

## Windows Administrators Meeting

September 12, 2008

Notes (taken by Steve Kunz)

### Meeting Started (9:00)

#### Announcements

- ITS has reorganized the networks, communications, and systems groups into new “teams”. The Windows Active Directory management now falls under a group named “Network Infrastructure, Authentication, and Directory Services” (“NIADS”). This group is managed by John Hascall [ITSYS]. Another group related to Windows management is the “Windows Applications and Support” team, managed by Mike Lohrbach [ITSYS]. ITS members of “core teams” are shared among “project teams” to achieve ITS goals in a prioritized manner (so members work on projects for multiple teams as their skills are needed).

#### Browse Masters, Elections, Etc. -- Steve Kunz [ITSYS]

Kunz talked about issues relating to browsing, browser masters, browser elections, etc. Each subnet will have systems participate in browser elections each time a Windows system is booted up (Samba systems may also be configured to participate). These elections can take considerable network bandwidth and present some load on any system that wins the election. Browsing is generally considered an “old world” function from Windows 95 days (prior to WINS and DNS). Typical use would be when mounting a share and using the “Browse” button to find the NetBIOS names for Windows systems on your subnet.

There may be advantages to disabling systems from becoming browse masters – especially if you use WINS/DNS hostnames for all remote connections and do not rely on “browsing”. There are a couple ways to achieve disabling the browse master function on systems.

The first (easiest) way is to apply group policy to machines to disable the “Computer Browser” service. To do this, create a new GPO (or modify an existing one) and go to:

Computer Configuration  
Windows Settings  
Security Settings  
System Services

Open "Computer Browser" and set it as “Disabled”. Link the GPO where you need it to be applied.

Another option is to use registry settings (either via GPO administrative templates or script/manual manipulation) for more granular control of the browser service. A good article on this can be found here:

<http://www.microsoft.com/resources/documentation/windowsnt/4/server/reskit/en-us/net/chptr3.msp?mfr=true>

Important: Keep in mind this is an optional suggestion – not a request to turn off computer browsing wherever you may find it. You may still find some users relying on this service.

## **Group Policy Object Management-- Steve Kunz [ITSYS]**

Kunz talked about group policy object management issues that OU managers should keep in mind. The issues are:

**Duplication:** There are over 1,600 GPOs in the “Group Policy Objects” container, while there are only 76 “top level” OUs. This means there are 1) a lot of duplicate GPOs and 2) a lot of orphaned GPOs (sitting unused, not linked to any OU). There would be some advantage for each OU admin to find their orphaned GPOs and delete any unneeded ones. This would reduce GPO space and reduce unneeded clutter in the GPO container.

**Naming:** It is recommended that OU managers start the names of their GPOs with the short abbreviation of their OU, and make the names unique and possibly descriptive. “New Group Policy” (the default) is definitely not a good choice. Good naming conventions will aid OU admins in finding their GPOs in the “Group Policy Objects” container (they will all sort together). Finding them sorted together allows easy backup/restore operations (covered in a following section).

**Ownership:** Group policy objects are “owned” by the creator at the time they are created. The first step after an OU manager creates a new GPO should be to change the rights so “!<ou> Admins” have full control. Doing so means that if the creator leaves, the new OU managers can manage the GPOs for the OU. This is done with the “Delegation” tab on the Group Policy Management Console when editing the GPO.

**Backup and Restore:** Anyone who creates a group policy object should 1) document the settings and 2) backup the GPO for later restoration should it become corrupted/deleted. This is done by locating the GPO in the “Group Policy Objects” container (with the Group Policy Management Console”), right-clicking the object, and selecting “Back Up”. You are prompted for a path to a folder to place the backup. Restore works in a similar way (selection “Restore from Backup” instead).

**Scripts:** Microsoft supplies a good number of valuable scripts to use in managing GPOs. On any system where the “Group Policy Management Console” is installed, look in the folder “C:\Program Files\GPMC\Scripts”. There are many good scripts there (and a “gpmc.chm” help file).

Kunz indicated ITS has begun performing a weekly backup of all GPOs in the domain (performed every Friday). Retention of the last three weeks (only) will be done. Restoration of individual GPOs by ITS may be possible in the future (but be prepared to provide a unique name for the GPO - or the GUID). ITS restoration should be considered an emergency backup when your own GPO documentation/backup policy has failed.

Some links with good information:

<http://tech.ait.iastate.edu/win2000/admin/GPO.procedures.pdf>  
[http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa814151\(VS.85\).aspx](http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa814151(VS.85).aspx)

## **User Container Renames-- Steve Kunz [ITSYS]**

Kunz asked if anyone would have any objection to making the user object containers have a consistent “CN=<netid>,OU=<whatever>,OU=...,DC=iastate,DC=edu” format. Due to results of running processes in the past (in 2003) many user containers that existed in 2003 or earlier were renamed with a container name of the “proper name” (displayname). These container names appear as “CN=<lastname>, <firstname> <mi>,OU=<whatever>,OU=...,DC=iastate,DC=edu”. Having all the container names be the “<netid>” format has several advantages (especially for scripting). During the meeting nobody raised any objections to the rename being done. Kunz will advertize more widely on the WinAdmin mailing list and proceed after wider discussion.

## **Open Discussion**

Chris Thach [CIRAS] asked if anyone else had seen problems with Excel 2007 and error messages relating to “too many stylesheets”. This problem seems to occur when editing an old spreadsheet created with previous versions of Excel (Excel 2003) or new spreadsheets created with Excel 2007. Nobody at the meeting had any “assured fixes”. Ideas such as “Are macros causing the problems?” and “Have you tried turning off auto-calc?” were offered. If you have seen this problem and can offer a solution to Chris, send him some email.

Frank Poduska [ITCSV] reminded everyone that the “account suspension” processing will begin soon. Emails will begin going out for renewal reminders. Wording on these emails is becoming a challenge in the current “phishing” environment.

Wayne Hauber [ITSEC] commented that phishing emails continue to find victims at Iowa State. User education is still key.

Steve Schallehn [ITNET] indicated ITS is working on a NetReg problem that occurs in certain locations on campus. Systems will ask for a DHCP address and then be told another host already has it. They get another DHCP address and repeat the process. In many cases all the addresses are “locked out” (in use) even though there are not that many hosts in the area. It may relate to “proxy-ARPing” (and rogue DHCP servers on the network).

## **Meeting Adjourned (10:10)**

Next meeting is scheduled for October 10.