

Inktel Direct Finds Easier Administration and Faster Authentication with Upgraded System



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Inktel Direct has reduced authentication times by 40 percent (boosting personal productivity) and gained better control of its networks by replacing a mixed environment of Microsoft Windows NT 4.0, Sun Solaris, and IBM OS/2, with Windows Server 2003 and the Windows Server 2003 Active Directory service.

Company Overview

Inktel Direct is a direct marketing outsourcer providing database marketing, contact center, fulfillment and lettershop services to companies in a variety of businesses including travel, tourism, financial services and telecommunications. Inktel has become one of the nation's leading direct marketing service providers to the Fortune 500. A sampling of the company's client list includes Discover Card, Ford Motor Company, National Geographic, Bellsouth, Sprint, Bankone, Disney, Procter & Gamble, and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines.

Situation

Inktel's dedication to providing great customer service has led to rapid growth in recent years. The Miami-based company has grown to more than 500 employees, and has opened offices across the United States. But the rapid growth of the company has placed increasing pressure on a network infrastructure that includes Microsoft® Windows® NT 4.0, Sun Solaris, and IBM OS/2. Additionally, Inktel needed to enhance its security to comply with the third-party security audits required by its top-tier customers. With new facilities to serve, and growing demands on its network infrastructure, Inktel knew it was time to upgrade its network, and it wanted to choose the operating system that would provide the best platform for the company's continued growth into the future.

Solution

Inktel, working with DATACORP, a Miami-based Microsoft Certified Partner, chose Windows Server 2003 as its new network operating system. The transition was accomplished by first removing from the domain two Windows NT 4.0 backup domain controllers (BDCs) and holding them in reserve offline for disaster recovery. The Windows NT 4.0 primary domain controller (PDC) was then upgraded to Windows Server™ 2003. Immediately after, three additional Windows Server 2003 domain controllers (DCs) were added and all of the Flexible Single Master Operation (FSMO) roles transferred to the most powerful server, a Dell PowerEdge 4400. The legacy Windows NT 4.0 PDC and BDCs were decommissioned, as with the flawless upgrade, there was no need to use them. Domain Name Server (DNS) and Windows Internet Naming

Industry

Direct Marketing Services

Business Need

Inktel required a network infrastructure that was easier to manage than its existing mix of network operating systems. The company also required enhanced security to meet demands of its customers.

Solution

Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003 was deployed to replace the combination of Windows® NT 4.0, Sun Solaris, and IBM OS/2 operating systems. Windows Server 2003 Active Directory service was deployed to enhance security and to provide a central point of network administration.

Benefits

- Easier network administration using Windows Server 2003 Active Directory®
- Remote administration reduces need for traveling between sites
- Enhanced security

Service (WINS) were installed on two Windows Server 2003 DCs, with one of the DCs being deployed in Inktel's Chicago office which had previously been authenticating to the Miami office over a T1 line. Windows Server 2003 organizational units (OUs) were created, users were moved, and administration was delegated to local office administrators. Applications still running on Solaris and OS/2 are being replaced so the two operating systems can be retired from the network. Windows Server 2003, combined with Microsoft Services for UNIX, provides a great opportunity to move existing UNIX-based applications onto the Microsoft platform.

Benefits

The deployment of Windows Server 2003 and Active Directory has provided Inktel with a more robust and easier to manage network. An immediate benefit was the ability to unite two separate domains that had existed for some years, since Inktel had purchased a fulfillment and lettershop company in Chicago.

"The Chicago and Miami systems, based on Windows NT 4.0, had been pieced together, but never consolidated," says Michael Gonzalez, Director of information Services, Inktel Direct.

"Windows Server 2003 has given us the ability to unite the two sites in a single Active Directory forest to centralize and reduce administration while improving security and performance. Active Directory provides a very user-centric administration model. This greatly reduces our reliance on phone calls to branch offices to conduct administrative functions."

Inktel is taking advantage of the Windows Server 2003 Administrative Delegation feature to extend simple administrative responsibilities to branch offices. The company has used Active Directory to reduce in-house help desk calls by delegating some functions, such as resetting passwords, to call center supervisors.

The Remote Desktop Administration feature is working so well for Inktel that it has reduced the need for Miami-based IT staff to visit the Chicago site.

"The Remote Administration console has proven to be an invaluable tool for administering the domain controllers for our Miami headquarters, as well as for Chicago," Gonzalez says. "Its ease of use allows staff to troubleshoot efficiently without having to travel to the server's location."

Security has always been a priority for Inktel, and Windows Server 2003 continues Microsoft's commitment to enhancing security through a range of services and features including support of Kerberos V5 authentication, public key certificates, Secure Sockets Layer/Transport Layer Security (SSL/TLS) digest authentication, and smart cards.

Inktel has also noted performance enhancements. "Client logon and authentication was about 40% faster after the upgrade was complete, boosting personal productivity," Gonzalez says. "End-users and our administration staff were all quite pleased."

The Windows Server System™ is Microsoft's comprehensive family of server applications for building, deploying, and managing next-generation, integrated applications and Web experiences. Designed with mission-critical performance in mind, the Windows Server System provides fast time-to-market as well as scalability, reliability, and manageability for the global, Web-enabled enterprise. Built from the ground up for interoperability using open Web standards such as XML, the Windows Server System enables a distributed computing model for the Internet, based on Internet protocols and standards in order to revolutionize the way computers talk to one another.

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For more information about DATACORP, visit the Web site at: <http://www.data-corporation.com/>
For more information on Inktel Direct services and solutions, visit the Web site at: <http://www.inktel.com/>

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"Windows 2003 is the logical step in our growth. Inktel Direct has grown very rapidly in the last few years and Microsoft products have grown right along with us. Our systems have become more complex and the number of users, devices, applications, and locations that we are supporting has grown. Moving our development to Visual Studio .NET and our network to Windows Server 2003 and the Active Directory service gives us an integrated set of tools to grow our company."

Michael Gonzalez,
Director of Information Services
Inktel Direct



DATACORP delivers high availability solutions and business continuity services to mid-market companies as well as state, local government agencies, and education institutions in Florida.

"Solutions like Windows Server 2003 help DATACORP deliver on its client commitments. It is obvious that Microsoft is dedicated to delivering solutions that bring tremendous value to the business community."

Hugo G. Perez
Managing Director
DATACORP

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