

Password Management for the Enterprise

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The manager has the access number to get into the computer room that was just changed and he is in the middle of a meeting. One of the Administrators created a new service account, but what is it for? The DBA has several different accounts with read and write privileges to different databases but you can't possibly remember them all. You wrote a password down on a post-it-note, but where did you put it? As administrators we have faced many, if not all, of these issues at one time or another.

I was recently tasked with finding a solution to password management. I did a search on the internet and found many programs offering to hold credit card numbers or passwords to your bank or favorite web site. All of which are probably decent and useful in their own right but they didn't lend themselves to be viable in an enterprise environment. What was needed was something shareable between different people and groups, it had to be flexible enough to service each group and above all, it needed to be secure.

Secret Server by Thycotic (<http://www.thycotic.com>) was carefully tested and put through some scenarios. One important thing (besides security) was that it had to be flexible. It needed to be able to be customized to the way we do business. Adding your own groupings, folders and even attributes is a breeze.

Some of the best features I have found are the following:

It integrates with Active Directory; there is no need to manage and maintain another database of users (a separate license is required – but well worth it).

The fact that it is a web interface and requires no client installation was a big plus. Once the environment was setup and tested releasing it to the users was as simple as sending out a URL. It can also be easily nested inside of an existing web site.

All access to the system, whether it's an addition, deletion or just a view of a password, is logged and tracked. You have full view of the use of the application. There are also reports that can be run on many different levels to see who has accessed the application and when.

Customization was very simple. After a few moments working with the product I was able to add my own fields and attributes. I was able to customize them any way I needed to. Adding company specific information and also forcing users to enter requirements, that would otherwise be skipped, was very simple and straight forward.

Security is very strong using AES 256 bit encryption and SHA512 on each password. Secret Server uses a SQL backend and all the passwords stored are hashed. Of course proper security measures should be taken to protect this database.

All in all, this is a very solid product well worth the money and with great technical support. You can even download a free single user version and set it up to try out or demo. If you decide to do that, you can leave the environment as is and install the multiuser license and you are off and running.

Installation was extremely simple, took about 30 minutes (IIS environment was already setup). One change was needed in the web.config file that was well documented.

*My installation was version 3.2, check back for my notes on the 4.0 install coming soon.