

Re: I need to password protect my pc at startup

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- *From:* "Kat" <kat@xxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Thu, 19 Jun 2008 10:41:23 -0500
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I'm at a very small company... we have 8 people working in the office here. I don't know that much about how to set up passwords or if using the log on password is effective enough. I do not have that set up now. I am one of 3 owners here, almost everyone in the office has keys to get in here on evenings and weekends. We are too small to have an IT person let alone a department. So we are pretty much on our own. One person here is best with pc's and does what she can to keep us up and running but doesn't seem to know if the windows log on is secure enough to prevent other people on my machine. I have several files password protected so users can not get into those. However I suspect a co-owner getting nosy and poking around on my machine.

Hopefully this has helped explain my concern. I have delicate files on my machine that this other person has admitted getting into and reading. I don't want them doing that again so I'd like to protect my machine when I am not here. This person being an owner has access to my office as well with keys so locking the door isn't going to do it.

I want to set it up with a password so that if the machine is off, they can not get into it even if they can turn it on.

Thanks

"Shenan Stanley" <newshelper@xxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:uglYtBi0IHA.4772@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Kat wrote:

I have XP Home on my PC at work. I need to protect my computer so NO ONE else can get on to it. I know someone has been coming into the office after hours and on weekends and reading my emails and looking at files. Personal emails have been read and then marked unread but when I click them typically the person sending has "send a receipt" when opening emails and on Mondays I'm not getting that message if I reply to an email and the sender again replies then I do get that. Also when looking at properties on files it will say

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when it was last accessed and it will be a time I was not at work.
So...

How do I make my computer secure?

Is using windows logon with a password secure enough so no one else can get on my pc?

Is there a better way to protect my machine?

If someone has unrestricted physical access to your computer and time – they can access everything on it. The only 'practical' exception may be encrypted files/folders – as they *may* take years to get into using means most would have access to. Beyond that...

I think you may be suspecting something that is not happening. You seem to concentrate around email specifically – which to me implies that the security breach may have nothing to do with the local computer. Email goes through servers – and depending on what type of server your company uses – someone could easily get access to your email account from anywhere given the right resources and ingenuity. As for the file 'access' stamps – are these locally stored files or are they stored on a remote server share?

You can 'somewhat' secure the system from most. There is ways around everything, however. New lock – custodial staff likely can still get in – as well as other people. New password(s)? The IT Staff likely still has full access to your computer remotely and your email without even knowing your password.

Of course – if this is *not* your computer and is your company's computer and the IT staff is not involved in fixing this with you – some of this may be against policy and get you in trouble...

1) Lock your office. The first rule of computing security measures is physical security. Without physical security – just about everything else can be overcome. If you think your current lock will not stop them – ask to have the lock changed.

2) Change all your passwords. I recommend passwords that are 15 characters or longer. Hopefully you don't have any limitations in length (other than 'has to be at least x characters...') Something you can remember – but not obvious. Making up a phrase and then abbreviating/putting in numbers and symbols is a good method. Like.. "Stop hacking into my computer!" could turn into "5topH4ckingInt0MyC0mp!"...

3) You could set a BIOS password and change the boot method so that it boots only from the hard disk drive (no other methods.) How to get into your BIOS and such would differ per machine – but most tell you when powering on the first time what key(s) to press to get into the BIOS/System Setup and once there – setting a password to boot the computer and/or change BIOS settings should be easy enough to find. If you set it

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so that it won't even start to boot without the password – this is actually your best protection (in your case) as the 'casual' hacker will not likely be able to get past this and the better hacker would – but covering their tracks would be almost impossible – you'd *know* someone came in and did something. Some others might just take the drive out and boot in a similar/exact other machine – then put it back when done – but they'd have to REALLY want whatever you have on that machine. ;-)

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Shenan Stanley
MS-MVP

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How To Ask Questions The Smart Way
<http://www.catb.org/~esr/faqs/smart-questions.html>