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## AutoProf's Config Manager Takes on Windows Desktop

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By Paula Musich

Desktop management software developer AutoProf will be one of the first in its class to extend the Group Policy environment in Microsoft Corp.'s Active Directory with a new Windows desktop configuration manager.

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AutoProf's new lightweight Policy Maker Professional uses Active Directory's Group Policy environment to eliminate much of the necessary script writing and automate configuration processes such as drive mappings, printer connections and mailbox user profiles.

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Using the Microsoft Management Console interface, Policy Maker Pro makes change management more secure, scalable and flexible, AutoProf officials said. It eliminates the need to create scripts to set up drive and printer mappings and perform other configuration functions, something users often find onerous.

"Before, we had to create a log-in script for each [of 35] branch locations," said Jay Leal, systems architect at First National Bank Group Inc., in Edinburg, Texas. "We were managing more log-in scripts as we added branches. If an employee went to another branch, the log-in script would point them to their home server. Now, we can dynamically assign drive letters based on where people log in."

The tool, which works with Microsoft's Windows 2000, Windows XP and Windows Server 2003, "really helped us to centrally manage all those small settings," said Leal. And it made the process of copying files to desktops more efficient, he said. It can also manage Microsoft's Office, Outlook and Internet Explorer.

Although the Group Policy environment has been available for some time, few users leveraged it much beyond security settings, according to Michael Emanuel, director of product management in the Windows Enterprise Management Division of Microsoft, in Redmond, Wash.

"It's taken a bit of time for people to get [Active Directory] deployments to where they are considering using Group Policy to manage desktops. We watched how people used Group Policy over several years and realized we needed to make it easier to administer IT policies for IT professionals," said Emanuel.

The tool, available now, can manage TCP/IP connections, shortcut configurations, registry configurations and application preferences.

[Click here](#) to read about other tools that cut configuration time.

AutoProf, of Portsmouth, N.H., will also release a Group Policy-based patch management offering for Windows 2000, Windows XP and Windows Server 2003. The new Policy Maker Software Update leverages Microsoft's Software Update Services.

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