

Installing a shared network printer in an automated fashion on Windows XP & Vista client workstations

When to use this document

Use this document whenever you are setting up a network printer on a Windows Small Business Server, or Windows 2000/2003 Server network.

Until Windows 2003 Server R2, Windows server operating systems did not have the ability for the Network Administrator to deploy network printers through Group Policies, an incredible omission. In Windows 2003 Server R2, however, once you have added the *Print Management Console*, deployment of network printers is finally possible.

However, if you have Small Business Server 2003/2000 (SBS2000/2003), Windows 2003 Server, or A Windows 2000 server, the *Print Management Console* is not available and, until this document, the only option was to buy third-party add-on products. No longer : this document walks you through an extremely simple method of automating the installation of network printers onto end-user PCs via Group Policies in any Windows server environment.

Minimum requirements

On the server side

Windows 2000 Server
Windows 2003 Server
Windows 2003 Server R2
Windows Small Business Server 2000 (SBS2000)
Windows Small Business Server 2003 (SBS2003 – SBS2003 R2)

On the clients side

Windows XP Pro
Windows Vista Business Edition

Adding a network printer automatically

The method below relies on a little known VBSCRIPT file provided by Microsoft from Windows XP onwards : **PRNMNGR.VBS**. This VBSCRIPT file allows you to install a network printer onto a PC using a single command line. So, for Windows XP client PCs/workstations (see Vista considerations at the end of this document) :

- On your server install and set up the printer to be networked.
- Share the printer. Let's assume the name of your server is **SERVERW2K** and that you name its share **TopFloor-ColorLaserJet-3700DN**.
- Next, to ensure that the printer is automatically installed into a user's profile when he/she logs on, simply enter the following line in a batch file that gets run by the Logon Script setting of the Group Policy that applies to the user in question :

```
CSCRIPT %windir%\system32\prnmngr.vbs -ac -p "\\ServerW2K\TopFloor-ColorLaserJet-3700DN"
```

The simple line above will add the specified printer into that user's profile if it does not exist.

- That's it. You now know how to simplify your network printer installations.**

For completeness find below a logon script batch file which automatically adds a number of network printers to each user to which that particular Group Policy applies :

```
@ ECHO OFF
```

```
REM =====
REM *
REM * H_Drive_All_Users.bat
REM * -----
REM * This login batch file maps the H: drive for all users (first deleting the old H mapping), *
REM * and any future central drives that may need to be created.
REM *
REM * This file also installs onto the client PCs any printer which is not
REM * already defined on that PC for that user.
REM *
REM =====
```

```
START /WAIT NET USE H: /DELETE
NET USE H: \\ServerW2K\Central_Files_for_ABC_Company /PERSISTENT:YES
```

```
REM * This command removes the LaserJet 1320 from all users as it has now been retired
REM * Next time someone reads this it will be safe to delete this line because all users will have logged on by
REM * then, which means the printer will be gone and this line will then no longer be needed
CSCRIPT %windir%\system32\prnmngr.vbs -d -p "\\ServerW2K\Middle Floor LaserJet 1320"
```

```
REM * Printers being added
CSCRIPT %windir%\system32\prnmngr.vbs -ac -p "\\ServerW2K\HotDesk-ColorLaser-3550"
CSCRIPT %windir%\system32\prnmngr.vbs -ac -p "\\ServerW2K\TopFloor-ColorLaserJet-3700DN"
CSCRIPT %windir%\system32\prnmngr.vbs -ac -p "\\ServerW2K\MiddleFloor-LaserJet-P2015N"
```

```
:END
```

**Deleting a network printer
automatically**

As you will have gathered from the above batch file, in addition to allowing you to install and configure a network printer automatically, the Microsoft **PRNMNGR.VBS** VBSCRIPT file also allows you to delete an obsolete or retired printer automatically. Example :

```
CSCRIPT %windir%\system32\prnmngr.vbs -d -p "\\ServerW2K\Middle Floor LaserJet 1320"
```

Enjoy !

**Special Windows Vista
considerations**

In Windows Vista the free Microsoft VBScript printing files are not located in C:\Windows\System32. Instead they are located in : **C:\Windows\System32\Printing_Admin_Scripts\en-US**.

Thus, in a mixed network of Windows XP PCs and Vista PCs, for the above automated installation of a network printer to work equally well on Windows XP and Windows Vista, you must ensure that on the Vista PCs the VBScript files are copied to C:\Windows\System32 from their default location. You can do that manually if only two or three Vista PCs are involved, or by login script if a dozen or more Vista PCs are involved (or you can make sure that your Vista Sysprep image has those files in the System32 folder). Here is a sample of a script which will do the copying to System32 :

```
IF NOT EXIST "C:\Windows\System32\Printing_Admin_Scripts\en-US" GOTO :END
C:
CD \ Windows\System32\Printing_Admin_Scripts\en-US
COPY PRN*.VBS C:\Windows\System32 /Y

:END
```

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