WorkBench Documentation

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WORKBENCH

WorkBench is a hierarchical environment manager for *nix shells. It sources shell-code distributed across multiple levels of a folder hierarchy and invokes environments with the combination. Code could thus be implemented to operate at different scopes, allowing clear overrides at each folder depth and easy overall maintenance while managing several hundred environments.

WorkBench is a minimalistic framework. It is extendable and configurable, and can adapt to a variety of use-cases. It is implemented as a single bash script, and designed to work with minimal dependencies even on vanilla *nix systems.

Installation

WorkBench is under active development. A package based installer is currently not available.

1.1 Install from source

WorkBench (wb) is a single bash file. You can use curl or wget to fetch the bleeding edge wb script from the WorkBench repository.

1.1.1 Using curl

curl -fsSL https://raw.githubusercontent.com/pshirali/workbench/master/wb > wb

1.1.2 Using wget

wget https://raw.githubusercontent.com/pshirali/workbench/master/wb

Ensure that wb is placed in a folder which is in your PATH. Set the execute bit for wb by running chmod +x < path/to/wb>

Configuration

WorkBench accepts its configuration from environment variables which have the prefix WORKBENCH_. WorkBench comes with sane defaults and external configuration is optional.

2.1 Configuration using rcfile

WorkBench can also source an *rcfile* on invocation. The default location for the *rcfile* is \$HOME/.workbenchrc. If a file at the default location exists, then it is automatically sourced.

A custom *rcfile* can be specified using the environment variable WORKBENCH_RC pointing to a file that already exists.

The *rcfile* can be used to define multiple configuration parameters at once.

Note: The rcfile overrides environment variables defined in the shell.

A full list of configurable parameters are available in subsequent chapters.

2.2 The WorkBench Home directory

WorkBench operates on files inside a directory defined by WORKBENCH_HOME. If WORKBENCH_HOME is undefined, the default home directory \$HOME/.workbench is used. WorkBench automatically creates the necessary folder(s) on invocation.

Chapter $\mathbf{3}$

Completion

A bash completer for WorkBench is available in the completion subdirectory of the WorkBench repo.

To deploy it:

- 1. Download the file completion/wb_complete.bash
- 2. Add the following line to your .bashrc or .bash_profile where complete.bash is located

source "<path/to>/wb_complete.bash"

Introduction to subshells

Note: Skip this section if you are already familiar with bash subshells

Consider a file abcd with the contents below:

```
export ABCD=10
show_abcd () {
    echo "The value of ABCD is ${ABCD}"
}
alias c=clear
```

A bash subshell could be invoked using:

bash --rcfile ./abcd

While the prompt remains the same, a new interactive shell is now active. In this state, the following behavior can be observed:

```
>> echo $ABCD  # value from the environemnt variable is printed
10
>> show_abcd  # a bash function is invoked
The value of ABCD is 10
>> c  # alias for `clear`. Clears the screen.
>> exit  # exits the subshell
```

On *exit* all context from the subshell is lost. It may be observed that executing the same commands in the parent shell does not result in the same behavior as what was seen in the subshell.

An environment is a subshell initialised with environment variables, functions or aliases which caters specifically to a project or a task at hand.

By using environments:

- 1. The parent shell's namespace remains free of project-specific declarations
- 2. Declarations are local to each environment. Commands and variables by the same name could be declared in each environment, which perform operations unique to that environment.
- 3. It is easy to exit from the subshell and unload the entire environment at once.

WorkBench Concepts

5.1 Introduction

WorkBench makes it easy to work with a large number of custom shell environment scripts, each of which could be tailor-made for a project or task.

WorkBench sources shell code spread across different depths of a directory tree to construct an environment automatically. Code could thus be implemented in parts, residing in files at different directory depths, and without any hardcoded references.

WorkBench operates only on files present inside a directory as defined by WORKBENCH_HOME. It uses two abstract terms to refer to parts of a to-be-assembled environment; namely Shelf and Bench.

