



Resolving the Password Authentication Issues That Compromise Security at Major U.S. Energy Companies

Case Study

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Industry Case Study: Major U.S. Energy Companies

The Situation (Typical Problems and Environments)

With its customers in the energy industry, PistolStar has formed some of its most enduring relationships. A number of these customers have made multiple product purchases or returned to buy additional seats.

Energy industry customers are most concerned with physical security and operations, especially penetration of their perimeter because it is controlled by software. Unauthorized intruders who gain control of critical systems can create havoc with ramifications for human health and safety and environmental integrity. Therefore, password security is probably of greater importance in this industry than in others and it is chief among all password issues. The problems many of these customers encounter with password management for Lotus Notes, and specifically the Notes ID password, have amplified their password security concerns. And, as with all customers, reducing Help Desk calls is paramount to ensuring resources are devoted to the more critical security issues that need to be addressed.

Major U.S. Energy Customer A is one of the world's top 50 providers of natural gas and electricity, serving customers in North America and selected international markets. The password issues experienced by their 18,000 employees were numerous and all were related to Notes, such as difficulty with synchronizing the Notes ID password, Notes' stringent password complexity rules rejecting successful password changes in Microsoft Active Directory, and Notes' overall unwieldy password management process. The biggest issue to emerge was recovery of the Notes ID password. It was one of the most cumbersome tasks for both administrators and users, yet recovery of the Notes ID password is essential as users need to authenticate with it to access the Notes client.

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"We wanted to reduce the number of sign-ons for our users, but found difficulties with syncing the Notes ID password," states the customer. "Sometimes it would sync and sometimes it wouldn't."

Major U.S. Energy Customer B, a U.S. based company with 11,500 users was looking to provide a solution corporate-wide for single sign-on to Notes and recovery of the Notes ID. They had been using Novell eDirectory as their LDAP directory, but they were in the process of converting to Active Directory. They were also conducting a Notes upgrade at the same time.

As the customer elaborated, "We wanted to sync the Notes ID with the network directory password so users only had to change their network password every 30 days or so, and we wanted to extend password changes to the HTTP password."

Major U.S. Energy Customer C wanted the ability to integrate Active Directory with Notes to enable authentication against Active Directory to access Notes applications. In addition to reducing authentication steps, their goals were to eliminate Notes ID password recovery and coordinate password policies.

The Solution

Major U.S. Energy Customer A originally purchased 18,000 seats of PistolStar's Password Power Lotus Notes ID Plug-In to extend synchronization of the Notes ID password to Domino HTTP, then added the capability to redirect authentication to Microsoft Active Directory.

“PistolStar fit our environment and was fairly simple to deploy,” the customer reports. “The company was helpful and responded to our needs and to any issues that arose.”

Password Power allows the company’s users to login to their Lotus applications with their Active Directory username and password, making it possible to manage one password in a centralized directory. Users can gain access to Domino servers and Notes clients, including the Notes ID.

Major U.S. Energy Customer B, who has a long history of using PistolStar’s products, had purchased the Company’s Web Set Password Plug-In originally and now added the Notes ID Plug-In, which they found they could use during their conversion to Active Directory. The Notes ID Plug-In enables both single sign-on to Notes and recovery of the Notes ID.

“I don’t know of another solution out there that does this,” states the customer.

With Major U.S. Energy Customer C, a small division of the company bought the Notes ID Plug-In several years ago, then the entire organization came back and bought it again for global use. With the more recent upgrades of the Notes ID Plug-In, Customer C has been able to leverage Active Directory to achieve authentication redirection for accessing Notes, eliminating recovery of the Notes ID password, and synchronizing password policies.

The Benefits

For all customers in the energy industry, PistolStar’s solutions immediately addressed and resolved users’ and administrators’ issues with Notes ID password recovery, Notes ID synchronization and coordination of incongruent password policies.

Energy customers have embraced the ability to leverage Microsoft Active Directory for centralizing authentication to enterprise applications, thereby extending Active Directory’s authentication, authorization and password policy enforcement capabilities across multiple passwords. As one customer expressed, it is an added value of Password Power that proves its flexibility and muscle. What is most compelling about authentication redirection for energy customers is that it not only makes it possible to use Active Directory to unlock the Notes ID, it eliminates the need to synchronize the Notes ID.

“Integration between the Notes ID and Active Directory has worked well and the password stays in sync,” notes Major U.S. Energy Customer A. “PistolStar has met our needs by allowing us to deliver seamless single sign-on to our users. It’s a very stable product.”

In addition to achieving its goals for reduced sign-on and password synchronization, Major U.S. Energy Customer A has seen dramatic results. “We have been able to dramatically reduce calls for Notes ID password resets, we estimate by about 60-70%,” the customer reports.

Although they are not tracking results and thus do not have specifics, Major U.S. Energy Customer B reported “We are reaping huge benefits from using PistolStar’s products.”

By achieving single sign-on to Notes via Active Directory and the resulting reduction in Help Desk calls regarding the Notes ID password, energy customers’ users and administrators have gained tremendous time savings. Password Power’s benefits have contributed to not only easing energy customers’ password woes, but enhancing overall password security and freeing up IT resources for more serious security concerns.

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