

CITY OF CHICO

City of Chico Dynamically Assigns Network Access Rights, Delegates Tasks and Drives Performance Gains Using DSRAZOR for eDirectory and DSRAZOR for GroupWise

City Streamlines Information Systems Operations

Background:

When the management of Chico, California changed hands nearly two years ago, the city's new government took active steps to enhance the delivery of public services. City leaders sought ways to improve customer service and enhance Chico's reputation among its citizens.

This new direction is apparent in the city's Information Systems (IS) group. Embracing Visual Click's DSRAZOR solution for account management and network administration enabled the organization to smartly delegate a variety of tasks and dynamically assign the rights necessary to perform them.

Not only has this increased the productivity and performance of the IS group. It has empowered departments throughout the city to handle tasks in a "smarter, better and faster" way.

Challenge: Delegating Account Management and Enhancing Help Desk Capabilities

With a network spanning more than 17 servers and 350 workstations, Chico's IS group must ensure that network infrastructure is operational and city employees have access to relevant resources. The group provides network services for multiple departments, including municipal services, water pollution control, fire and police.

Among the numerous challenges the city's IS group faced was the need to delegate tasks—specifically, account management activities and Help Desk functions, such as remote access.

Novell's ConsoleOne platform for directory services lacked the ease of use that the IS group required for processes such as creating new accounts and passwords or quickly and accurately assigning rights. ConsoleOne also proved too cumbersome and difficult to use to consider installing it at all the locations where rights would be necessary.

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In addition to these concerns, the IS group's ability to delegate the task of network account creation to its Human Resources (HR) department had proven itself a vital security issue. Previous approaches to account creation often left HR unaware of new users on the network, particularly interns and other temporary employees. Lacking the knowledge of which individuals had network access meant that the city had been vulnerable to security risks.

Account management delegation was also an issue of productivity. "We experienced constant interruptions as people called up and asked that a new account be created," explains Al Salazar, Senior Information Systems Analyst for the City of Chico. "We had managers tied up in secretarial tasks. This distracted us from higher value activities that would be a better use of IS efforts."

The IS organization needed a more effective way to handle Help Desk functions as well. For example, providing remote access to workstations would allow the Help Desk team to handle workstation problems with ease and efficiency. While such capabilities were available through ConsoleOne, they were slow to execute and difficult to manage.

Finally, the IS group needed to enhance its network administration and system management capabilities so that it could more easily verify the status of various activities and resources on the network. For example, the network administrators wanted a simple procedure for determining whether certain policies had been assigned to a given workstation and whether that workstation was operational.

Action: Investing in DSRAZOR

After seeing Visual Click's DSRAZOR products demonstrated at Novell's annual BrainShare conference, Salazar downloaded DSRAZOR and began experimenting with it. Ultimately, the team invested in both DSRAZOR for eDirectory and DSRAZOR for GroupWise.

The City of Chico's IS group was impressed with Visual Click immediately – and it has remained so. "I've gotten great response from their technical assistance team," says Salazar, who has actively worked with Visual Click to develop custom applets. "When I send someone a request or a question by email, I get a response within hours, and they actively work to address all our requirements. They are very responsive."

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One particular feature of DSRAZOR that Salazar's group found compelling was its ability to dynamically assign rights. For example, a DSRAZOR applet can be created and delegated to users without specifically assigning those users the necessary rights to run the applet. Instead, the rights are assigned to a particular group. As members of that group, users automatically have the rights to run any applet available to that group. "They automatically assume the rights if they are in a particular group," says Salazar. "As I assign people to that group, they can run the applet without having the full DSRAZOR application installed on their system. They just have access to the applet over the network, and they have access to the functionality they need. They are temporarily assigned rights."

Results: Strengthening IS Performance

DSRAZOR has greatly improved the Chico IS group's ability to effectively address its three objectives, thereby enhancing the organization's overall performance and customer service. Now, the city's HR department can create new accounts, update passwords, and implement changes to user accounts and attributes. Before the IS group introduced DSRAZOR, such functionality was virtually unheard of. Now, it is commonplace. When new titles or phone numbers must be added, HR can deal with such tasks on its own. Not only are HR and IS more productive as a result; DSRAZOR resolves an important security issue by ensuring that the Human Resources department is aware of which individuals have access to the network.

"Just getting HR to key in attributes of users has taken quite a burden off of IS," says Salazar. "Now we are funneling that over to the HR folks, and they can quickly take care of it."

Using DSRAZOR has also enabled Chico's IS group to delegate the tasks of managing and updating distribution lists. For example, the city's Fire Department can now change these lists from one month to the next as personnel move between different stations. "Instead of waiting a couple of days to respond to a request, they have almost immediate access once they have updates to make," adds Salazar. He notes that the Police Department has taken advantage of this delegation capability in a similar manner to update distribution lists for public media.

"DSRAZOR has provided a means to streamline our operations. It offers an easier way to delegate tasks."

Al Salazar, Senior Information Systems Analyst.

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for GroupWise

DSRAZOR
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With DSRAZOR, the Help Desk team now has remote access to desktops. This type of access allows the IS group to handle IT problems more effectively than before. Rather than having to engage in the cumbersome task of launching ConsoleOne, Help Desk professionals can rapidly launch the DSRAZOR applet and take over the workstation from a remote location.

Another major change that Chico's IS group has enjoyed since implementing DSRAZOR is in the area of network administration. "DSRAZOR provides visibility into directory services that you don't normally get when you are just looking at objects through ConsoleOne," says Salazar. "In the background, you can actually find out when an object is created, which you can't do in ConsoleOne. Once you know when an object is created, then you can look at a sequence of events as it happens or even add a new user to the system. If that flow of information doesn't get to me, I still have another way to find it out."

The city's Information Systems staff has also realized significant value from DSRAZOR's reporting features. Salazar notes that DSRAZOR enables him to identify when workstation certificates or licenses need to be renewed. "I can run a report strictly to look at certificates," he says. "It pinpoints what I need to be aware of." DSRAZOR also helps him obtain a list of all his servers, identify how long they have been operational, and determine how to handle relevant patches. "Pinpointing such issues in the database with DSRAZOR makes it a lot easier," he adds. "You can develop an applet that will pull that information for you and deliver it in a certain way."

The IS group's newfound capacity for delegation has enabled its staff members to reinvest their resources in tasks that are more relevant to their skills. "Instead of having managers doing secretarial work, we can delegate out and focus on higher level tasks," says Salazar. "Now, we can spend more time planning and executing updates to our network, for instance. We can address other problems that we have had in terms of application rollout. We can concentrate on higher level planning and execution."

As a result of implementing DSRAZOR for eDirectory and DSRAZOR for GroupWise, the IS organization has increased its productivity and improved its service levels. "DSRAZOR has provided a means to streamline our operations," concludes Salazar. "It offers an easier way to delegate tasks to people and empower them to do the updates they need to do when they need to do them. As far as network administration, it's given me the tools to make my job much easier and perform more effectively."

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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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