5.2 Shelves and Benches

EXAMPLE: Consider a WORKBENCH_HOME with the following structure:

| WORKBENCH_HOME | | |
|----------------|---------|---------|
| ash.bench | # BENCH | |
| — bar/ | | |
| baz/ | # BENCH | |
| wb.shelf | # DENGI | # SHELF |
| birch.bench | # BENCH | |
| foo/ | | |
| - pine.bench | # BENCH | |
| wb.shelf | | # SHELF |
| wb.shelf | | # SHELF |

5.2.1 Shelf

A shelf is WORKBENCH_HOME, or any subdirectory inside it, which contains the file as defined by WORKBENCH_SHELF_FILE. The default value for WORKBENCH_SHELF_FILE is wb.shelf. A shelf is always a path relative to WORKBENCH_HOME. Shelf names end with a trailing / as they represent the directory containing WORKBENCH_SHELF_FILE and not the file itself.

In the example above, the file wb.shelf is present at three locations. Hence, there are three shelves here.

```
foo/
bar/baz/
```

The table below maps the name of the *shelf* to the underlying resource file:

| Shelf Name | Underlying resource filename |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| / | WORKBENCH_HOME/wb.shelf |
| foo/ | WORKBENCH_HOME/foo/wb.shelf |
| bar/baz/ | WORKBENCH_HOME/bar/baz/wb.shelf |

The subdirectory bar/ is not a *shelf* because it doesn't contain wb.shelf.

5.2.2 Bench

A bench is a file anywhere inside WORKBENCH_HOME with the extension as defined by WORKBENCH_BENCH_EXTN. The default value for WORKBENCH_BENCH_EXTN is bench. The extension separator . is assumed automatically and is not part of the value. Bench names are representative of files. They do not include the trailing .<WORKBENCH_BENCH_EXTN>

In the example above, there are four files with a .bench extension. Hence, four benches.

```
ash
bar/baz/maple
bar/birch
foo/pine
```

The table below maps the name of the *bench* to the underlying resource file:

| Bench Name | Underlying resource filename |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| ash | WORKBENCH_HOME/ash.bench |
| bar/baz/maple | WORKBENCH_HOME/bar/baz/maple.bench |
| bar/birch | WORKBENCH_HOME/bar/birch.bench |
| foo/pine | WORKBENCH_HOME/foo/pine.bench |

5.3 Analogy

Analogous to a real workbench, the top of a *bench* is where the work gets done. A discerning artisan might place minimal tools required for the task at hand on the *bench*, while rest of the tools might be placed in *shelves*, each of which ordered based on the frequency in which they get used; frequently used tools being closer than infrequent ones.

The abstract *shelf* (a place to stow tools) may also be imagined as a pegboard where tools are hung for easy access. An artisan can locate any tool quickly, use it and put it back.

In WorkBench, the *shelf* hierarchy is provided by the possible presence of the WORKBENCH_SHELF_FILE at different directory depths leading up to the Bench.

Code that is declared in a Shelf at the root; that is WORKBENCH_HOME will be sourced by every *workbench*. Code that is applicable only to a specific set of environments could be defined in Shelves in a subdirectory at the appropriate depth. Thus declarations & implementations common to multiple environments get organised into Shelves, while declarations which uniquely associate with one environment get placed in a Bench.

A pegboard approach could also be implemented by declaring functions in various Shelves but not calling them. The Bench would call those functions with various parameters for the task at hand.

5.4 Benefits

- 1. Overall there is less code to maintain.
- 2. It is easy to influence control on a whole group of environments by moving code to a Shelf at the appropriate subdirectory
- 3. Redeclaration results in overriding. Code in a *shelf* at a deeper depth overrides those at lower depths (closer to WORKBENCH_HOME). Code in a *bench* overrides all *shelves*. The workbench *tree* could be designed to be shallow, or deeply nested to cater to the amount of overriding required.
- 4. The hierarchical structure lends itself to organising and managing a tree of hundreds of benches easily.

Usage Guide

WorkBench has a minimal set of commands. They are also short (usually one character).

Note: The following convention denotes OR. Example: wb a |b| c means wb a OR wb b OR wb c

6.1 View version and env – [wb –V, wb –E]

wb -V prints the version of WorkBench being used.

wb -E lists all environment variables starting with WORKBENCH_. These environment variables may be defined in your current shell, or may be defined in a WORKBENCH_RC file.

