

Case Study: The ServiceMaster Company

Directory Synchronization & Identity Management Enable ServiceMaster to Reduce Operating Costs and Improve Communication

Client Profile

ServiceMaster currently provides outsourcing services for more than 10.5 million residential and commercial customers. As America's Service Brands for Home and Business, the core service capabilities of the Company include lawn care and landscape maintenance, termite and pest control, home warranty, plumbing, heating and air conditioning services (HVAC), cleaning and disaster restoration, furniture repair and home inspection services.

These services are provided through a network of over 5,400 company-owned and franchised business units, operating under leading brands which include Terminix, TruGreen ChemLawn, TruGreen LandCare, ARS Service Express, Rescue Rooter, American Mechanical Services, ServiceMaster Clean, American Home Shield, Merry Maids, and Furniture Medic.

The Business Challenge

ServiceMaster had over 35,000 employees, including approximately 13,000 with user identities and/or mailboxes in their current Active Directory and Exchange environment. Historically, IT services and operations were delivered on a decentralized basis with each business unit and/or brand employing its own IT staff, technology, and policies. As a result, identity information was stored in numerous locations and it was a challenge for human resources to disperse company-wide, departmental, or geographic-based communications.

ServiceMaster's de-centralized network architecture included five distinct forests and four NT4 domains, which hindered the ability of employees to engage in effective collaboration efforts between business units, and increased user identity administration costs and risk of unauthorized access to company systems.

The PointBridge Solution

PointBridge met with the Director of IT Operations for ServiceMaster as well as various technical and management staff to gain a solid understanding of the project, its requirements, resource and cost constraints, current systems and data, and risk factors. They also defined a range of features and functions to be included in the solution.

Together the companies developed a comprehensive strategy to achieve directory synchronization for all of their business units. They decided to focus on American Residential Services (ARS) and designated it as the template by which the other units would later be modeled.

Based on their extensive experience delivering Microsoft infrastructure solutions for the most complex business and technology environments, PointBridge suggested implementing the Identity Integration Feature Pack for Active Directory (IIFP) to provide GAL synchronization between Active Directory, Active Directory Mode and Microsoft Exchange Server 2000/2003.

Recognizing the Benefits

This solution will help ServiceMaster achieve the following business goals:

- Reduce costs via integration and centralization of services under one IT management structure
- Improve communication between the parent company and its service brands via a stabilized global address synchronization solution
- Reduce administrative costs and overhead
- Provide automatic maintenance of user accounts

Additional, long-term benefits may include:

- Compliance with regulatory requirements such as Sarbanes-Oxley Act
- Reduced security risk via advanced access control technology
- Lowered IT costs by reducing help desk volume and centralizing the management of user identities
- Overall increased employee efficiency

Getting Started

ServiceMaster provided PointBridge with detailed information about the company's current and desired state environment. This documentation was critical to creating accurate plans and architectural designs in the subsequent phases.

Next they formed a core team comprised of two PointBridge and four ServiceMaster representatives. A 15-member advisory committee was also invited to participate in several regularly scheduled meetings and provide additional input. Collectively, this group played an important role in the design and implementation of the project. They also worked together to overcome three significant hurdles: cleanup due to orphaned accounts; disablement of the previous Global Address List (GAL) synchronization solution; and achieve design consensus.

Overcoming Obstacles

The first stumbling block the team encountered was orphaned accounts. More accounts existed than ServiceMaster had people, so a lot of cleanup was undertaken to remove duplicate and outdated information. It was important the accounts were "purged before they merged" which proved to be very labor-intensive.

Secondly, ServiceMaster needed to disable their previous GAL synchronization solution: Microsoft Metadirectory Services (MMS) 2.0. Microsoft support for MMS was scheduled to be discontinued in late 2004, and the company's business needs had outgrown the original design and architecture of MMS. Given the many connections between MMS and other ServiceMaster systems, it was critical that MMS be disabled following a well-planned and well-tested process that would minimize the risk of outage to current business systems.

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The last thing that posed difficulty in this process was the need to establish design consensus from all of the business units. It was difficult to accommodate each group's special needs and requests when designing a single template. The team worked hard to get consensus while trying to balance user needs with corporate needs.

Synchronization and Identity Integration Completed

Microsoft Exchange servers do not host their own directory service, but are integrated with active directory (AD). All Exchange data is retrieved from the global catalog servers in AD. When a user wants to find a person within the organization, they search the GAL, a collection of messaging recipients in the enterprise. It contains all recipients within the organization, including all mailbox-enabled users, mail-enabled users, groups, and contacts.

Because PointBridge used IIFP, the AD user, group, and contact objects in both the ARS and corporate forests were imported into the metadirectory to create new objects. From the metadirectory objects are then synchronized between both AD forests to create contact objects for the mail recipients in each forest. The final result was bi-directional synchronization.

The IIFP GAL synchronization solution uses two management agents for active directory GALs to import the user, group, and contact objects from each AD forest into the metadirectory and then export the object data as contacts for the other AD forest. Once the process was completed, users in both ARS and ServiceMaster's corporate office were able to locate users in the other AD forest as contact objects in their local GAL.

User Training Provided

PointBridge recognized the need for two representatives from the ServiceMaster IT department to complete a training course titled, "Designing, Deploying, and Managing Identity Integration Server (MIIS) 2003." It was conducted by the Oxford Computer Group, an IT service company based in England that specializes in identity and access management (IAM) and is recognized as global experts in MIIS 2003.

Some of the topics covered included: identity management and metadirectory concepts; management agents and data flow; extending MIIS through WMI and DLLs; provisioning; working with Active Directory, Active Directory Application Mode (AD/AM); and installing and maintaining MIIS (including security and high availability).

The training prepared the ServiceMaster representatives to assume day-to-day responsibilities, while PointBridge remained available to lend its expertise, if necessary. Overall, the user training reduced project risk and accelerated knowledge transfer to the representatives from ServiceMaster.

End Result

In approximately three months, PointBridge designed, tested and deployed the IIFP version of MIIS 2003. It currently provides identity integration and directory synchronization between Active Directory and Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 instances for ServiceMaster's ARS division and its corporate headquarters personnel, with a long-term goal of achieving GAL synchronization with three additional business units.

About PointBridge

PointBridge is an IT consulting firm delivering Microsoft infrastructure solutions for the most complex business and technology environments. We integrate and optimize our clients' directory, messaging and identity management infrastructure so that they realize the full value of their IT investments. At PointBridge, we are committed to producing 100% outspoken client references 100% of the time.

For more information, please call 312.334.1900 or visit www.pointbridge.com.