



Go Back to Bed

Blaine Homer

Editor's Note: In last month's issue, we introduced a new column that focuses on the lighter side of networking, exploring the humorous side of your job as a network administrator. You, no doubt, are often faced with users, colleagues, and maybe even your own alter ego that does stupid—albeit amusing—things. This column is dedicated to sharing these experiences with Novell Connection readers.

The response to this column has been great. Be sure to check out this month's "Letters to the Editor" on p. 4 to read about the amusing experiences of other Novell Connection readers. Then send us the humorous stories about your own network support experiences. (Send your stories to editors@ncmag.com.)

The other day, I was browsing the Internet. I am not sure why I was browsing, what I was looking for, or what I wanted to accomplish. I may have been helping my fifth grader with his school report.

Note. Fifth grade is the perfect school grade: My son is just old enough that my work will pass off as his own, and just young enough that I can still compete [sic] for a good grade—especially now that I have access to the Internet and I have learned how to cut and paste.

Anyway, as I was browsing, I came across a post that has stuck in my head. I'll probably remember this post forever. (I don't know why I remember such useless information. I guarantee that I won't remember the command to save the configuration on a Cisco router. Is it save, store, or write? But I will certainly remember this post—and now so will you.)

Filed: 10/26/2000, Police Department, 7 a.m.—A 37-year-old woman in the 1800 block of Spanke Street reported having problems with her computer. Someone has changed all the passwords, and she believes she knows who is responsible.

After reading this post, I was left with several questions and observations:

- Does a street named Spanke really exist? And if there were such a street, would you live on it? Enough said!
- I might expect this reasoning from a 90-year-old (the more technically challenged generation). But at 37, this woman should know better!
- I can't believe that this report came in at 7 a.m. I am not sure about you, but I usually have better things to do with my time at 7 a.m. than call in a police report for something

like this. Then again, maybe the woman was preordering a double cafe latte online. Maybe she wanted to send her boss an e-mail message, explaining that she had been up all night partying and that she was "sick." (As you have probably discovered, using e-mail is sometimes safer than using the telephone. After all, your boss might actually answer the phone at 7 a.m.) Maybe the woman had been up all night trying every possible password combination.

- How does this woman know that someone changed *all* of her passwords, rather than just one password? If the woman had a BIOS password, would she know that someone had changed her Windows login password? If she couldn't log in, would she know that someone had changed her screen saver password? If the woman wasn't able to access her desktop, how would she know if the culprit had changed the password for her Internet Service Provider (ISP) account?
- Is changing *all* of someone's passwords a more serious crime than changing just one password?
- Why did the woman call the police—especially if she knew who had "perpetrated the crime"? After all, there probably isn't any precedent that gives the police jurisdiction over changing a password. Of course, I could be wrong. Maybe there is a landmark case that gives police the right to arrest someone if he or she changes someone else's passwords. However, I wonder if there is a penalty if the person changes only one password. Or, is the first occurrence classified as a misdemeanor?

Although I will never know the answers to these questions, I will never forget this post—and now thanks to me, you may never forget it either. After all, this post is what technical-blunder-story legends are made of.

After really pondering this post, however, I realized that I have had several similar conversations with people and that I too know who the culprit probably is: His full name is Caps Lock Key. Maybe you know him too. My advice to the next police station that gets a report like this is: Tell the user to hit that darn Caps Lock Key "guy" and go back to bed. How dare he change all the user's passwords?

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Send your stories about humorous networking mishaps and misunderstandings involving users, colleagues—or even yourself—to editors@ncmag.com. ●