

NT-Bugtraq: SUS changes – the word from Microsoft as posted into the SUS newsgroup...

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From: Susan Bradley, CPA aka Ebitz – SBS Rocks [MVP] (*sbradcpa_at_PACBELL.NET*)

Date: 09/18/03

Date: Thu, 18 Sep 2003 10:29:11 -0700

To: NTBUGTRAQ@LISTSERV.NTBUGTRAQ.COM

>From a posting in the SUS newsgroup:

About 9 hours ago we did indeed release service packs for Windows 2000 SP4 and Windows XP SP1 as new content through SUS. To address one of your concerns, we could have done a better job of advertising this coming change, and if something similar happens in the future (not likely) we'll try to do a better job at communicating *prior* to the change. Let me try to address some of the other issues or concerns that you've raised.

1) Lack of notification about this change.

This change has been discussed as "coming" quite a few times in this newsgroup, as well as a couple of 3rd party community sites, but we did not specify a date for the change. Part of the reason behind that was because of creating expectations and not meeting them. This change was going to occur last week, but was put on hold at the last minute because of the pending release of MS03-039, which is such a critical patch that we did not want to distract from its importance by releasing service packs on the same day.

We also have a disadvantage about notifying users. We have never required registration to download or use SUS. I personally wish we had a list of all SUS users so we could send email directly, but we don't. Although the coming change has been mentioned in this newsgroup, in reality most people only visit the newsgroup when they have problems or questions...they likely wouldn't have seen those discussions (or any "official" notice) anyway.

The "SUS content notification change" alias is useful to find out when content changes, but we don't have the capability of easily modifying the text of the email since we don't directly control the emailer and it gets generated automatically. Again, if we had a list of registered users we could have bypassed the emailer and done notification more directly.

2) Can this new feature be turned off?

Unfortunately, no. Delivering service packs is essentially the same as delivering any other critical update or security update. The only way that

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we could possibly provide a method to turn it off would be to produce two separate versions of SUS: one that downloads service packs and one that doesn't. Doing so would be time-consuming and would distract the product team from working on the next full version of SUS.

The reason that this feature was turned on to begin with is because every customer that we have talked to, either in person, conferences, on the phone or through email, has expressed extreme wishes to see service packs delivered through SUS. A year ago there was a completely different version of SUS in beta that would provide service packs, but in order to get it you would have to have an SA (Software Assurance) license, which is not free. The overwhelming feedback that we got was that service packs should be part of the "normal" SUS. In all the discussions and feedback that we've had, including here in the newsgroup after it was stated that service packs would be available by the end of September, we haven't had one person complain or say they didn't want service packs (at least as far as I know.)

3) Size of download

Yes, downloading the service packs won't be fast, especially on slow connections. It will be about as painful as the initial setup and synchronization of a SUS server, but it will only happen once...at least until the next service pack is released, and that is still several months away. This is going to be more painful for customers on slower connections, but I don't know how we can easily alleviate that, at least in this version of SUS. The next version will allow you to specify *exactly* what content you want, and only download that content so you don't get content you don't need or never intend to approve, but the current version can't be modified to do that. Again, service packs have been such a high-volume request that we feel that the majority of our customers are willing to put up with the pain of the download once every few months.

4) About silently changing features without proper notification

I completely understand your point, and I do agree that we probably could have made better efforts. If anything like this happens again (again, not likely) I'll definitely keep this request in mind. Most of my comments about #1 are still applicable though. We unfortunately don't have an easy way of notifying our users in cases like this when we need to. :o(

Final note: Jose does work for MS, and has taken over responsibilities for answering newsgroup posts. I haven't been very active in the newsgroups for several months because of that. I'm going to try to start diverting some of my time to pay a little more attention to the newsgroups (I've been telling myself that for several weeks though) so that I can assist Jose and perhaps provide additional help. I accept responsibility for not posting information on these changes to the newsgroup earlier today, at least to provide confirmation that the change was intended. I should have done that.

–don

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Don Cottam
Microsoft Corporation
Software Update Services

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doncoATmicrosoftDOTcom

(I prefer to communicate through the newsgroup, so please do not email me unless necessary. Thx!)

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