

Active@ Password Changer

User Guide

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Contents

- Overview 4
- Program Start and Search Options..... 5
- SAM Selection 6
- Local User Account Selection..... 7
- Change Account's Password and Attributes 7
- Technical Questions..... 9
- Glossary of Terms..... 11

Overview

Active@ Password Changer Professional is a solution designed for resetting local user password and account attributes on Windows NT / 2000 / XP / 2003 / 2008 and Windows Vista systems in case of Administrator's password is forgotten, lost or user account has been blocked, disabled or locked out. You do not need to re-install and re-configure operating system in this case. With Active@ Password Changer you can log in as a particular user with an empty password.

Active@ Password Changer Professional also provides the ability to manage with days and times of the week that the user account is permitted to log on to the computer, which is useful for preventing the logging on for account you choose (or remove that kind of prohibition). For example, you can define in what hours your child can logon to the computer. This software has simple wizard-like user interface, supports multiple hard disk drives, is able to detect several SAM databases (in case if multiple OS were installed on one volume) and pick up the right one before starting recovery process. List of local users is displayed; you should choose the one to reset password or parameters. It can reset User is Disabled flag, Account is locked out flag, User must change password flag and sets Password never expires to avoid possible user blocking after password has been reset.

Demo version allows you to detect proper SAM database, view the user list and particular user attributes.

Commercial version actually resets passwords and changes attributes. FAT16 / FAT32 / NTFS / NTFS5 file systems are supported. Windows NT / 2000 / XP / 2003 / 2008 and Windows VISTA operating systems are supported for password recovery, new 64-bit MS Windows operational systems are supported as well.

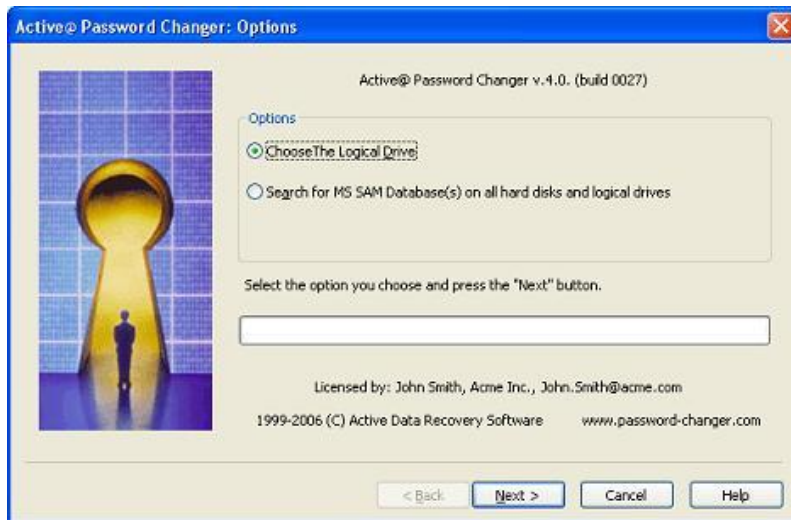
Program Start and Search Options

Start Active@ Password Changer:

- from the menu
- from the command line: go to the directory where software is located and type:

PasswordChanger.exe

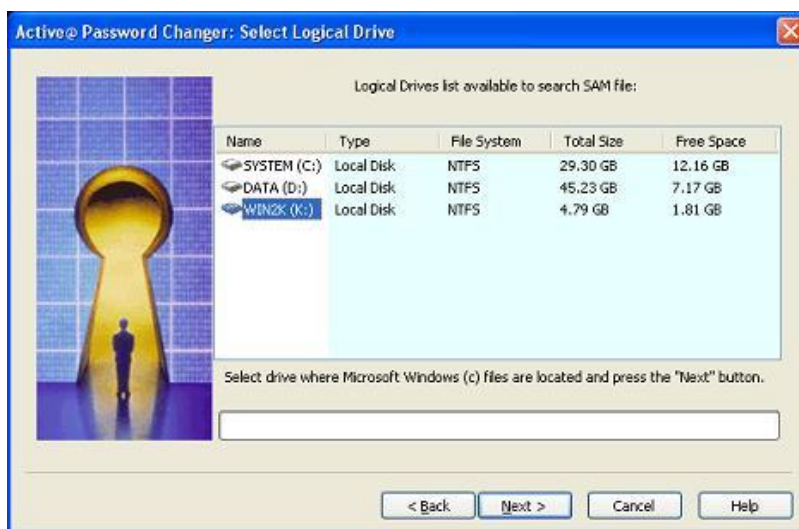
Program starts and you will see the following options:



You can either choose a particular logical drive to search SAM database on, or choose to search on all hard disks and logical drives.

Click Next to go to the next step.

