Preparing for Year 2000

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With less than five months to the year 2000, you have probably already isolated and fixed any potential networking problems that pertain to the year 2000. However, your work is not completed yet. Now is the time to double-check your company's network to ensure that it is year-2000 ready, once and for all. You still have time to make last-minute adjustments if you encounter networking problems you missed during your earlier year-2000 testing.

This article describes some of the resources that are available through the year-2000 page on Novell's web site (http://www.novell.com/year2000). This article focuses on Novell's Ferret utility, which you can use to assess the year-2000 readiness of each NetWare server on your company's network.

YEAR-2000 RESOURCES

The year-2000 page on Novell's web site is a clearinghouse for year-2000 resources. You can click the Product Status link to find out whether the Novell products you are using are year-2000 ready. When you click this link, a table appears, listing the year-2000 status of each Novell product. Some products are year-2000 ready as is, while other products require you to download and install a year-2000 update. A few products are no longer supported by Novell. For example, Novell is not providing a year-2000 update for NetWare 3.11. If you have a NetWare 3.11 server, you must upgrade to NetWare 3.2, NetWare 4.2, or NetWare 5.

You can click the Third-Party Products link to view a list of the third-party utilities and drivers that are included with Novell products. To help you determine the year-2000 status of these utilities, Novell has provided a link to the year-2000 page on each manufacturer's web site. You should always contact the manufacturer directly to get the final word on whether third-party utilities and drivers are year-2000 ready.

NOVELL'S FERRET UTILITY

After you have installed any necessary year-2000 updates or upgrades on your company's NetWare servers, you should perform a year-2000 readiness check on all NetWare servers. To simplify this process, Novell offers a free utility called the Year 2000 Information Ferret. You run the Ferret utility on each NetWare 3, NetWare 4, and NetWare 5 server. (This utility does not work with NetWare 2.)

The Ferret utility gathers information about a server's NetWare Loadable Modules (NLMs) and network services. You then send this information to Novell, which analyzes the information and returns a detailed report about the server's year-2000 readiness.

You can download the Ferret utility from http://www.novell.com/year2000/y2kferret.html. Before you click the Download button, you should write down the keycode that appears on this page. The keycode is MPEAU. You do not have to enter the keycode to download the Ferret utility, but you must enter the keycode when you run this utility.

After you have recorded the keycode, click the Download button to download the Ferret utility, which is a self-extracting file that is approximately 2 MB in size. After extracting the files, run the SETUP.EXE file, which installs the Ferret utility on your workstation's C: drive and creates the associated program icons.

You can install the Ferret utility on any Windows NT/98/95 workstation that is running the latest version of Novell's 32-bit client software. (You can download Novell's 32-bit client software free from http://www.novell.com/download.) This workstation must be attached to the server for which you want the Ferret utility to gather information.

Running the Ferret Utility

You can use the Ferret utility to gather information for one or more servers on your company's network. The Ferret utility gathers information quickly, moving from one server to another in rapid succession. This utility is an efficient option for gathering information about servers that are located across slow WAN links. By using the Ferret utility to gather information for servers on your company's WAN, you can eliminate the need to visit each corporate site to perform a year-2000 readiness check.

You must have ADMIN or ADMIN-equivalent rights to each server. You then run the Ferret utility by completing the following steps:

1. Launch the Ferret utility. The main menu appears, displaying a toolbar and several menu options. The main menu also displays a list of servers to which the workstation is currently attached.
2. Select the Profile option from the toolbar. The Profile screen appears, containing a field for the keycode that you recorded earlier. Enter the keycode in this field. The Profile screen also contains fields for personal and corporate profiles. Enter the appropriate information in these fields. When you send the information gathered by the Ferret utility to Novell for analysis, Novell will use the profiles to identify this information.
3. Next, select the server or servers for which you want the Ferret utility to gather information. You will be prompted to log in to the network. The Ferret utility checks the Novell Directory Services (NDS) database to determine whether or not you have ADMIN or ADMIN-equivalent rights to each server.
4. After you are authenticated to NDS, click the Scan Servers button. The Ferret utility will begin gathering information for each server. If you selected a NetWare 3.1x server in the previous step, you may receive some error messages. These error

messages are caused by the Ferret utility requesting information that is not available in NetWare 3.1x. But don't worry: The error messages do not affect data integrity. Simply acknowledge each error message, and continue with the scan.