If you use an *rcfile* with WorkBench, the values you set in the *rcfile* will apply over everything else. The *rcfile* is sourced on every wb invocation regardless of the command.

6.2 Operating on Shelves and Benches - [wb s, wb b]

The following operations can be performed on shelves and benches:.

6.2.1 List

WorkBenches can be listed using wb s | b

6.2.2 Print path to the underlying file

wb s|b <name>, where <*name>* is either a <*shelfName>* or <*benchName>* prints the absolute path to the underlying resource file associated with that shelf or bench.

The path is generated and displayed for non-existent shelves and benches as well. A non-zero exit-code is returned if a shelf or bench doesn't exist.

6.2.3 Run a command against the underlying file

wb s|b [options] <name> <command> [[arg]..]

Runs < command> [[arg]..] <path-to-underlying-file-for-name>

Examples:

```
wb s <shelfName> cat  # view the file WORKBENCH_HOME/.../<shelf-file>
wb b <benchName> vim  # edit the file WORKBENCH_HOME/.../<bench-file> in ViM
```

Commands execute only when a <shelfName> or

enchName> exist on disk. It is possible to create a new *shelf* or *bench* inline, just before running a command on it by adding the -new switch.

wb s --new <newShelfName> vim

WorkBench prompts for confirmation if the *<command>* is rm. The *--yes* switch can be used to indicate *Yes* to skip the prompt. Alternatively, WORKBENCH_AUTOCONFIRM can be set to any non-empty value to disable this prompt and assume *Yes* always.

6.3 Auto-generated workbench and Entrypoints

A *workbench* is the auto-generated code composed by WorkBench (the tool), when the command wb a|r|n < benchName > is executed.

The switch --dump can be used to print the auto-generated code on *stdout* instead of executing it. The --dump switch does not validate the presence of a *<benchName>*. This switch can be used to review the generated code.

The auto-generated workbench has the following high-level sections:

| INIT | < Initial declarations are done here |
|------------|---|
| SOURCE | < Shelves and bench are `sourced` here |
| ENTRYPOINT | < Entrypoint function is called with `args` |

The *INIT* section of the *workbench* contains basic/no-op implementations for the default functions. *Shelves* and *Bench* are expected to define their own functions with an actual implementation to override those in *INIT*.

The INIT section defines the following variables:

- 1. WORKBENCH_ENV_NAME: Stores the *benchName* as the environment name
- 2. ORIG_PS1: Stores the current PS1, while PS1 is reset to prefix the current benchName
- 3. WORKBENCH_CHAIN: Stores a : separated list of each sourced *shelf* and *bench* in the order in which they were sourced.

An entrypoint is a shell functions invoked after sourcing all the *shelves* and the *bench*. Each WorkBench execution command has a different *entrypoint* function associated with it. Any trailing arguments passed to the WorkBench's execution command are passed on to the *entrypoint*.

Entrypoint function names are configurable. The table below lists the environment variables which define the *entrypoints* and the default function names associated with each of them.

| Туре | Environment Variable Name | Default Function Name | Command |
|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| entrypoint | WORKBENCH_ACTIVATE_FUNC | workbench_OnActivate | а |
| entrypoint | WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC | workbench_OnRun | r |
| entrypoint | WORKBENCH_NEW_FUNC | workbench_OnNew | n |

The *entrypoint* is invoked by calling the entrypoint environment variable. Thus the value of the entrypoint environment variable can be redefined in the *shelf* or the *bench* to point to a non-default function as well.

6.3.1 Entrypoint Example

When wb r <benchName> arg1 arg2 is executed, then the function that maps to WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC becomes the actual entrypoint. The default entrypoint function name is workbench_OnRun and the *INIT* section has an implementation for it.

A *shelf* or *bench* could redeclare workbench_OnRun multiple times; in files at different depths. The last declared implementation will be the one that executes with arguments arg arg2

It is also possible that WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC could be assigned a new value like my_custom_func anywhere in the *shelves* or the *bench*. The last declared value of WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC is now the new entrypoint function, and the last declared implementation of the function my_custom_func is the one that executes with arguments arg1 arg2

6.4 Executing workbench environments - [wb a, wb r, wb n]

The *workbench* stores the execution command in the varible WORKBENCH_EXEC_MODE. *Shelf* and *Bench* code could take decisions based on this value.

