

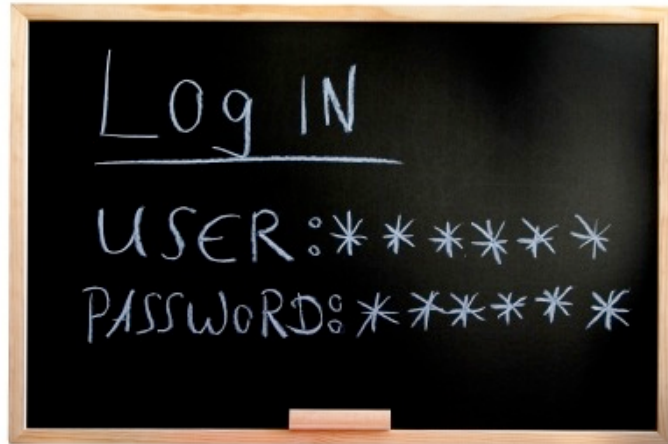
Get Employees Back to Work!

Common Reasons For Slow Login Times

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Logging In: Not As Easy As It Seems

To the average end user, logging in appears to be a simple process. But on the contrary numerous functions must take place behind the scenes, and they must run seamlessly in order for a fast login to occur.



When logging in fails to happen as quickly as it should, employees become agitated or perhaps take it as their cue to head for the lunchroom to

gossip while grabbing a cup of coffee. Consequently, what starts out as a five-minute login process turns into a half hour break at the beginning of the workday. The results of this undesired ritual are a distracted body of employees, hours of unproductive behavior, and a computing environment that is not functioning optimally. By aggressively managing your slow login perpetrator, you can save your business a great deal of time and resources.

User Profiles Can Lead To Problems

Profiles give users the tool to aptly perform their jobs. Local, mandatory, and roaming profiles each offer different freedoms and customization options depending on the applications required of that business. Yet with the pros of profiles inevitably come the cons and often times the answer to slow logins is linked to how a user's profile is configured and maintained.

Your login concern may be related to the fact that you are utilizing:

Roaming profiles. The nature of a roaming profile dictates that a computer will take some time to boot up when logging in because it has to retrieve all of the profile's customizations from a centralized database. Doing so simply takes longer in comparison to a local profile whose information is kept at the workstation itself. This is especially the case with older profiles that have gathered a great deal of data and have become overly cumbersome. This leads us to the next possible cause for sluggish logins.

Bloated profiles. Many users nowadays save their personal photos and entire music collection to their profile in addition to their work-related personalizations. Doing so can lead to a bloated profile, which impedes a computer's ability to

swiftly login. You can try employing folder redirection by moving large files to the network as opposed to keeping them within the user's roaming profile. This may be all it takes to speed up the login process. However, you may find that solving the problem takes further action.

If you've checked these commonly problematic profile issues and can't find anything indicative of causing poor login times, there is another possible culprit.

Login Scripts: For Better and For Worse

When functioning properly, login scripts can be very valuable. Some system administrators control their computing environment almost entirely with login scripts. From mapping network drives and assigning printers, to creating registry keys and copying files, there are innumerable ways that login scripts can be used to execute crucial desktop management tasks.

However, using and maintaining login scripts can be a double-edged sword because they are very flexible and can be created in a manner that only the scriptwriter understands. Because the scriptwriting process varies so greatly, it can be near impossible for a succeeding sys admin to continue working with a pre-existing login script. New scripts get written on top of older scripts and can quickly lead to maintenance problems and sluggish login times. In the event that a login script malfunctions due to inconsistent maintenance or a single key is mistyped in the scriptwriting process, a login script can transform from a useful instrument into a login nightmare.

Is A Solution Worth the Time and Effort?

You've narrowed down the ocean of possibilities to the most probable reasons for your dismal login times, but where do you go from here?

