



Active Directory – What is it and what can it do for your business?

Microsoft Windows computers that are joined to a centralized network are members of an Active Directory Domain. Active Directory is a component of the Microsoft Server operating system and is primarily used to manage Windows user logons and network access. Once a server has Active Directory role service configured, it serves a specific network function called a Domain Controller. If you're using Active Directory in your business, you also have the opportunity leverage Active Directory Group Policy in your network for other IT administrator tasks.

Group Policy settings are defined on DCs (domain controllers). Group policy equips network administrators with central place to customize a variety of Microsoft Windows settings for domain joined servers and workstations. These settings called GPOs (Group Policy Objects).

GPOs are enforced at a domain level, so users cannot change them without explicit access. As an example, you could use Group policy to make sure workstations lock the keyboard after 5 minutes of inactivity, or block access to certain components of the control panel. Group policy can do more than just workstation security; you could also publish network printers and network resources to all users of a certain department, or set everyone's homepage to the same web address. Additionally, Group policy can be utilized to restrict access to specific folders, windows components, and even applications.

Advanced features of Active Directory Group Policy:

Central management of windows machines

- Workstation lockdown / consistency
- Mapped user drives and shares
- Govern local workstation storage
- Global policy updates (proxy, printers, favorites, firewall, RDP)
- Roaming Profiles/Folder redirection

Device, network, and wireless security

- NPS/RADIUS
- Workstation security (disable services, ports, devices, file types, logon availability)

Contact your MAPSYS sales representative to learn more about the capabilities of Microsoft Active Directory to lessen simple administrative tasks and harden your workstation security.