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Reader's Digest Delegates Help Desk Functions Globally, Cuts ID Creation Time by 50%, Strengthens Reporting

DSRAZOR Facilitates Transition from NetWare to Windows

Background:

Reader's Digest Association, publisher of the famous lifestyle magazine that bears its name, was looking for more productive ways to manage its Help Desk functions. With offices all over the world, the organization needed to delegate certain activities, such as password resets and ID creation, in order to ensure that employees across the globe were always actively supported.

Through its investments in DSRAZOR for eDirectory and DSRAZOR for Windows, the organization has met many impressive goals. Not only has it managed to delegate Help Desk functions; it has cut ID creation time in half and significantly enhanced its compliance-related reporting activities. Complaints and problems have dropped considerably, as Help Desk and reporting activities are handled more rapidly, accurately and effectively.

Situation: In Search of a Faster and Smarter Way

Several years ago, it became apparent to the Reader's Digest Association that the organization needed a more effective way of handling certain Help Desk functions and aspects of Sarbanes-Oxley reporting. Its security team, headquartered in Westchester, New York, is responsible for supporting nearly 6,000 people worldwide. This team is also charged with managing data security; protecting firewalls; and ensuring compliance in ID creation, termination and management.

Unfortunately, the team was dependent on ConsoleOne, the native administrative tool that accompanies eDirectory. This broad and inflexible tool burned up lots of time in ID creation and password management. As the company contemplated a transition to a Windows Active Directory environment, the Security Group Manager realized that if they did not take decisive action, the time-consuming tasks that burdened the Help Desk would only grow.

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> **Steven Santamorena, Manager of Reader's Digest Association's Security Group.**

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The team needed "a faster way of doing day to day activities like setting up accounts and doing basic searches relevant to ID management," says Steven Santamorena, Manager of Reader's Digest Association's Security Group.

What's more, ConsoleOne made it difficult to delegate tasks to Help Desk teams across the globe, particularly given the sensitive security issues associated with granting such privileges. The team sought a way to enable the process of delegation, ensuring that a Reader's Digest employee in Australia or Hungary had local support from Help Desk professionals. Should a password problem occur on the other side of the globe in a different time zone, it was important to ensure that it could be handled without dependence on the central IT group.

At the same time, the organization needed to be able to report on ID compliance. The company's own policies with respect to Sarbanes-Oxley demanded the ability to verify all accounts and meet relevant password length requirements. The Security Group needed to ensure that there were no improper accounts. "If we say we are doing something, we have to do it," says Patrick Tulskie, Data Security Analyst. "It's our published policy, and we must remain consistent with our policies."

Finally, the team needed an administrative and security solution that would foster a smooth transition from a NetWare to a Windows environment. It was clear that each environment's native administrative tools were difficult to use and limited the Help Desk personnel's productivity.

Action: Implementing DSRAZOR

Recognizing the challenges to be addressed, the IT organization chose DSRAZOR for Windows in 2006, complementing the investment it had made in DSRAZOR for eDirectory several years prior.

Leveraging the tools, the group built solutions for the Help Desk to unlock accounts and manage/reset passwords. It then delegated the ability to manage accounts, largely enabling the core IT group to turn its attention to more critical concerns. In addition, the tools enabled the organization to run reports documenting ID compliance.

"We can create IDs more quickly and consistent with custom tools," explains Santamorena. "It enabled us to delegate tasks and to enhance the capabilities of our Help Desks around the world."

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The group customized the tools and took them to new levels. The specialized tools now enable the security specialist to pick a group of users and manage them all at once. Whereas ConsoleOne and other tools were slow and complicated, it was now possible to create IDs rapidly in both Active Directory and eDirectory. Using DSRAZOR for Windows and DSRAZOR for eDirectory, Tulskie created a simple interface to assist the Help Desk and ensure that they put information in the proper fields and then create the ID in both environments.

Bulk creation is now an option. IDs are created based on a standard, while another application creates CSV files and generates them according to these standard. "DSRAZOR tools enable me to finalize the creation," says Santamorena. "We are able to create one or more users based on our standards, but at a much quicker rate."

Results: Big Productivity and Reporting Gains

The impact of such efforts is impressive.

The tools enabled dozens of Help Desk professionals around the world to easily unlock accounts and reset passwords. It gave relevant privileges to Help Desk professionals so they could manage accounts without involving the central IT team. This significantly enhanced Help Desk productivity. "We can create IDs more quickly and consistent with custom tools," explains Santamorena. "It enabled us to delegate tasks and to enhance the capabilities of our Help Desks around the world."

This creates important efficiencies. For one, it reduces the amount of time an end user's account might remain locked. "By having the tools delegating that out without giving too much privilege, we have gotten rid of a bottleneck," he adds.

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Quantitatively speaking, it has cut ID creation time by 50%. Finally, it ensures that the quality of the account is strong. "It's done right the first time," Santamorena notes. "There's no need to change later down the road."

Benefits to reporting are similarly notable. "In the past, reporting hadn't been conducted very well," says Tulskie. "It happens much easier with this DSRAZOR. We can now see every user ID in our environment in a flat structure. Our table has all compliance attributes. It has expiration, ID status, logins, and password length requirements, etc. We can go through every week and verify that all accounts meet password length requirements. We can verify that there are no improper accounts."

Whereas relevant data previously was held in multiple containers, the group customized the tool so it could view account data within a single view. "We built in a flat view," he adds. "It accelerates your ability to identify non-compliant IDs or accounts and fix them and produce reports much more rapidly."

The security group notes that the built-in applets of DSRAZOR make it very easy to use and easy to learn. This proved important in the company's transition from NetWare to Windows because they did not need to be trained on a new set of tools.

Meanwhile, the security group reports that the support it has received from Visual Click Software has further strengthened its ability to hit the ground running with DSRAZOR. "In the beginning, I didn't have a complete understanding of what these products could do," explains Tulskie. "But the support team would send me a custom tool or examples of functions I was looking for, and I would be able to tie it back to my challenges. They are always willing to jump on the phone with you, discuss objectives, and work it out."

The security group states that its ultimate objective is to replace the basic functions of Novell and Microsoft's native tools with DSRAZOR. They're close. They estimate they already have 70% of the required day-to-day functions replaced through DSRAZOR, which has sped up operations. "When someone's breathing down your neck or you need to get something done quickly, you don't want to be looking at the hour glass," says Tulskie. "You can't wait for the admin tools from Novell or Microsoft."

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Santamorena explains that he would highly recommend DSRAZOR. "It's a great tool because it makes our lives easier. It's very customizable. And with the help of a great support staff at Visual Click, it is very attractive. They are very quick and eager to help you out with understanding a specific function or make a custom tool for you."

The overall value has been compelling. As Tulskie puts it, "We have happier end users and a happier Help Desk staff. Complaints and problems have dropped dramatically, and things are getting done much faster and more accurately than in the past."

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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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