The decision to do nothing is always an option. The time it takes to login may not seem significant in the long run. How can five minutes of booting up in the morning affect the bottom line of a company?

Ponder the consequences of inaction by calculating this quick equation: take your slow login time, multiply it by the number of employees in your company, multiply that by the number of work days in a week, and multiply that by the average number of work weeks in a year. The overall amount of time wasted might make you reconsider your position, in which case an attack plan must be constructed.



Taking Profiles Head On

Slow login times are frequently linked to profile-related issues. Let's say you fall into this category and have concluded that the culprit of your slow login problem is indeed profile-related. You can't eliminate profiles entirely and you've come to the conclusion that the issue warrants a solution. There are a few effective options to consider that are both cost effective and easy to implement.

The kneejerk reaction to eradicating bloated roaming profiles is to switch to mandatory profiles. Mandatory profiles, like roaming profiles, are stored in a network location and allow users to make profile changes during a session. The key differentiator between the two profile types is also what makes mandatory profiles a great solution for those encountering slow login times. Mandatory profiles are read-only by nature. Because of this, a single profile can be used for a large group of users, which is why they are often helpful in an enterprise setting. A mandatory profile does not contain user-specific data, therefore profile sizes are much smaller and login times are generally much faster. However, the downside to this is that mandatory profiles do not allow users to save their profile changes from one session to the next. The results are profiles that login quickly but must be customized by the user after every login, which ends up eating up precious morning hours and defeating the purpose of implementing mandatory profiles in the first place.

Hybrid Profiles: The Best of Both Worlds

If your users do not need customized profiles and your business applications work well in conjunction with mandatory profiles, then your journey to fighting drawn out login times is over. Pass 'Go', deploy mandatory profiles, and collect well over \$200 in improved employee productivity. However, if you have users that need to save specific settings or that utilize complex business applications, the standard mandatory profile will not quite suit your situation.

Third party software companies offer a profile solution commonly referred to as a hybrid profile. The hybrid profile was given the moniker because it uses either a mandatory or local profile on the back end, but offers the ability to customize and replicate user-specific settings to multiple servers and/or workstations. By implementing hybrid profiles within your user base, you can eliminate slow logins while retaining user settings and enforcing system administrator control. This solution offers the most cost effective and timely solution for those that simply need it all.

Tread Softly and Make Headway

If you decide you want to take a closer look at the efficiency of your login script, here is a word to the wise: system administrators can be defensive about the login scripts they've spent untold hours slaving over, so attacking their brainchild may not be the best approach. Try to uncover a bit of background information about the login script in your company. Was it written by your current sys admin or is it a fourth generation hand-me-down? Generally the fewer hands your login script has gone through, the less likely you are to have problems with it.

To determine whether your slow login problem is associated with your login script, try suggesting a simple test: begin by logging in as you normally would with the login script running. Be sure to time how long the process takes. Then disengage the login script, log off, and try logging in sans login script. If there is a major disparity between the two login times, then there's a good chance you can significantly improve your login time by taking a closer look at the login script without insulting your system administrator.

One option you can try is streamlining your login script. To give an example, there are applications such as MS Office and Outlook that are used on a daily basis, but others like Photoshop and Illustrator that are only opened sporadically. By moving the registry settings of these infrequently used applications directly to the application's point of execution, you can move unnecessary and bulky code from the login script and speed up the login process. If still further tweaking is desired, look to a third party software company that can work in conjunction with your login scripts to succinctly eliminate any login delays.

Does Your System Administrator Have All the Time in the World?

There are several different paths you can take to address your login predicament. Ultimately it comes down to how much time you want to ask your system administrator to devote to the problem. Maybe it will only take a quick look at your login scripts, or maybe you will find that it is best to deploy a software program that can manage your profiles and login scripts and ease both your technical and financial concerns while giving your sys admin the time s/he needs to dedicate to other more pressing tasks. Having a firm grasp of your company's situation will help you decide how best to take action.