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NSW DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

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New South Wales Department of Primary Industries Relies on DSRAZOR and DSMETER to Enhance Account Management and Audit Network Activity

Australian Agency Increases Network Security and Empowers Support Team

Background:

Australia's New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) cultivates the profitable and sustainable development of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and mineral resources throughout the state. This government agency needed a straightforward solution that would enable it to manage more than 3,500 user accounts spanning both Windows and Novell environments.

The NSW DPI sought a way for its Help Desk staff, which often includes temporary personnel, to manage accounts without having to navigate multiple, complex management consoles. Visual Click's DSRAZOR for Windows and DSRAZOR for eDirectory met this objective, enabling the department to delegate responsibilities for account management and to automate repetitive tasks. The DSRAZOR software also provides a development environment for the creation of new applications that enhance productivity and performance.

Challenge: Finding a Straightforward Management Solution

The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries was formed in July 2004 through a consolidation of several departments of the Australian government. The NSW DPI staff, which employs 3,500 members at over 130 locations across the state, delivers a wide range of services to primary industries and rural communities.

With an IT environment that utilizes both Windows and Novell servers, the agency's Networks group faced the challenge of introducing a network management approach that was simple, effective and capable of spanning multiple platforms.

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The NSW DPI often depends on supplementary talent to staff its Help Desk. Some of this temporary personnel lack the advanced technical skills and training necessary to work in complex management systems, such as Novell's ConsoleOne and iManager. "We needed a straightforward tool to manage user accounts, whatever the environment," says Peter Medbury, Directory Integration Manager in the organization's Networks group. Further, the team needed a management system that would enable them to create a whole series of attributes for its Windows, Novell and Citrix environments. Existing tools did not easily support what the NSW DPI refers to as "auxiliary classes" – attributes stored in eDirectory for a system to be managed, such as the creation of a "global group in Active Directory."

Finally, the NSW DPI was interested in automating other aspects of network management, including the creation of phone numbers and voice mail boxes, the enablement of security management functions, and the creation of user and group accounts.

Action: Leveraging DSRAZOR and DSMETER

In 2002, Medbury and his immediate team members first began working with Visual Click's DSRAZOR. At that time, the product represented a means of distributing user management tasks and increasing efficiency for the team. "We have used DSRAZOR principally in the past to delegate aspects of user account management," says Medbury. "We gave [people throughout the organization] the DSRAZOR application, and they managed their part of the environment. We did that for quite a few areas."

Recently, DSRAZOR has also served as a development platform for a profusion of the NSW DPI's applications. One identity management application the organization built contains 35 screens and handles an array of tasks, including:

- adding new users
- managing user/group accounts
- renaming user IDs, the home directory and the associated eDirectory attributes
- integrating password management with a password generator
- remote control of users' workstations
- creating phone numbers and voice mail boxes used by a VOIP phone management system
- granting user entitlements to Citrix-hosted applications

- handling security actions, such as intruder detection and account disabling procedures
- reporting

DSRAZOR has dramatically enhanced the agency's procedure for renaming user accounts as well. Medbury explained that this previously tedious process required multiple steps that took some time to complete. If any steps in the process were missed, the work had to be repeated when the fault was discovered. The introduction of DSRAZOR allowed the Networks group to automate the process, thereby reducing it to a simple task that only required a single, automated set of clicks, which ensured that all steps were processed, every time.

In yet another case, the policy-driven password environment introduced with the Identity Management System enforced unique passwords but couldn't ensure Help Desk staff always assigned unique passwords. As a result, any duplicate passwords assigned by Help Desk staff caused problems with password synchronization in the identity management environment. DSRAZOR made it really simple to integrate a Password Generator that could automatically generate valid entry codes, and it eliminated the problem associated with duplicate passwords. "With DSRAZOR, that problem has gone away," explains Medbury.

Additionally, the department has deployed Visual Click's DSMETER for NetWare. It was critical to monitor activity on the network, particularly given the necessity of giving contractors access rights on short notice. "We use it for security. We needed to be able to monitor what they were doing on the network," says Medbury. "We

looked to see what attributes are used in particular tasks. Sometimes, the names of the attributes are quite obscure, and there's no documentation supporting them. The information logged by DSMETER allows us to configure custom security roles that allow only a specific task to be completed."