A no-op function workbench_pre_execute_hook executes just before a *workbench* is built. This function could be implemented by the WORKBENCH_RC with logic that decides whether to go ahead with execution. Refer to the *Security* chapter for more details.

6.4.1 Activate - [wb a]

The *activate* command is equivalent of bash --rcfile <workbench>. It spawns a subshell with the autogenerated *workbench*, with WORKBENCH_ACTIVATE_FUNC as the entrypoint.

Nested activations are prevented by checking if WORKBENCH_ENV_NAME has already been set.

Deactivating a workbench is done by simply running exit.

Occasionally, there may be cases where some code needs to be executed when an *exit* is issued. This can be achieved by redeclaring the *exit* function, calling user-defined code, followed by calling *builtin exit*.

Example:

```
exit () {
    <your-deactivation-code-goes-here>
    builtin exit $? 2> /dev/null
}
```

6.4.2 Run - [wb r]

The *run* command is the equivalent of bash -c <workbench>. It executes the *workbench* non-interactively, with WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC as the entrypoint. The *run* command is used to invoke one-off commands which may be defined in the *workbench*.

For example, a *workbench* could declare subcommands like start, stop, build, deploy etc, as independent functions. The entrypoint function defined by WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC could parse arguments and dispatch them to respective subcommands.

Thus, for the same workbench, the activate and run commands could be used to trigger different functionality.

6.4.3 New - [wb n]

The *new* command is a variant of the *run* command. It's execution is similar to that of the *run* command (non-interactive), but with WORKBENCH_NEW_FUNC as the entrypoint.

When the command wb n <newBenchName> is invoked, WorkBench creates all intermediate *shelf* files (if they don't already exist) followed by the *bench*. The *bench* must either not exist, or must be a zero-byte file.

The last declared function as defined by WORKBENCH_NEW_FUNC is then called, which is expected to write contents into the new *bench*.

Consider a programming language like Python, Go etc. All projects of a language would require a common set of steps to build up a workspace for the language. For Python, tools like *virtualenv*, with *virtualenvwrapper* are already available. Similar tools exist for other languages too.

It is easy to implement code in a *shelf* to define the behavior for all projects for a particular language/group. The code could wrap around an existing tool (like *virtualenv*) or provide all functionality by itself.

The aspect that varies between each project of a language might be: (a) Name, (b) Project URL, may be (c) language version etc. But, such values are few. The *shelf's* implementation of WORKBENCH_NEW_FUNC could request this information for a new project and dump the metadata into the *bench*. The *bench* could therefore be minimal; may be an *env* file with key-values.

Environment Variables

The table below contains a list of environment variables which WorkBench consumes in its configuration.

| Environment Variable Name | Default Value | Description |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---|
| WORKBENCH_RC | \$HOME/.workbenchro | Auto-load location for the rcfile |
| WORKBENCH_HOME | \$HOME/.workbench | Directory containg shelves and benches |
| WORKBENCH_ALLOW_INSECURE_P | ATH | Skips using 'realpath' if set. |
| WORKBENCH_GREPPER | egrep | Grep tool used to list env. vars |
| WORKBENCH_AUTOCONFIRM | - | Skip confirmation prompt for <i>rm</i> if set |
| WORKBENCH_SHELF_FILE | wb.shelf | Filename for the shelf file |
| WORKBENCH_BENCH_EXTN | bench | File extension for the bench file |
| WORKBENCH_ACTIVATE_CMD | /bin/bash –rcfile | Command to invoke subshell in intereactive |
| | | mode |
| WORKBENCH_COMMAND_CMD | /bin/bash -c | Command to invoke a script in non-interactive |
| | | mode |
| WORKBENCH_ACTIVATE_FUNC | work- | Entrypoint function name for the activate |
| | bench_OnActivate | command |
| WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC | workbench_OnRun | Entrypoint function name for the run com- |
| | | mand |
| WORKBENCH_NEW_FUNC | workbench_OnNew | Entrypoint function name for the new com- |
| | | mand |

