



Success Story: Password Reset Station Development and Implementation

Summary:

TerpSys developed a Password Station for self-service password resets, thus reducing “password lockout” calls to the Help Desk and improving password security.

Client: National Cancer Institute (NCI)

NCI is a major, Maryland-based federal government agency involved in highly sophisticated cutting-edge medical research.

Objectives:

- Devise a user-friendly way to change personal passwords on a self-service basis.
- Meet the client’s requirement that passwords be of a certain length, include certain characters, and be changed every 90 days.
- Allow users to pick easily-recalled passwords that meet agency guidelines.



Challenge

NCI had two separate directories, Microsoft Active Directory and Novell eDirectory, which made changing passwords difficult for users working on their own.

Many users - particularly those on Mac and Unix stations - found that when they tried to change their password, the change didn’t show up on both systems, forcing them to remember two different passwords for the Microsoft and Novell Directories. This, in turn, led to annoying multiple authentication challenges for some users, and a high incidence of “account lockouts” for users mistakenly entering an incorrect password.

TerpSys needed to develop a solution that – with a single user entry - would change that user’s password on *both* directories. It also needed to ensure that users had sufficient time to select passwords that could be easily memorized and complied with agency technical parameters.

Solution

TerpSys worked with NCI to create a “Password Station” website, where users could log in and make password changes that would automatically propagate over all directories. TerpSys also implemented a system notifying users that their passwords would expire in 20 days, and reminding them to visit the Station and choose a new one.

This solution gave NCI network users ample time to pick a valid, new password, thus increasing the likelihood that they would choose one that met NCI guidelines and which they, personally, would find memorable.

Results

- User-friendly “One-Stop” Password Station streamlined the password change process
- TerpSys-designed solution allowed users to implement password changes anytime, without help
- Dramatic drop in password reset and “account lockout” calls to the Help Desk.