5. You will be prompted to click the Send button when the scan is completed. A screen appears, displaying several options for how to send the information gathered by the Ferret utility to Novell for analysis. These options are Disk, FTP, and E-mail.

The Disk Option

The Disk option is the slowest way to send information to Novell. If you select the Disk option from the Send page in the Ferret utility, you will be prompted to copy the .ZIP file created by the Ferret utility to a floppy diskette. (The Ferret utility generates several output files that store information gathered from a particular server. The Ferret utility also generates a .ZIP file that contains all of these output files. If you configure the Ferret utility to scan multiple servers, a separate .ZIP file will be created for each server.) After copying the .ZIP file to a diskette, you mail the diskette to the following address:

Novell Millennium Services
1555 North Technology Way
M/S ORM-S112
Orem, UT 84097-2399

You should include a card that lists your contact information and your return address. Novell will then be able to send you the results of its analysis.

The FTP Option

The FTP option is much faster than the Disk option. If you choose the FTP option, you can upload the output files to Novell via Novell's web site. Unfortunately, this option may present a couple of problems. First, you must maintain your Internet connection throughout the upload process, which may take a lot of time depending on the speed of your Internet connection and the amount of information you need to send. Second, Novell's HTTP-based upload capability supports only Netscape Navigator 4.06 or above.

I encountered another problem with the FTP option. Although Netscape Navigator is configured as my default web browser, Microsoft Internet Explorer launched when I selected the FTP option from the Send page in the Ferret utility.

To avoid this problem, you can launch Netscape Navigator and enter http://www.novell.com/year2000/upload1.html, which is the URL for the upload page on Novell's web site. On this page, you click the Upload ZIP Files button. An additional Netscape Navigator window appears, displaying /y2k as the current directory.

At this point, you open Windows Explorer and locate the C:\NOVELL\FERRET directory. You then select all of the output files, and you drag and drop them into the Netscape Navigator window displaying the /y2k directory. When Netscape Navigator asks if you want to upload the output files, you answer Yes. And that's it: Once the output files are transferred, you can close both the Ferret utility and Netscape Navigator.

The E-mail Option

Like the FTP option, the e-mail option allows you to send information to Novell instantaneously. I prefer this option over the others because you can tell whether the output files are successfully transferred and received by Novell. Within a few hours of sending output files to Novell via e-mail, you should get an automated reply informing you that Novell has received these files. This reply also informs you that you should receive Novell's analysis report via e-mail within three to 10 business days.

When you select the E-mail option from the Send page in the Ferret utility, a list of instructions appears, explaining the e-mail address you need to use and what you must include with the e-mail message. The instructions also explain that if you click the e-mail address, your e-mail program will be launched and an outbound e-mail message will be created with the proper address and with the output files already attached. Unfortunately, this operation may fail. To be on the safe side, you should write down the instructions. For example, you must use y2k@novell.com as the e-mail address and "Year 2000 Assessment" as the subject. In addition, you must attach all .ZIP files that are located in the C:\NOVELL\FERRET directory. You can then send the e-mail message.

Interpreting the Report

After you send the files to Novell, all you have to do is wait. In testing the Ferret utility, I sent two sets of output files to Novell. I sent the first set of output files to Novell via e-mail, and I received Novell's analysis report via e-mail only three days later. I sent the second set of output files via FTP. This time, I waited six days to receive Novell's analysis report via e-mail. (No matter which way you send the output files to Novell, you receive the report via e-mail. If you do not provide an e-mail address, you receive the report on a floppy diskette via regular mail.)

If you send the output files for multiple servers to Novell, you receive a separate report for each server. You can view the report by using the latest version of Adobe's Acrobat Reader. (You can download the Acrobat Reader free from http://www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/download.html.)

You should browse the report to determine the overall year-2000 readiness of the server. For help in interpreting the

Check Third-Party Products With Check 2000 3.11

If you are looking for a desktop management solution that provides year-2000 testing, you should consider purchasing Novell's ZENworks 2. Not only does ZENworks 2 allow you to manage workstations, deploy applications, and conduct hardware inventories from a central location, but ZENworks 2 also allows you to determine whether each workstation on your company's network is year-2000 ready.