The table below contains a list of environment variables which are injected as part of the auto-generated workbench.

| Environment Variable Name | Description | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| WORKBENCH_ENV_NAME | Name of the currently active bench | |
| WORKBENCH_EXEC_MODE | The mode in which the workbench was launched. One of 'a', 'c', 'n' | |
| WORKBENCH_CHAIN | A : separated list of every sourced shelf and bench | |
| ORIG_PS1 | Stores the existing PS1 before redefining it | |

CHAPTER $\mathbf{8}$

Exit Codes

WorkBench exits with different exit-codes when it encounters errors. The table below lists the error names, exit-codes and a description.

| Error Name | ExitCode | Description |
|--------------|----------|---------------------------------|
| ERR_FATAL | 1 | General/fatal errors. |
| ERR_MISSING | 3 | Resource does not exist. |
| ERR_INVALID | 4 | Failed input validation. |
| ERR_DECLINED | 5 | Opted No on confirmation prompt |
| ERR_EXISTS | 6 | Resource already exists. |

Security

WorkBench is a bash script capable of executing shell code from your system. This page discloses some of the innerworkings of WorkBench for user awareness. It also covers guidelines and best-practices that you should follow to securely use WorkBench.

It is vital that you understand the contents of this page before you use WorkBench. A discerning user might find the contents here a tad verbose. However, it is in the best interest of a potential user.

This document assumes that you are already operate a secure system where the statements below (but not limited to) are true:

- 1. You trust the OS binaries that are installed.
- 2. Only you have access to the contents of your user directory. (\$HOME)
- 3. You own and understand the contents of your shell's refiles. (like .bashrc).

The rest of the this page discusses how WorkBench fits in, and the baggage that it brings with it.

9.1 Single User Context

WorkBench is designed for a single-user. You should use WorkBench on systems where you (as a *nix user), and ONLY YOU own and are in are in complete control of:

- 1. WorkBench (the tool), and the location where it is deployed.
- 2. The location(s) and contents of all WORKBENCH_RC files
- 3. The location(s) and contents of all WORKBENCH_HOME folders (the entire tree)

Every time you run *wb*, you are not only executing the code in *wb*, but also the contents of the *rcfile*. The default location \$HOME/.workbenchrc is tried if *WORKBENCH_RC* is not defined. The *rcfile* here is a shell script. The code within it will execute even without the *execute* permission set on the file (similar to your *.bashrc*, *.bash_profile*)

Depending on values defined against *WORKBENCH_SHELF_FILE* and *WORKBENCH_BENCH_EXTN*, all files matching the filename and extension respectively within your *WORKBENCH_HOME* are assumed to be shell scripts.

Code from these files will be sourced when you invoke *wb a*, *wb r* or *wb n* commands. As above, they too don't require the *execute* permission to be set on them.

WorkBench is not in control of any files or commands that may be sourced or executed within *shelves* or *benches*. It is possible that code (content within the *shelf* or *bench*) might source files outside of *WORKBENCH_HOME*, or outside of your *user* directory too.

The name of the *entrypoint* function that WorkBench executes can be redefined using *WORK-BENCH_ACTIVATE_FUNC*, *WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC* and *WORKBENCH_NEW_FUNC* respectively. Depending on the command invoked, the control will land on one of these functions.

The values for these variables can be replaced by any executable binary or an existing definition in your current shell (parent shell).

Example:

```
WORKBENCH_RUN_FUNC=echo wb r <benchName> Hello World
Will print "Hello World" in the last line of the command's output.
```

9.1.1 Guidelines

1. Ensure/change the ownership of wb, *rcfiles* and all contents of *WORKBENCH_HOME* to you (as a user). Ensure that *write* and *execute* permissions are not available for *group* and *all*.

Ideal permissions:

```
chmod 0700 <wb>
chmod 0600 <rcfiles>
chomd 0600 <WORKBENCH HOME and all its files>
```

2. Do not introduce new content into WORKBENCH_HOME that you haven't personally written or reviewed.

For example:

- (a) Do not extract archives inside WORKBENCH_HOME.
- (b) Do not git clone repositories into your WORKBENCH_HOME.

