UNITED STATES COURTS

U.S. Bankruptcy Court Improves Insight, Access and Control with CPTRAX, DSRAZOR and Zero Privilege Helpdesk Delegation

Background:

The U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Middle District of Pennsylvania handles bankruptcy cases filed by individuals or businesses that can no longer pay creditors. Keeping track of and having access to all of the associated data across remote district locations is critical. After migrating from a Novell environment to Microsoft Windows, the court faced several challenges that hindered that ability. The IT department required a tool that would help it manage and audit Active Directory and the File System without exceeding a tight budget. The department chose Visual Click's DSRAZOR for Windows with the Zero Privilege Helpdesk Delegation option and CPTRAX for Windows. This combined product solution provides necessary insight, access and control of the new Active Directory/NTFS environment.

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Challenge: Gain Insight into Active Directory/NTFS

The U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Middle District of Pennsylvania was comfortable using its Novell operating system for 15 years. Despite the familiarity, the IT department determined a Microsoft Windows operating system would better fit its needs and a migration soon followed. Permissions and security was a top concern. Although the migration had its advantages, it also presented the Pennsylvania court with challenges.

The court's IT department suddenly lost the ability to recover deleted items or determine who deleted the files. It tried using semi-homegrown applications, but they generated a large quantity of data that needed to be scrubbed. It was a priority to understand file permissions and what files and directory systems were secure. "We needed more transparency with management of Active Directory," says Chuck Smith, Information Systems manager at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court of Pennsylvania. "The Windows operating system was new to most of us and we didn't know what was hidden inside of it. We needed a tool to give us insight into what we couldn't see, allowing us to better manage the system, prevent problems and quickly resolve issues."

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The IT department was also hoping the migration would give it some new capabilities it didn't previously have. With the Novell platform, the court lacked remote access to end users' computers. In order to get users set up, an IT technician would have to be dispatched to that office to work with the user one on one. Smith wanted a tool that could manage the terminal services profile remotely so it could keep a better eye on what was on the network and if it needed to be there. Smith and his team viewed the migration and the use of a new tool as the perfect opportunity to analyze directories, files and accounts and clean the system of unwanted data that was consuming space and resources.

Action: Leveraging CPTRAX and DSRAZOR with Zero Privilege Helpdesk

There were a number of network security and access management software solutions that Smith and his team reviewed before choosing Visual Click's DSRAZOR for Windows with Zero Privilege Helpdesk Delegation Agent and CPTRAX for Windows, but most were price prohibitive with an excess of features. "We weren't sure what we were looking for in Active Directory and didn't want to overinvest in a toolset that offered applications we wouldn't use," says Smith. "Visual Click offered a perfectly priced tool for our budget, size and requirements."

DSRAZOR for Windows is an administrative tool that gives the court an easy-to-use interface to help manage and report on Windows Active Directory and NTFS security settings. It helps IT get the most out of Active Directory without requiring scripting or advanced programming skills. CPTRAX for Windows focuses primarily on compliance and control for auditing and restricting file system access to enterprise data. "There are some files and data we want to share but maybe not with everyone," says Smith. "Using the tools, we can quickly tell who is looking at what files. This not only helps us with management, but with auditing and security; we can see where we are vulnerable."

Both DSRAZOR and CPTRAX offer end users hundreds of customizable applications (applets) from which to choose that fit specific business requirements to help manage and leverage the data stored in Active Directory. The Pennsylvania court is currently tracking logon and logoff activity in CPTRAX not only for logon/logoff information, but IP addresses as detailed as down to the machine name. It also uses the File System Module in CPTRAX to audit file creations and deletions, and restrict the movement of folders into subfolders and changes made to rights.

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DSRAZOR has helped the court analyze data brought over from the migration and determine whether it is still needed or used. The court utilizes several DSRAZOR applets, including many under the Assess AD/NTFS Security module, such as accounts never logged on or disabled, accounts that are locked or expired, and directory and file permissions.

"End users often click and drag a file without realizing they have moved it," says Smith. "We like to monitor file sizes to see if a file has been copied or duplicated. Along the same lines, we use the modules to examine servers and disks. We never realized how quickly the disks fill up. Using DSRAZOR, we can identify areas where we can clean up servers to open up more space. We can use one tool to find out when a file has been created or accessed and another tool to see if file permissions are still open and if that was intentional," explains Smith. "The two tools complement each other well and bring all of the data in Active Directory together with fewer screens, fewer clicks and fewer resources."

In addition, the court is using Zero Privilege Helpdesk modules to delegate certain tasks to people without having to grant permissions and introduce security risks. Specifically, the court is using the applet that enables a number of assigned people to unlock accounts that have been locked out due to the end user waiting too long to reset their password. "The assigned people do not have to be authorized with the root password, but using Zero Privilege, we can still give them the ability to unlock a password. It is straightforward and doesn't require them to get into the server and work their way through Active Directory to find the user. It's an easy-to-use application that sits on their desktop."

Results: Quick Access to Data

The court is pleased with its new perspective into Active Directory, using DSRAZOR and CPTRAX to identify and remedy problem areas. It also uses the tools to quickly respond to auditors inquiring about controls and specific file access such as who changed a file and how often passwords are changed. "Without using these tools from Visual Click to generate clean, easy-to-read reports, I don't know if some of this data is possible to obtain," says Smith. "This has saved us hours and dollars, and it allows us to more quickly move to the next project."

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Smith and his team say the support of Visual Click made the implementation and ongoing maintenance much easier. "The support has been wonderful," says Smith. "They are responsive, easy to reach and have a genuine interest in ensuring their products are operating as promised."

Although measurable statistics on dollars saved since using DSRAZOR and CPTRAX is difficult to quantify, Smith believes the number to be significant. Beyond monetary savings, he also is able to conserve resources who can now concentrate on more business-critical issues. "I find these tools educational," he says. "No matter how much you think you know about something, when you see it from a different perspective, in this case with the help of Visual Click software, you see everything more clearly. I understand more about Active Directory, how it works and what it's used to control. To me, that kind of knowledge is invaluable."

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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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