In addition to the Ferret utility, ZENworks 2 includes five licenses of Check 2000 3.11 from Greenwich Mean Time. With these licenses, you can use Check 2000 3.11 to test five workstations at a time. Check 2000 3.11 then provides detailed information about the year-2000 status of each workstation.

You can also schedule Check 2000 3.11 to run on a regular basis. That way, Check 2000 3.11 automatically tests any new operating systems, applications, or updates that are installed on each workstation. By purchasing additional licenses from Greenwich Mean Time, you can run Check 2000 3.11 on every workstation.

You can also download a free copy of Greenwich Mean Time's Check 2000 PC Lite if you do not want to purchase ZENworks 2 at this time. (You can download Check 2000 PC Lite from http://www.gmt-2000.com/form.htm). Check 2000 PC Lite allows you to conduct extended BIOS and CMOS time and date tests on each workstation. Many utilities that test the BIOS and the CMOS report only whether a particular process has failed the test. Check 2000 PC Lite, however, provides detailed information about which process has failed, how that failure affects the workstation's operation, and what—if anything—you can do to resolve the problem.

I strongly recommend that you add Check 2000 3.11 or Check 2000 PC Lite to your company's year-2000 test suite. For more information about ZENworks 2, visit Novell's web site (http://www.novell.com/products/nds/zenworks). You can also call 1-800-NETWARE or 1-801-228-4272. For more information about Check 2000 3.11 or Check 2000 PC Lite, visit Greenwich Mean Time's web site (http://www.gmt-2000.com). You can also call +44 (0) 1329-825-468.

report, you should visit the report page on Novell's web site (http://www.novell.com/year2000/reporthelp.html). The most important part of the report is the Year 2000 Status column, which lists one of the following options for each NLM or network service running on the server:

- Ready. This option indicates that the NLM or network service meets Novell's requirements for being year-2000 ready. In other words, the NLM or network service may not require a year-2000 update. If the NLM or network service does require a year-2000 update, that update has already been applied. In this case, the report's Remarks column specifies Required Patches Found.
- Patches Required. This option indicates that the NLM or network service requires a year-2000 update and that the update has not been applied yet. The report should include a link to the URL from which you can download the necessary year-2000 update for this NLM or network service.
- Ready—Optional Updates Available. This option indicates that Novell has released an optional year-2000 update for the NLM or network service. In this case, the update addresses year-2000 issues that do not affect the year-2000 readiness of the NLM or network service. For example, Novell's testing may have revealed that a particular NLM will continue running after the year 2000 but will not display the date correctly.
- Supported—Being Tested. This option indicates that Novell is currently testing the NLM or network service for year-2000 readiness. You should periodically check Novell's web site to find out whether the year-2000 testing is completed and a year-2000 update is available for this NLM or network service.
- Not Supported—Upgrade to New Version. This option indicates that Novell is not testing the NLM or network service for year-2000 readiness. In this case, you should upgrade to the latest version of the product, or you should migrate to a different product. Novell will not support year-2000 issues for any NLM or network service that is not being tested for year-2000 readiness.

You may be confused by one aspect of the report: Some NLMs and network services, such as those for GroupWise, are identified by a major version (GroupWise 5.0, for example) or by a version grouping (GroupWise 5.2 or above, for example). The report then states that the NLM or network service is year-2000 ready but that upgrades are available. If you want to maintain the highest confidence in your company's level of year-2000 readiness, you should upgrade to the latest version of the product.

Finally, you should keep in mind that the Ferret utility does not gather information for third-party products running on each server. As a result, the report does not include information about the year-2000 status of these products.

Several companies offer utilities that allow you to determine whether third-party products are year-2000 ready. For example, you can use Check 2000 3.11 from Greenwich Mean Time to test each workstation on your company's network. ZENworks 2 includes both the Ferret utility and five licenses for Check 2000 3.11. (See "Check Third-Party Products With Check 2000 3.11.")

CONCLUSION

After you have assessed the year-2000 readiness of each NetWare server on your company's network, you should take advantage of Novell's list of links to other year-2000 resources that are located on the Internet (http://www.novell.com/year2000/hotsites.html). These links provide valuable information about ensuring that your company's network is year-2000 ready.

As mentioned earlier, you should also check with the manufacturers of every product on your company's network, including both hardware and software. This process may be time-consuming, but contacting each manufacturer is the only way to find out once and for all whether products are year-2000 ready. With time running out before the year 2000 arrives, preparing your company's network should be your top priority.

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