Subject: Comp. info: MS attack on Netscape
Date: Mon, 04 Nov 1996 14:00:32 -0800
From: Laura Buddine <laura@iacta.com>
To: jimb@netscape.com
CC: jim@netscape.com

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Dear Jim,

We're Netscape users and fans, and couldn't find any other place on your Web site to send you some important competitive info. I hope you'll make good use of it.

We just upgraded to NT4.0 Server, and installed the IIS 2.0 server that came with it (replacing our IIS 1.0). The immediate result was that any user surfing to our site with a Netscape browser was challenged to enter a user name and password, and then was given an "Access Denied" message. (It also denied access, even if the user had a valid name and password with full admin privileges.)

However, anyone using MSIE 3.0 (didn't test with 2.0) could surf with no problem -- and no name/password challenge.

This "feature" isn't documented. After an hour crawling around the Microsoft web site in search of some kind of help, I found a document that mentioned this -- and said that the reason is that "Netscape browsers cannot properly handle an NT challenge/response."

This "feature" is the default, even when "allow anonymous users" is checked. In fact, the only workaround that we could find was to give read-only permission to everyone to the entire \wwwroot directory -- obviously not a preferred choice of any system admin.

As you are no doubt aware, Microsoft does not provide support for its NT products unless you purchase a support package. Our choice -- and that of any NT4.0/IIS2.0 user -- is to either set the directory as read access to all, or pay Microsoft $150 (!) for a tech support call.

Jim, it is my strong suspicion that this was set as a deliberate attempt to cause problems for Netscape. It's very tempting to use the IIS2.0 because it comes free with NT4.0 Server. It's especially tempting for small to medium companies with Intranets, because it saves them money and sets up automatically with NT4.0. If some users in the company are using MSIE to browse with no problem and others using Netscape are locked out, the easiest way for a busy admin or support person (especially that can't spend $150 for a 900-number call and doesn't have an hour to paw around the Microsoft site) is to tell his users to use MSIE.

This is outrageous, and even more so when they try to blame the problem on Netscape. I hope you will kick Microsoft's butt with this.

If I can answer any questions of this, I'll be happy to. I can be reached as laura@iacta.com or by phone at (310) 869-3031.

Regards,
Laura Buddine

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