

DALLAS ISD

Dallas Independent School District Depends on DSRAZOR for Windows to Manage Rights and Security

DSRAZOR for Windows Saves District Time and Costs

Background:

“Everything’s bigger in Texas” holds true when it comes to the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). With 160,000 students and 20,000 staff members across 384 square miles, managing Active Directory, servers, file system rights and home directories is an enormous undertaking. The only way DISD can ensure security is by using Visual Click’s DSRAZOR for Windows and Zero Privilege Help Desk.

Challenge: Efficiently Manage Active Directory and File Permissions

DISD invested in DSRAZOR for Novell more than nine years ago, using the identification program to create and manage student accounts. When the district migrated to Windows Active Directory, it needed to give certain users rights to change passwords and unlock accounts without granting them access to the remote server administration tool.

This was particularly evident on campuses lacking IT personnel. “Simple tasks such as setting passwords for new students required me to travel to each campus, load the application onto the site computer and configure it to ensure access to restricted files was prohibited,” says Kevin Collier, LAN engineer in Systems Administration at DISD. “I then had to train the staff member on how to use the app. The entire process could take an entire day.”

Security is always a focal point for Collier and keeping track of the intricacies of the network, groups and permissions was nearly impossible with the number of staff members involved. “People change jobs, which changes their groups and permissions,” he says. “Even when they leave the district, I can be one of the last to know. It exposes the district to security breaches and makes tracking file changes difficult.”

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Kevin Collier

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Action: Migrating to DSRAZOR for Windows

Collier had extensive experience using DSRAZOR for Novell and admits he did not feel it was necessary to look at other products on the market. “We knew Visual Click had a Windows piece so it was a no-brainer to migrate,” he says. “We did a test with a small number of licenses and it was clear the tool would be ideal for our Windows environment.”

DSRAZOR for Windows offers hundreds of built-in apps that are simple to use and easily configurable to fit the district’s needs. It is most helpful when it comes to passwords, lockout accounts and group changes. “We have three to four groups using modified versions of the same app,” Collier says. “It allows us to give users who normally don’t have the access to do it themselves so our team doesn’t have to spend time managing these groups. Not only does it give us more time to focus on more critical tasks, but now users have more autonomy and they don’t have to wait on us to complete their request. It speeds things up immensely.”

Using the example above illustrating how much time it could take Collier to help a staff member with passwords at a campus without IT personnel, Collier now uses DSRAZOR’s point-and-click features to quickly create an app and copy it to the server. The campus staff member can download it from the server and begin setting passwords within 10 minutes of basic instruction that pops up on the screen.

The app has built-in security measures making it impossible for the person to see any other student names than those at that campus. Not only are the students at other campuses protected, but the user is protected from inadvertent changes to accounts.

Dallas ISD recently purchased Zero Privilege Help Desk to further manage permissions. It does not use Active Directory delegation but a separate server-based service with full security options to create accounts, change passwords, change AD details, and create Exchange accounts and home directories – without giving help desk operators change privileges. “Zero Privilege helps us reduce how many people have explicit rights within the tree because that can become unmanageable, especially with job changes,” says Collier.

Collier can also use the tool to run Active Directory reports, such as how many people have not logged in or file sizes to determine how much space is remaining on a server. Reports like these are vital for auditing purposes.

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Results: Reduced Time and Costs, Improved Security

Dallas ISD has saved significant time using DSRAZOR for Windows and Zero Privilege Help Desk, which in turn saves tax dollars. Any tool that can assist school districts in better utilizing resources is always appreciated. “There is no way our team would have the time and money to come up with all of the customized apps available in DSRAZOR,” says Collier. “The speed and ease that allows us to customize various tasks is a big savings because we do not have to find funds to buy specific programs to do it.”

If one of the prebuilt apps cannot be custom configured to fit the district’s needs, by the DISD staff, Collier gets a fast response from Visual Click’s technical team. “I usually can find an app that can be quickly modified to fit our needs,” he says. “However, if I cannot make it work, I email support via a link on the app, tell them what I want the module to do and within a few hours, I have the exact module I requested. I can see what they did so next time I will be able to do it myself. Their fast turnaround time is a huge benefit.”

Zero Privilege gives Collier peace of mind knowing he can better maintain the overall security of Active Directory. No longer does he have to manually make changes or rely on someone informing him of a staff member’s job change or departure from the district.

“The Visual Click sales team has been awesome,” says Collier. “There is never any pressure and they communicate with support so they always know what is been going on with us. I appreciate their responsiveness and periodically checking in with me to see how things are working for us. How many technology providers bother to do that after the sale? It is priceless.”

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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
for Windows

DSRAZOR
Zero Privilege Help Desk for Windows