PicWorkflow - Microstock Workflow and Analysis Tool

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Picworkflow [2] is a microstock [3] submission and analysis tool. It works a lot like the now closed isyndica service. If you never used isyndica then you should probably go and read the review of isyndica [4] before continuing. All the key benefits of picworkflow and the major concerns are the same as those for isyndica.

The security of this type of service is a big issue so I will address it before I even start. Picworkflow goes to some length to explain how passwords are encrypted. By the sounds of it I'm happier with picworkflow than anywhere else online I put my passwords, because you need to enter a 'master password' each time you submit images your agency passwords are not stored on the server in a form that can be read without that master password. Even if someone broke in they would not be able to access those passwords, in fact if you lose the master password (not the site login) you need to re-enter all of your logins and settings again, the encryption is completely one way. Don't take my word for it have a look at the credentials page if you plan to use picworkflow.

 As an aside, I was really rather concerned a few months back to realise that my previous FTP *[5] client stores all my microstock logins in plain text on my own computer. It goes without saying that everyone should be very careful to where, what or who they provide their account details.*

[2]

What does it do?

Picworkflow is a series of tools that allows you to upload images (also vectors and video although I didn't test that) to the server and from there distribute those images to multiple microstock agencies. Tools are included for editing keywords, titles and descriptions, and statistics tools are planned. Images can currently be uploaded to picworkflow by FTP or via a flash uploader in the browser.
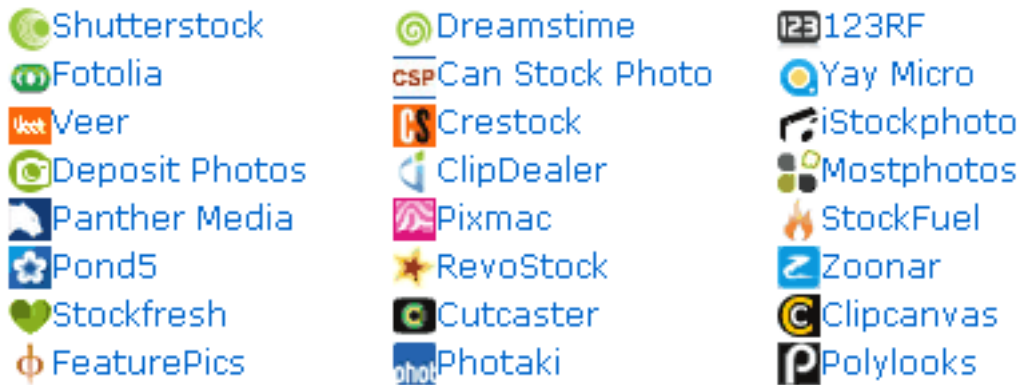
Prices

Each image (up to 22mb) costs 1 credit to distribute to one destination, for videos 1 credit per 22mb so a 100mb video would be 5 credits. 1 credit costs 1 US cent. For images that's comparable to the prices charged by isyndica, and hopefully with the video charged by the size this will make the service sustainable long term.

Unlike isyndica storage is not included for free (although you did need a 'higher' account on isyndica to get that), you don't need storage for the basic service you get 7 days of storage for each upload free. If you don't pay for storage all you lose is the ability to distribute old images to new agencies down the road without uploading them again. Files are stored for 7 days on the server and then automatically trashed if you don't extend their storage, you will still be able to track acceptance and stats after the original file has been deleted. 1 credit for 3 months storage for an image up to 22mb i.e. same pricing as for the distribution.

Free... thought that would catch your eye! new signups get 40 free credits to try the service out without obligation, and there are several ways to earn free bonus credits by referring new users and 'helping picworkflow along'.

Sites Supported

Pretty much everyone, including istockphoto (istock can the awkward for not supporting ftp uploads), the list grows as people suggest new agencies. If you do have an agency not supported you can add them and potentially earn a bonus for sharing with the community. Adding your credentials (site logins and password) is also a piece of cake - I remember for several agencies isyndica wanted username, email address, password, ftp username and ftp password, which were very often the same thing or concatenations thereof).

Shutterstock   Dreamstime   123RF
Fotolia   Can Stock Photo   Yay Micro
Veer   Crestock   iStockphoto
Deposit Photos   ClipDealer   Mostphotos
Panther Media   Pixmac   StockFuel
Pond5   RevoStock   Zoonar
Stockfresh   Cutcaster   Clipcanvas
FeaturePics   Photaki   Polylooks

... and growing

Title, Description & Keywording Services

Picworkflow allows you to purchase keywords, titles and descriptions for your images. The keywording is performed by 'crowd sourced' keyworders who are paid for each keyword they add. You set the price you want to pay for each keyword when you import images (you can also order keywords later). Quality and processing time is built into the system with feedback from previous keywording tasks and the amount of money you chose to pay. Higher value tasks are given to keyworders with a history of good keywording experience, lower value tasks are more likely to be left to keyworders with less experience and may take longer.

Select your default destinations:

Check before authorising distribution as these tasks will override destination-accepted filetypes or resolution.

Purchase keywording for these imports...

fast Images with keywords already applied will be audited to the ordered number and you will be refunded for any which remain *slow* unchanged.

Purchase keywords for ~**1 image**

How many keywords?   25

Payment per keyword?   1

Information   Keywording Cost: 25 c

A title and description costs a fixed 20c per image (at time of review) , Keywords cost between 0.5 and 2 cents per keyword.

A loopback FTP 'destination' is provided free of charge allowing you to download and archive your

keyworded images as well as distribute them to agencies.

Where did it come from?

Like a lot of good things picworkflow was made in Manchester. It is produced by Robert Davies who gave photographers picniche [6] (and picniche toolbar [7]) along with several other services for microstock buyers and image users. You can follow robert @bobbigmac [8] on twitter.

Conclusion

Having already reviewed isyndica I don't feel the need here to explain the virtues of uploading once and distributing to many locations, discuss the price or comment on the level of service provided, in these respects **picworkflow perfectly fills the void in my workflow that was left when isyndica closed**.

Picworkflow claim "The goal is to do everything possible to help your photography business run smoothly and efficiently." I love to find fault (I know I'm sick) and I'm struggling here, it does seem for the most part to fill that goal.

Improved stats are 'coming soon'. There are also some nice things including self promotion options like badges of your latest images I've not mentioned in the review.

I've used picworkflow regularly over the past 18 months or so. FTP distribution has been very reliable. I've had a few niggles with embedded metadata [9]; however these are in some cases the same issues I see if I upload directly myself - agencies interpret different encoding standards in different ways and having images processed in CS2, CS4 and now more recently CS5 I feel like I have tested every possible combination!. Recently, touch wood all agencies have been importing everything without a hiccup (even istock!).

The titling and description service is very good, I've had well over 100 images processed and can only think of a few minor problems.

The keywording service also works well, and is very flexible. I've had at least 1000 images keyworded. Bids below 1c can take longer to process, Pay 1c or more per keyword and they are usually completed within 24 hours. Keywording quality, as you would expect directly proportional to your bid, but even at 1c you can get some excellent keywording done very quickly with only a few percent of images needing a correction - pay more to get the good keyworders and you almost guarantee an excellent selection of keywords. Like any service, when you start it's wise to begin with small batches just to try things out and tune the settings to your needs.

For more details and to try out the service visit picworkflow.com [2]

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