



Los Angeles Community Development Department Sees Immediate Benefits from DSRAZOR and DSMETER

CDD's Computer Systems Division Reports More Productive Workforce Plus Efficient, Stable Network

Background:

The Los Angeles Community Development Department (CDD) offers economic, social and employment opportunities for residents in need. The L.A. CDD Computer Systems Division (CSD) is responsible for department-wide computer and data systems support.

L.A. CDD Systems Analyst Kenneth Smith credits Visual Click Software with increasing the productivity of the Computer Systems Division, in spite of his division's limited staff. DSRAZOR for eDirectory enabled the CSD to delegate simple eDirectory user account management tasks to Divisional Tech staff in CDD field offices. Using DSMETER for NetWare, his division was able to meet all of its network security and storage objectives.

Challenge: Overwhelmed Staff and Limited Storage

The Community Development Department's main offices are located in downtown Los Angeles. The CSD operates out of these offices, using a Novell network environment with 13 NetWare servers and 500+ users in its eDirectory. The CDD has over 20 field offices throughout Los Angeles—the second largest city in the United States—from the Valley at the northern border down to the Harbor District.

Kenneth Smith first learned of Visual Click Software (VCS) at a Novell conference. In March 2004, VCS performed a DSRAZOR for eDirectory product presentation for the L.A. CDD Computer Systems Division. In June 2004, the CSD invested in DSRAZOR for eDirectory. The CSD benefited from DSRAZOR's Zero Privilege Helpdesk applets, its large/unused file cleanup, and its custom reporting features. At that time, the Computer Systems Division had 22 employees and a manageable workload.

"DSRAZOR allows Divisional Tech staff to delete user accounts instantly," says Kenneth Smith, Systems Analyst for L.A. CDD's Computer Systems Division. "We don't have to wait on our HR department to notify us."

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In 2007, a staff shortage cut Kenneth Smith's division by 50%. The 11 remaining CSD staff members were constantly travelling to far-flung field offices to perform simple eDirectory user account management tasks. Each field office visit averaged two hours in drive time—not to mention the time spent creating and deleting accounts as well as changing passwords and other items for CDD users. These regular site visits left CSD staff little time at the main office to focus on high level Computer Systems issues.

Another pressing issue facing the L.A. CDD's Computer Systems Division was that data storage was in short supply. Some CDD employees' were placing storage intensive files that were not work related (for example, .wav, .mp3, .avi, and .wmv files) on network drives. According to Smith, "These files were occupying a lot of space on the network, slowing it down, and presenting security risks."

Smith sought a solution that "would reduce the types of files going on our network; reduce our time on backups; and speed up the creation of accounts in the field offices directly."

Action: Investing in DSRAZOR and DSMETER

In March 2007, Kenneth Smith visited the VCS web site. "We used DSRAZOR for eDirectory in 2004, and I remembered the benefits of it. A lot of friends I've met in Novell classes over the years highly recommended DSMETER for NetWare; they were using it to prevent certain types of files' going on the network. So, I looked back into Visual Click, and my staff and I had another product presentation. The Tech Support Engineer showed us what VCS products can do for our network, and I said, 'This is what we need!'"

Following additional VCS training in Spring 2007, Smith and the L.A. CDD Computer Systems Division began using DSRAZOR for eDirectory on a regular basis again. In May 2007, the CSD also purchased DSMETER for NetWare.

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Results: Field Offices Manage User Accounts, Data Storage Returns to Normal

DSRAZOR for eDirectory proved immensely worthwhile to L.A.'s Community Development Department right away, "especially in our field offices," Smith says. The CSD customized DSRAZOR applets to suit their needs, saved them as .EXEs, and distributed them to other divisions. Smith elaborates, "We gave some of our users, Division Tech people, access to create eDirectory user accounts, modify user accounts, change passwords—even delete user accounts. Instead of calling us (the Computer Systems Division) to do the work, we assigned one person per division who we gave access to perform these tasks. DSRAZOR allowed us to do that without having to go out and train them how to use NetWare, how to go into ConsoleOne or iManager; DSRAZOR just allowed those functions to be right there on their desktops."

