

Interval International Leverages Centrify's Zone Technology 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, receiving five new industry awards in 2014.



"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."

Sasan Hamidi
Chief Information Security Officer,
Interval International, Inc.



The Challenge

Bridge Active Directory to a growing Linux environment for user authentication and management. Implement least privilege model to minimize 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 their infrastructure was in need of an upgrade. "Our data center was mostly Windows with a small number of Linux servers," says Sasan Hamidi, 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 began an aggressive project to rewrite its existing legacy applications used every day to coordinate transactions with resorts all over the world. Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) design was used 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 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. "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 on-boarding
- Help to meet and prove compliance with PCI guidelines



The Solution

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

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



“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.”

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“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.”

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“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 those that passed a primary evaluation were asked to present to Interval’s infrastructure, operations and development teams.

“We had solid cross-functional agreement that Centrify provided all the functionality 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

Privileges are limited according to user roles and job requirements, while hundreds of man hours are saved each week through automated password changes, real-time generation of audit and compliance reports, and streamlined user on-boarding.

Recently, the leisure industry, seen by hackers as a valuable source of member and card holder data, has been a favorite target. “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’s Zone technology 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.

“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.”



Centrify strengthens enterprise security by securing identities from cyberthreats. Centrify uniquely unifies identity for privileged and end users across cloud, mobile and data center. Centrify improves security, compliance, agility and productivity for over 5000 customers, including over half of the Fortune 50 and over 80 federal agencies. www.centrifys.com.

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