

Ouachita School District Pairs Centrify with Microsoft Office 365 for Identity & Access Management



The Ouachita Parish School District is located in Monroe, LA and includes 35 schools that serve over 19,000 students in grades PK through 12. The district ranks third out of 66 school systems in the state.



The Challenge

Ouachita needed a low-cost, easily implemented authentication solution for Office 365 that would simplify user access, increase security, and add little to no new management responsibilities for the system administrator.

As part of a process to replace a legacy email system with Microsoft Office 365, the Ouachita school district was looking to incorporate a single sign-on (SSO) solution that would facilitate the transition to Active Directory for user authentication and simplify the introduction of new user applications. Identified by the district as a technology enabler, SSO would provide a single point of access for all applications through one log-in process. The district's top priorities included:

- Functionality that would include unlimited application support
- The ability to easily add more apps as required
- Easy, rapid implementation that would require few resources
- Enhanced security
- Cloud-based technology for simplified ongoing management
- Cost that would fit a tight budget

As schools modernize and move education processes online, systems administrators in many districts are overwhelmed. With just two network administrators for the entire Ouachita district, the board needed to simplify the user experience for the faculty without increasing the burden on IT.



The Solution

After evaluating several open-source and commercial tools, Centrify's Identity Service solution best met cost and functionality imperatives, requiring only one new server to allow faculty to securely sign into email and other key apps.

Ouachita needed an SSO solution that could authenticate users both through traditional methods and Active Directory. Noting tight budgetary constraints, network administrator Keith Williamson began evaluating open source solutions, but quickly found that while many were in various stages of development, none were ready for prime time. And commercial products, as expected, were out of the price range.

While Microsoft's ADFS software was available free for educational institutions, the number of servers and the personnel required to manage those servers made it cost prohibitive. "Microsoft recommends back-up machines across all three layers of servers," says Williamson. "So, three layers, each with dual servers, meant a minimum of six servers to implement the solution, not to mention the costs associated with managing and maintaining them."

“Despite the fact that it was a major upgrade from what we'd been using, we had no trouble with the faculty's ability to adapt to the Centrify portal. It was so convenient they adjusted almost immediately.”

Keith Williamson
Network Administrator,
Ouachita Parish School District

“Our decision to implement Centrify over Microsoft's ADFS solution was 100% based on the ease of implementation, and the lack of ongoing management requirements.”

Keith Williamson
Network Administrator,
Ouachita Parish School District



In addition, IT was concerned that the ADFS solution would introduce six new points of potential failure. While virtual servers can be used to minimize the risk of such failure, the district was running low on virtual resources as well—memory upgrades and additional storage would be required. The district opted to keep looking for a more robust solution, until it discovered Centrify.

The Centrify solution is a low-resource application that doesn't require a server of its own, but can be run on a single PC. Learning of this and the solution's unlimited app support, Ouachita's IT department took advantage of a promotional pricing offer and moved forward with implementation—even before a free evaluation could be completed.



The Results

Rapid implementation of the lowtouch, cloud-based solution has provided faculty and staff with SSO across an unlimited number of apps, with a fraction of the servers require for the ADFS solution and no additional IT resources.

Today, Ouachita is enjoying a 99% hands-off solution that provides all the benefits of single sign-on, including immediate availability to a set of pre-defined apps as well as the ability for users to upload their own apps and websites into the Centrify system for quick and easy access. Ouachita now enjoys a number of significant benefits:

- User access to a multitude of sites and apps via one authentication process from any number of mobile or stationary devices
- Authentication through one secure server for more effective management and protection of user credentials
- With minimal internal hardware to manage, no additional network administrators were required, saving significant overhead costs
- The ability to lock down devices and wipe them if they're lost or stolen helps the district to ensure critical private information remains confidential

While the implementation of the entire new email system took approximately three months, the installation and set-up of Centrify was completed by one network admin, the day after purchase.

“ I haven't needed to log into the local Centrify server in months—it really does manage itself.”

Keith Williamson
Network Administrator,
Ouachita Parish School District



Centrify provides **unified identity management** across data center, cloud and mobile environments that result in single sign-on (SSO) for users and a simplified identity infrastructure for IT. Centrify's unified identity management software and cloud-based **Identity-as-a-Service (IDaaS)** solutions leverage an organization's existing identity infrastructure to enable **single sign-on**, multi-factor authentication, privileged identity management, auditing for compliance and enterprise mobility management.

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