You must treat the contents of WORKBENCH_HOME in the same light as your rcfiles, dotfiles etc.

9.2 Detecting changes in your WORKBENCH_HOME

WorkBench provides a function workbench_pre_execute_hook which allows you to implement your own *pre* checks before executing a *workbench*. This is an ideal place to implement checks to track change to *WORK-BENCH_HOME*.

You can implement workbench_pre_execute_hook as a function inside your *WORKBENCH_RC*. If the function returns with a non-zero return code, WorkBench will exit with that code.

Perhaps the easiest way to achieve this would be to turn your *WORKBENCH_HOME* into a Git repo and let Git track your changes. (Example: git status -s)

9.3 Canonical paths and directory traversal

WorkBench uses the realpath (GNU) utility to convert all relative paths to absolute paths before operating on them. WorkBench ensures that every *shelf* and *bench* that gets sourced as part of building a *workbench*, also reside within WORKBENCH_HOME.

Important:

- 1. WORKBENCH_RC and WORKBENCH_HOME are excluded from checks. It is highly recommended that they reside inside your HOME directory, but this is not enforced.
- 2. WorkBench does not detect *source* statements inside the code residing in a *shelf* or *bench*. Placing such *source* statements is discouraged. If you do, then you should ensure that you *source* it from locations within WORKBENCH_HOME.

It is possible that realpath might not be present on every OS, and you might have to install it before using Work-Bench.

WorkBench also provides a way to disable this feature. You can do so by setting WORKBENCH_ALLOW_INSECURE_PATH to any value to disable directory traversal checks.

9.3.1 What is a directory traversal attack? How is it harmful?

Directory traversal attack is a way by which software is made to expose or operate on files outside a directory boundary. It takes the form of an *attack* when it is used with malicious intent. WorkBench implements checks largely to prevent inadvertent sourcing of content.

A directory traversal attack involves a *path* derived from user input which includes .../. This indicates the parent of the intended directory. With directory traversal checks disabled, one could supply a command like: wb r .../ benchName to access a *shelf* and a *bench* that is located at the parent directory of WORKBENCH_HOME. The input could include multiple .../ to craft a *path* that points to any other file on your drive.

Note: WorkBench strips preceding / from *shelf* and *bench* names, and makes them relative to *WORK-BENCH_HOME*. This handles the case of input *shelf* or *bench* names supplied as absolute paths.

9.4 Temp files

WorkBench creates temp files with the auto-generated *workbench* contents when the commands wb a, wb r, wb n are executed without the --dump switch. The temp files are created using mktemp utility. This creates a file within /tmp with the content that you see in the --dump switch. The temp files have a default permission 0600 which makes them accessible to only you, the user. WorkBench deletes the temp file after the command completes execution.

Contribution

You are welcome to contribute to the WorkBench project.

WorkBench has been built with the philosophy of *less-is-more*. It is nearly feature complete. No big features are planned. Improvements however are always welcome.

10.1 Where can I contribute?

You can contribute to:

- 1. Discussing and suggesting improvements to provide hooks or tweaks, such that WorkBench could be adopted for use in more scenarios.
- 2. Testing: WorkBench compatibility tests are work-in-progress. This involves testing against various bash versions and against other shells (zsh, ash, etc)
- 3. A plan to start a Wiki is on the cards, where you can contribute your ideas and recipies on the best ways to use WorkBench.

10.2 How do I start?

You must start a discussion by opening a Github Issue first. You'll be guided on the next steps through the discussion. PR which don't go through this route will probably be rejected.

Testing

WorkBench was built with TDD. Unittests are written in Python3's unittest framework. They are best run with Python 3.7.

Tests can be run by cloning the repo and executing make test

Code coverage is on the cards using bashcov. This can be taken up after an enhancement in *bashcov* Issue-47 is addressed.

License

All content, logos, source-code under the WorkBench project is release under the Apache 2.0 license, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

A copy of the license can be found in the LICENSE file in the WorkBench repo.

Indices and tables

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