



Swiss Post Speeds Delivery of Active Directory with ActiveRoles

When Swiss Post came to implement Active Directory, a key part of its Windows 2000 migration, the company turned to ActiveRoles. Thanks to the solution, Swiss Post shortened the Active Directory implementation and avoided the significant development costs associated with building custom administration utilities.

The Challenge

A prime goal of Swiss Post's Windows 2000 migration project was to take advantage of the improved management functionality in Active Directory. An effective implementation of Active Directory was seen as key to streamlining the management of 20,000 Windows users in a complex, distributed environment.

Keenly aware of the expanded administration possibilities in Active Directory, Urs Gasser, the Project Manager for the Active Directory implementation project at Swiss Post, began to plan the administration model for the new Active Directory infrastructure. In the granular delegation possibilities, Gasser saw the chance to distribute the administration of Active Directory, thereby streamlining the management process and lowering costs.

He also saw an ever-increasing complexity.

Implementing and maintaining the planned administration model in an environment with thousands of locations would prove to be a major hurdle, as Gasser explains: "Manually assigning permissions is very complex, tedious, and error prone."

Adding to this complexity was the inability to accurately report on the security settings in Active Directory. "Once the permissions are set," comments Gasser, "there is no way to quickly find where a given user or group has which permissions."

Realising that the native tools would be insufficient for effective administration, Gasser began to look for third-party tools. The first candidate was the administration tool that was already being used in the company's NT environment. The software relied on an external database, running on a proxy server, to manage Active Directory, which proved unacceptable.

"Active Directory provides nearly unlimited possibilities to delegate and administer the environment without an additional database," explains Gasser. "I wanted a tool that took advantage of this capability, while offering the same scalability and stability. Our admin vendor on NT was willing to customise their solution to be partly Active Directory aware, but we needed a mature tool that was developed specifically for Active Directory".

"After a close examination, a complete custom development was also decided against. The development of a comprehensive management framework would have taken too much time. Development is only the first step - such a tool also has to be maintained. The time and costs were simply too high. We wanted to limit any custom development to those aspects not covered by a tool." Gasser continues, "For example, in order to facilitate Post specific processes and policies, a custom client interface was required to be developed; therefore, any tool selected would have to have an open architecture to support this."

The Quest Solution

In order to realise the benefits of Active Directory, while simplifying and accelerating the implementation of the administration model, Swiss Post turned to Quest Software's ActiveRoles.

After an exhaustive evaluation of ActiveRoles, the decision was clear. "ActiveRoles is a great tool. I put it to the test, and it met or exceeded my expectations. Using a tool that completely leverages Active Directory

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— Urs Gasser,
Project Manager,
Swiss Post

Overview

Headquarters

Bern, Switzerland

Services

Postal Service

Critical Needs

Streamline the management of 20,000 Windows users in a complex, distributed environment.

Solution

Quest® ActiveRoles for the administration of Active Directory

Results

- Saved on development and maintenance costs by avoiding the need to build own administration tools
- Simplified and accelerated the implementation of Active Directory

proved essential. Only a tool with the architecture of ActiveRoles could fulfil our requirements," states Gasser. "By implementing ActiveRoles, which is as scalable and available as Active Directory itself, we can ensure that the business-critical Active Directory services are not vulnerable to a single point of failure."

Another important criterion was the open architecture of ActiveRoles, as Gasser explains:

"The flexibility of ActiveRoles allowed us to:

- Automate the assignment of the roles across the enterprise and thus speed the realisation;
- Seamlessly integrate the custom developed WEB interface into the solution."

The implementation of ActiveRoles was straightforward and quick. "After the initial definition and planning of the administration model, the actual implementation was done in a short time," Gasser recalls. "This included installing the software, as well as creating and assigning the required roles. The interface is very intuitive, with little learning curve."

"The next item on the Active Directory project roadmap is Group Policy. The directory-enabled Group Policy Object (GPO) management functionality in ActiveRoles will give us the same benefits in this part of the project as we experienced in the initial phase," predicts Gasser. "Our additional goal of providing the end users with a custom interface will be greatly simplified and accelerated by ActiveRoles' integration with Active Directory."

The Bottom Line

By simplifying the implementation of the administration model, ActiveRoles has proved instrumental to Swiss Post's rapid and successful deployment of Active Directory. Gasser concludes: "With ActiveRoles, we significantly shortened the Active Directory implementation project."

About Swiss Post

Throughout Switzerland, Swiss Post operates 2,921 post offices, 18 letter centres, 4 parcel centres, 6 customer support centres for Postfinance and 2 printing and packaging centres. Swiss Post's annual turnover comes to some 6.2 billion Swiss francs with total assets of 42.1 billion Swiss francs. Swiss Post operates successfully in the fields of Mail, Goods & Logistics, Financial Services, and Passenger Transport.

Fifty-six thousand employees ensure that almost 17 million letters and 500,000 parcels are delivered each day. This adds up to almost 5 billion deliveries per year in total. Twenty thousand postal vehicles and 500 rail wagons travel half a million kilometers every day - equivalent to going around the world 12 times.

Swiss Post handles 826 million payment transactions and manages 2.57 million Yellow Accounts. On a network covering 10,316 kilometers, 1,958 Postbuses carry 97 million passengers. Swiss Post sells around 500 million postage stamps each year. Between 35 and 40 new stamps are issued annually.

More than 500 employees work for SPI, the international arm of Swiss Post, which was founded in 1996. SPI has its own subsidiaries in Germany, Austria, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States. The core business of these subsidiaries is the dispatch of international mailings for business customers.

About Quest Software, Inc.

Quest Software, Inc. delivers innovative products that help organizations get more performance and productivity from their applications, databases and Windows infrastructure. Through a deep expertise in IT operations and a continued focus on what works best, Quest helps more than 50,000 customers worldwide meet higher expectations for enterprise IT. Quest Software can be found in offices around the globe and at www.quest.com.