United Hospital System Achieves Insight into Active Directory/NTFS Management

DSRAZOR for Windows and Zero Privilege Helpdesk Gives the Organization Control Over Active Directory and Reporting on File System Permissions

Background:

United Hospital System is a comprehensive healthcare system that has served the southeastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois communities for more than 100 years. It provides services primarily through their Kenosha Medical Center campus, the St. Catherine's Medical Center campus and several other clinic locations. The hospital system recently migrated to Microsoft Windows from Novell and suddenly lost the capability to audit files and file shares on Active Directory. The IT department needed to gain control over the directory and user permissions. Only Visual Click's DSRAZOR for Windows and Zero Privilege Helpdesk offered the functionality it required without exceeding its budget.

Challenge: Efficiently Manage Active Directory and File Permissions

When United Hospital System migrated to Microsoft Windows and Active Directory from Novell, it lost the capability to locate files or file shares and see from where permissions were inherited. With Novell, directory assignments were centrally managed, thus enabling easy tracking. Although there were benefits from the migration to Microsoft, Active Directory presented a decentralized architecture that lacked a simple way to track ownership of files in file shares. With multiple file servers and 3,500 objects managed, manually determining owners and their access levels to files was time-prohibitive, if not impossible.

IT leaders began researching third party vendors who offered tracking capabilities on Active Directory. Carrie Mackay, Lead System engineer at United Hospital System says there were two main objectives the IT department wanted to achieve. The first was to have the capacity to run reports on a file share and for NTFS share permissions to find out who had access and where it was obtained. "Our second objective was to streamline administration with Active Directory to a help desk environment or to single users in HR who need access to certain things," she says. "But we didn't want to grant them permissions to everything. We wanted to control who had permissions and what they were able to see."

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DS**RAZOR** Zero Privilege Help Desk for Windows

Action: Migrating to DSRAZOR for Windows

After comparing products, United Hospital System chose Visual Click's DSRAZOR for Windows and Zero Privilege Helpdesk. "The other product we considered offered similar capabilities, but was three times the cost," Mackay says. "DSRAZOR gave us what we needed and allowed us to stay within budget."

DSRAZOR for Windows is an easy-to-use administration tool designed to help users get the most out of Active Directory without scripting or advanced programming skills. It gives users hundreds of customizable applications (applets) from which to choose that fit specific business needs to manage and leverage the information stored in Active Directory. United Hospital Systems utilizes many of the DSRAZOR Assess Active Directory/NTFS Security applets such as "accounts unused" and "Active Directory Trustees." It also gave them the ability to modify an applet that allows their Help Desk to reset passwords and look up Active Directory accounts by SAM account name or first name. The Zero Privilege Helpdesk Delegation Agent enables IT to delegate routine administrative tasks in Active Directory to lower-cost employees so that more senior IT staff can focus on business-critical initiatives. "One of the biggest advantages of these applets is that they enable Help Desk administrators to do their job without requiring full directory rights," says Mackay. "Using Zero Privilege Helpdesk, we can set the roles, control the permissions, and relieve our IT engineers from basic maintenance tasks."

The applets allow IT to query information from the directory to quickly see who has rights where. What once became a laborious, time-consuming, manual process can now be completed within minutes. This rapid querying also helps the hospital system deliver HIPAA data quickly with minimal resources.

"Once you become accustomed to DSRAZOR, it is rather easy to use," says Mackay. "The customizable applets can be designed to be simplified for the end user as well. Many of our applets were modified so they have the appearance of other applications. End users are familiar with the look and feel and see only the fields that are pertinent to them, even though the hidden fields are visible to us."

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The IT department is also enjoying the benefits of Zero Privilege Helpdesk that allows Help Desk staff to modify information in Active Directory without IT having to grant them rights. "They are limited to alter only what is available to them in the applet," explains Mackay. "They don't view it as a limitation, however, but an additional privilege they previously didn't have. They don't risk making a mistake because the applet is so straightforward. Our engineers can literally sleep better at night – they have peace of mind knowing that no one can perform prohibited modifications to a file and they aren't paged in the middle of the night when someone in Help Desk is requesting Active Directory permissions. The permissions are preset and if they can't gain access in the applet, they weren't meant to." Another valuable aspect of Zero Privilege Helpdesk is the ability to track user changes through the Active Directory audit log that was previously required.

Results: Reduced Time and Costs, Improved Security

United Hospital System is reaping the benefits of DSRAZOR and Zero Privilege Helpdesk. The visibility into files that was lost with the Microsoft migration has been restored, if not improved. DSRAZOR provides IT with the capability to report on rights in a decentralized architecture with minimal effort. The IT department is able to efficiently locate file ownership, permissions, and other key data within minutes using customizable applets. Help Desk administrators have assumed a larger role in the organization by performing maintenance tasks that would otherwise burden IT engineers and technicians. Finally, IT has gained control over the directory, as well as the permissions and privileges to files and file servers.

Visual Click prides itself on the customer support it provides standard with purchase. Visual Click believes helping customers fully utilize its products is a critical component of the product itself and requires no additional charge. "With all of the benefits we've experienced with DSRAZOR and Zero Privilege Helpdesk, perhaps equally as valuable is the support we have received from Visual Click," says Mackay. "They feel like an extension of our IT department, easily accessible to us for a simple question, help with customizing an applet, or even creating an applet for us. I can watch from my computer as they work remotely, teaching me the steps to take and tips for better development. They are invaluable to us."

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Visual Click

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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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DSRAZOR Zero Privilege Help Desk for Windows