

Mapping a local drive or folder as a network drive in Windows 95/98/ME

This type of requirement comes up primarily in cases when you run a Windows 95/98/ME network, with a specific application (ie. an accounts program, or a customers database) running on the main central machine, and where, typically, the software can only work through drive-based paths, e.g. “**H:\Accounts\CustData**” (ie. it is not able to work through UNC paths such as “\\Main_PC\Apps\Accounts\CustData”).

In such cases, because the data is shared by many of the other PCs, to avoid data corruption or the programs simply not working, you often absolutely need to ensure that the programs on all the PCs access the network data through exactly the same path. This is easy on the satellite PCs as all you need to do is **map** a drive to the shared directory on the central PC. So, in our example above, the **H:** drive would be mapped on all the satellite PCs to **\\Main_PC\Apps**. On the central PC however, it is not possible to map H: to C:\Apps because Windows does not allow you to map to a local drive - it only allows you to map to true network drives.

There is a workaround, however, and that is through the invaluable DOS **SUBST** command and the modification of two of your Windows startup files, AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS.

First, modify CONFIG.SYS

- You will first need to modify your **C:\CONFIG.SYS** startup file.
- Click on **Start \ Run**.
- Enter **SYSEDIT** and press Enter. This brings up a special system configuration editor which opens all the various Windows configuration files at the same time.
- Maximize **SYSEDIT** for ease of use.
- Through the **Window** menu option you can switch between the various configuration files.
- Switch to **CONFIG.SYS** (and maximize it too). If you do not have a CONFIG.SYS file then contact us at www.AnswersThatWork.com for further advice.

- Add at the end of CONFIG.SYS the following line :

LASTDRIVE = Z

This ensures that you can map any local drive up to **Drive Z**. If you do not have a LASTDRIVE command in CONFIG.SYS the highest local drive you will be able to map will be drive **F** :

Next, modify AUTOEXEC.BAT

- Next, through the "Windows" menu option, switch to **AUTOEXEC.BAT**. Again, if you do not have an AUTOEXEC.BAT file on your system, contact us for further assistance.

- Add at the end of AUTOEXEC.BAT the following line :

SUBST H: "C:\Apps"

The above line will now map drive H: to the local folder "C:\Apps". Note the use of the quotes which are there to ensure that you are able to map to folders whose names contain embedded spaces.

Finishing off

- Close SYSEDIT and answer **Yes** to all the **Save Changes** questions it asks you as you close it.
- Reboot your PC.
- On reboot you should find that you now have a mapping, H:, to a local directory of your PC (H: → C:\Apps),** and you have now thankfully ensured that all your PCs, including the central PC, access the data through exactly the same drive path, thus allowing your application to be fully and properly networked.
- You're done.**

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