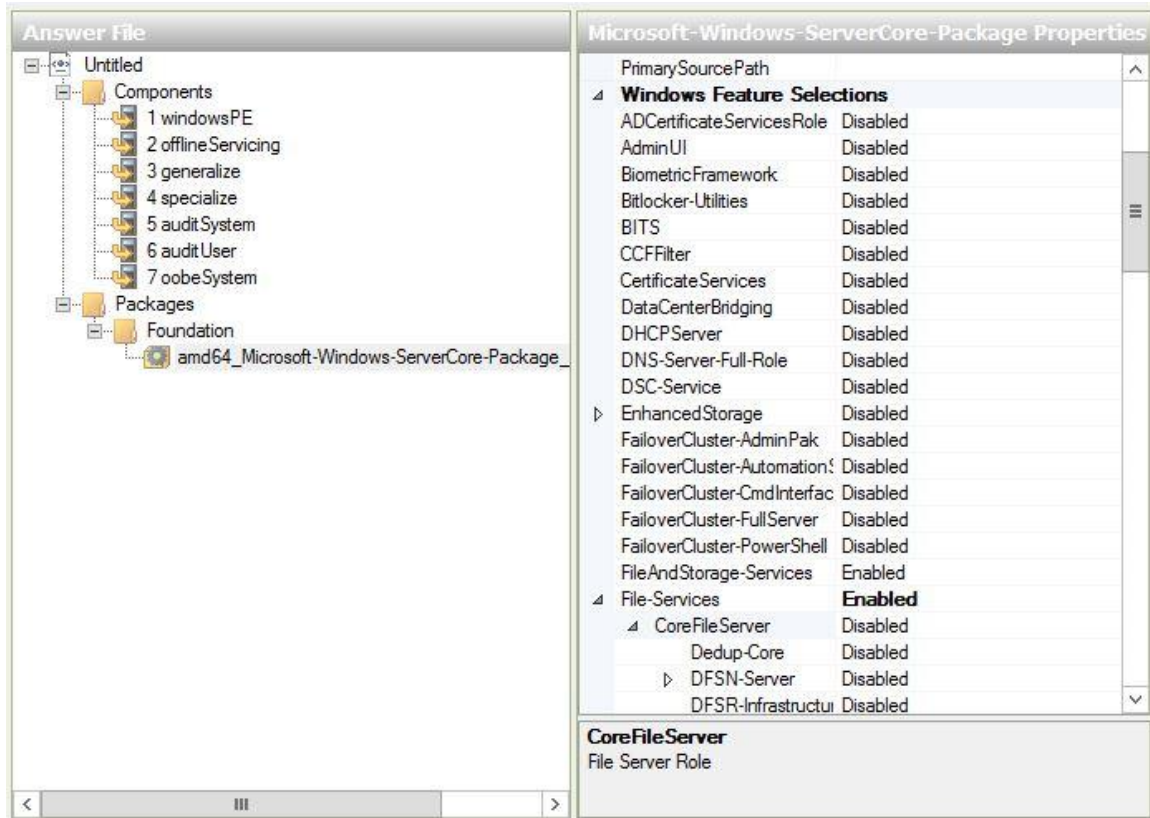


Figure 3 - Server Roles under Windows Feature Selections

The natural tendency is to install and configure the server, and then forget about it. Years later, it might be important to re-build the server. If you did all of the installation and configuration manually, you might forget the steps that were involved. SIM not only creates a Windows Server Installer that automates the server installation and configuration process, but it also creates a structured development process and forces the documentation of the installation and configuration.

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