In one case, DSMETER helped the organization identify and diagnose the problem of a huge number of failed logins. As it turned out, the video driver on a particular range of workstations was attempting to log on to the network using the IPX protocol. "We wouldn't have discovered it without DSMETER," adds Medbury. "It was having a huge impact on network performance, and the product allowed us to resolve the problem quickly." As he explains further, DSMETER is an "auditing tool that gives us assurance we don't have hacking activity."

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Peter Medbury, Directory Integration Manager.

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Results: Enhancing the Support Team's Performance

Through its investments in DSRAZOR, the organization has significantly enhanced the performance and productivity of its IT support team. "Visual Click has allowed us to introduce a simple-to-use tool for our Active Directory and eDirectory environments," says Medbury. As he explains it, support team members need only click a box to create and configure a user account in either environment. All relevant attributes – or auxiliary classes – are easily checked. Passwords and group management are automatically synchronized by the Identity Management System.

"DSRAZOR represents a single tool for user and group provisioning," he says. "It gives our Help Desk a tool they can use across all platforms. That enhances the performance of the team."

This solution also means that the department can accomplish more with its existing support staff. Given its relatively remote location (three hours outside of Sydney), hiring and training technically skilled staff can be a slow process. As a result, the Help Desk group relies heavily on outside talent. That being the case, it is vital to operations to be able to manage accounts and other network applications without a great deal of training and development. This is enabled through the clean navigation and consistent look and feel of DSRAZOR. Other management consoles would slow the team down.

"DSRAZOR reduced training time, enhanced account management and simplified password management," says Medbury. Since the 2004 amalgamation of different departments within the NSW Department of Primary Industries, these benefits have become increasingly critical. "We have the same number of staff supporting 30-40% more users in a more diverse environment."

Further, DSRAZOR has increasingly become an application development tool for the organization – much like Visual Studio. "A lot of things we have built are having lots of impact on our environment," he adds. "This has proved to be a powerful development platform for a typical class of application. It has enabled me to rapidly develop new applications that would take me years in other platforms."

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Finally, Medbury points to the value of his collaboration with the Visual Click Account Management and Support team. He describes the rapid turnaround of application updates and custom solutions. "Our experience has been very positive," he says. "If there are any issues, they work to get them quickly resolved. We have requested a number of enhancements to DSRAZOR that were critical to our operation, and these have been delivered quite quickly. Visual Click has extremely proactive support, which is not something you see very often in the IT industry. It's very unusual, particularly for an organization on the other side of the world."

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About Visual Click Software, Inc

Envisioned in 1996 and incorporated in 1999, Visual Click is the leader and pioneer in visually customizable computer network security access management and reporting applications.

Network Security Access Management: Our patented Visual Designer Technology allows for customer- specific applications to be developed in minutes rather than days, weeks or months. This powerful technology creates a new paradigm in network security access management. Previous technology either required use of overly large and complex 'consoles' that performed slowly and required product-specific training or required customized programming.

Our technology allows customers to create exactly what they need to control their network security access management without burdening the Administrator or requiring custom computer programming costs.

Network Security Reporting: Our patented Visual Designer Technology allows for customer-defined reports to be developed in minutes with very little training. This powerful technology allows the Network Administrator to focus on the important matters of securing a network. With minor customizations, each Network Security Report can simultaneously be used for Network Security Access Management. Each Network Security Report can also be used to change the Network Security issues it uncovers. This important technology solves two problems at the same time, namely, reporting about Network Security non-compliance and enforcing corporate Network Security policy.

Customer Benefits: Exceeding customer expectations is our number one goal. We know time is a resource that most IT professionals have in short supply. For this reason, our software is designed to reduce errors and minimize training costs, thereby freeing up valuable time to focus on more mission-critical tasks. From simplifying user management and maintaining regulatory compliance, to preparing for migration and delegating helpdesk duties, our software empowers our customers by saving them time and money associated with managing their networked environments.

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