Interval International Leverages Centrify to Easily Implement Least Privilege Management

Since 1976, Interval International has made it easy for members to enjoy vacations throughout a vast network of resorts in over 80 countries. Year after year, Interval is recognized as the industry leader in quality vacation exchange.

THE CHALLENGE

Bridge Active Directory to a growing Linux environment for user authentication and management. Implement a least privilege model to minimize the attack surface and increase security. Help meet PCI guidelines through segregation of duties, auditing, and reporting.

A period of rapid organic growth combined with a series of acquisitions made it apparent to Interval International that they needed to upgrade their infrastructure. "Our data center was mostly Windows with a small number of Linux servers," says Sasan Hamidi, former Chief Information Security Officer at Interval International, Inc. "But every new acquisition challenged us with additional apps and systems to be integrated into it."

In 2008 Interval International began an aggressive project to rewrite its existing legacy applications used every day to coordinate transactions with resorts all over the world. They used Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) design to provide a much more robust platform for interfacing with its cell center and affiliated resorts. To make the new environment even more efficient, Interval International deployed the redesigned application on top of Linux clusters.

Ultimately, their SOA environment addressed many challenging issues, but in the implementation process, the Linux environment grew to over 700 systems. "We couldn't centrally manage the security of our rapidly growing Linux environment," said Hamidi. "We used Active Directory to manage user authentication and management across Windows, but with Linux, admins had to manually change passwords every 90 days and manually create reports on configuration changes or other changes to the environment."

The company needed a solution to:

- Bridge the fast-growing Linux environment with Active Directory
- Implement a least privilege model for employees, contractors, and consultants
- Streamline user onboarding
- Help to meet and prove compliance with PCI guidelines

> "For efficiency of our extensive application development, we employ off-shore developers that need access to our environment. Centrify helps us manage exactly what those users have access to and gives us reports that alert us to any elevated access."
>
> SUSAN HAMIDI,
> *Former Chief Information Security Officer, Interval International, Inc.*

THE SOLUTION

Large integration projects and outsourced application development required granular management of privilege. Centrify's patented Zone Technology provides a least-access and least-privilege security model for easy implementation across diverse users, systems, and roles.

Due to a large number of acquisitions, a constant flow of consultants, contractors, and temporary workers were accessing the environment, so the company needed to manage who had access to what carefully.

"Huge integration projects sometimes require outside assistance, and a key concern has always been giving consultants and contractors the level of access they need to do their job and nothing more. We have to be certain they don't have privileges that could do damage. So, one of our key criteria in a solution was privilege management at a granular level," says Hamidi.

Interval's information security team began evaluating technologies that would connect their Linux servers to Active Directory and enable simplified privilege management. The company reached out to several reputable vendors and asked those that passed a primary evaluation to present to Interval's infrastructure, operations, and development teams.

> "Without Centrify, we'd be managing more than 700 servers manually. For that, we'd need to beef up the UNIX team significantly — and those skills don't come cheap."
>
> **SUSAN HAMIDI,**
> ***Former Chief Information Security Officer, Interval International, Inc.***

"We had a solid cross-functional agreement that Centrify provides all the capabilities we were looking for, and that sentiment remains today, nearly three years later," says Hamidi. "The Centrify solution has effectively bridged our Linux systems to Active Directory and clusters, offered a truly innovative and effective way to manage least privilege access through hierarchical zones, and even allowed for segregation of duties among servers."

THE RESULTS

Centrify Identity-Centric PAM limits privileges according to user roles and job requirements, while its automated password changes, real-time generation of audit and compliance reports, and streamlined user onboarding save hundreds of person-hours each week.

The leisure industry has become a favorite target for hackers as it stores valuable data in the form of member and cardholder information. "The attitude in this industry used to be that we didn't have anything anyone wanted, but that's changed. Now we're targeted by everyone from individual hackers to organized crime and terrorist organizations. We see it every day," says Hamidi.

While it's essential to protect against direct insider threats, Hamidi is acutely aware of high-profile breaches where outsiders have gained access using insider credentials. "I carefully and granularly limit user privileges because first, I don't want any insiders to have unnecessary access, and second, I don't want outsiders that somehow get insider credentials to gain extensive privileges," he says. "I need to minimize my attack surface wherever possible. Centrify Identity-Centric PAM has been instrumental in this effort, and it was very easy to implement."

Beyond the security aspect, the Centrify solution saves Interval International a significant amount of time, money, and resources.

> "With Centrify, we get a complete, holistic view of all activity across a given cluster of servers according to assigned privileges, and we can ensure regular user accounts are not elevated to root admin level."
>
> **SUSAN HAMIDI,**
> ***Former Chief Information Security Officer, Interval International, Inc.***

"We used to go to every Linux server to execute password changes, and now that's automated through Active Directory. We used to generate reports manually, but now the security and the operations teams have an instantaneous view across any given cluster, and the ability to generate audits and compliance reports at any time.

User account provisioning used to take up to 30 minutes for each server. Now, it's immediate. All told, we've gone from hundreds of hours a week executing these activities to less than ten, and that means significant cost savings."

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