Another benefit of enabling Division Tech staff in the field offices to delete user accounts at the drop of a hat: network security. Prior to implementing DSRAZOR for eDirectory, expired user accounts often remained on the network indefinitely. Smith relates, "Most people in the field offices didn't know what to do with these accounts. So, they just left them on the network." Whenever an employee resigned or was terminated, that person's eDirectory account would be deleted only after HR contacted the Computer Services Division and the CSD sent a staff member to the field office where that employee worked to delete the account. Smith explains: "If we got a notice from HR about an employee's termination three weeks after the fact, that person would have had access to the network for three weeks. They could have done anything." Visual Click products have had a profound impact on the Computer Services Division and the CDD field offices. "DSRAZOR allows Divisional Tech staff members, who work in the field offices, to delete user accounts instantly—as soon as a person, whether from termination or resignation, walks out the door," Smith says. "We don't have to wait on our HR department to notify us."

Using DSRAZOR applets to delegate simple user account management tasks to the field offices lifted an enormous burden off of the CSD. It allowed them to spend more time at their main office and focus on high-level issues. According to Smith, "When your staff is constantly doing routine user maintenance tasks, they aren't able to do the things that will improve the network. Over the last two weeks, we were able to implement our new Vista Support on our NetWare systems and allow printers to be installed on our new Vista PCs coming in."

"Visual Click products will increase your productivity as well as your effectiveness, security and maintenance on your network."

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DSRAZOR for eDirectory also equips the CSD with tools for discovering which users have particular files open. Smith explains, "We have a lot of database applications, and sometimes they become locked. Even though the Application Development staff has tried to close them out, someone might still have these applications open when Development is trying to work on them; DSRAZOR enables us to run a report and see who has what files open." This enables the CSD staff to "kick off" the offending user so that the Development staff can work on the application in question "and get it back up and running."

After implementing DSMETER for NetWare, Smith and his staff began noticing benefits immediately. "We kept getting notifications that people were trying to save music files on our network drives, and my staff asked me, 'Why do we keep getting these?' and I said, 'Because I want you to see how many times people try to put their personal music files on our network. You guys hear me complaining about this sort of thing in staff meetings. I want you to get the full impact.'"

Smith elaborates on how DSMETER addressed one of the CSD's chief concerns at the outset. "We were looking at data storage and wondering if we would have to buy another server or more storage. Well, no, if we manage what we have, we don't have to. DSMETER for NetWare has worked wonders for us. It alerts us and notifies users whenever an attempt is made to store non-work-related files on network drives not designed for that purpose." Without a doubt, Smith is pleased with his investment. "Now, our data storage has been returned to normal. That has truly been a benefit."

Using DSMETER, Smith's staff was also able to notify users which network they were allowed to use for storing graphics files on the network. "We were able to set up a photo server. So, if CDD employees try to save a .jpg or .bmp file, they get a notification saying, 'If this is a work-related photo, please save it to the R: drive', because that is the server drive designated for that purpose."

DSMETER and DSRAZOR also allow the Computer Systems Division to quickly run reports on network activity that can be quite illuminating. Says Smith, "If someone wants to know what types of files were being stored on the network, we're able to print that out. Who's saving what? Are they saving mp3s? Who's saving mp3s? Are people saving stuff that is not work related?" The CSD is able to answer these questions and more using DSMETER for Netware and DSRAZOR for eDirectory.

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Smith characterizes the implementation process of Visual Click products as "easy". He explains further, "That was the simple part. The product presentation took place over GoToMeeting and the Internet. The CSD staff was sitting in our server room, viewing it on the big screen projector. The Tech Support Engineer helped us set up our DSMETER to stop mp3s from going on the network drives, track the activity that we want to audit, and generate the reports we need. It was helpful that we didn't have to have someone come in here to show us how to do it."

Kenneth enjoys working with VCS Tech Support staff. "The Tech Support Engineer who showed us how to set up DSRAZOR and DSMETER walked us through everything. She wasn't in a hurry just to get us set up. She took our questions, our concerns—anything we thought could be modified later on, our suggestions—and just ran with them, which was really nice."

Kenneth Smith sums up his experience with DSMETER and DSRAZOR thusly: "If you have staff reductions, Visual Click products will increase your productivity as well as your effectiveness, security and maintenance on your network."

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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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