

SQL services failing on startup

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I've got a mystery on my hands and hope someone out there can help me. I attempted to include relevant information only.

Environment: SQL 2000 Enterprise SP3a, Win 2003 Enterprise, Active Directory

History: One of our production SQL servers is rebooted once a week on weekends. The services are set to autostart using a windows account. The account is now (see recent changes below) part of a global group with local admin privileges. The account is restricted to logon only to computers running SQL Server. Log Shipping is running on the server. After running fine for several months, the last two weekends, SQL Server has failed to startup after the reboot.

Recent Changes: The domain account was a member of the local admin group. Per company standards, the account was added to a domain group. The domain group was granted local admin privileges and the domain account was explicitly removed from the local admin group. Also, the list of computers the account can logon to was expanded.

- 1) The following message is associated with the failed startup: "The account name is invalid or does not exist, or the password is invalid for the account name specified." The first time this happened, the logon account for the services was changed from domain\account to a UPN logon (account@mycompany.com). SQL Server started up fine manually. This weekend it failed again with the same message. Again, SQL Server started up fine manually, indicating the account and password are set correctly.
- 2) The domain account used to startup the services has been granted SQL Server login privileges and is a member of the SA server role. Under the "Security Access" option there is a third option listed in addition to Grant and Deny access, "Through group membership". The "BUILTIN\Administrators" group also has login privileges. I checked other servers, and this is the only occurrence of this option on windows logins.
- 3) Because of the authentication issues, I'm hesitant to change all our SQL server services to startup using domain accounts. Most of them do not need access to resources on the network. This particular instance requires it because of Log Shipping.

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Thanks for your help,
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