If you choose the first option, you need to specify the drive to search SAM database on:

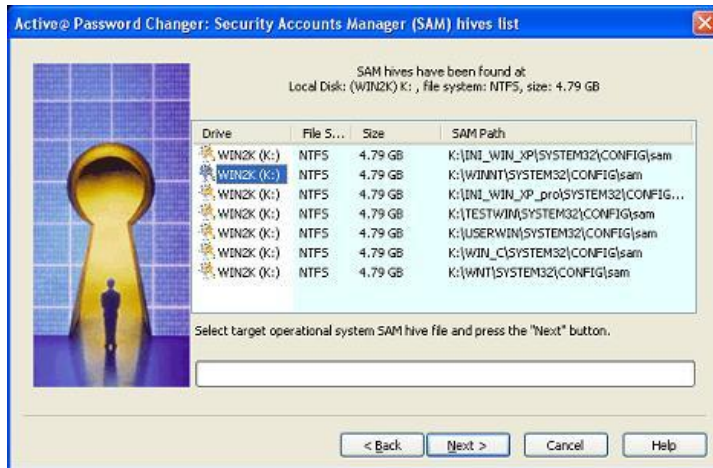


Choose a drive and click Next to go to the next step.

SAM Selection

SAM (Security Access Manager) - a database where information about local users, their rights and passwords is stored.

If several SAM databases found - you need to choose a proper SAM database to reset proper account password and attributes. Normally SAM is located on a drive where operating system is installed in the folder :\\WINDOWS\\SYSTEM32\\CONFIG.



Choose a proper SAM database and click Next to go to the next step.

Note

Please do NOT try to change account attributes for the operating system currently running (which SAM is located on the same drive from where the Windows is started). It is not possible, see the note below. To change account attributes and reset the password you either need to boot from bootable CD containing Windows PE, or attach another HDD having Windows installed and boot from there.

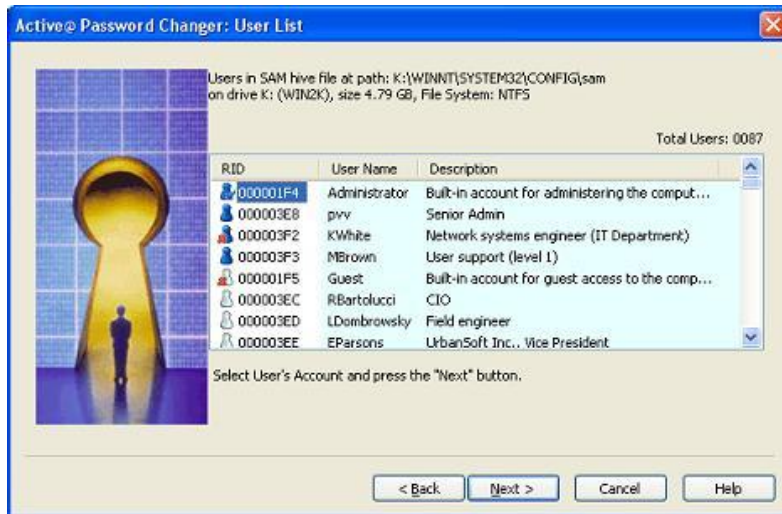
Important

As long as you need to change system account attributes, drive where SAM is found must be locked exclusively before changing. Exclusive lock means that no one (including Windows) except Active@ Password Changer has full access to the account. This also means that if you try to change local account attributes for the system currently running, you will NOT be granted exclusive access to the drive and will not be able to reset account attributes. The following message might appear:



Local User Account Selection

After you've chosen SAM database you will see the list of local user accounts with descriptions:



Choose a Local User Account to reset password and attributes for and click Next to go to the next step.

Note

Primary Administrator's account (even if renamed) is always placed on the first place.

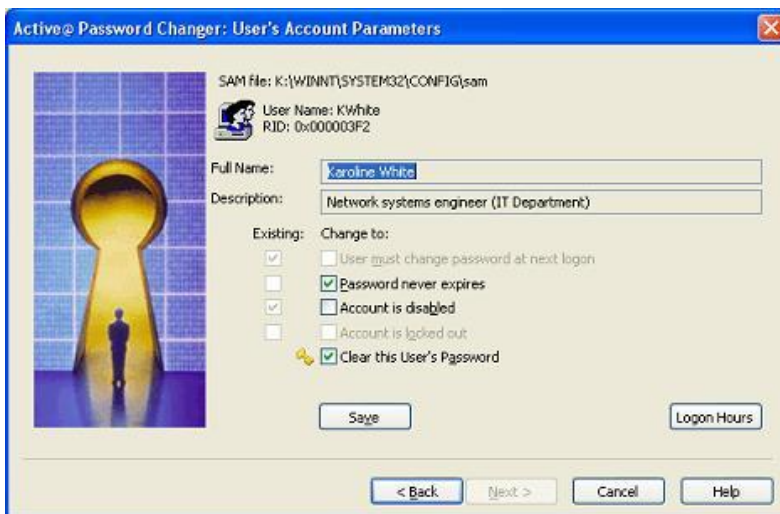
Other Administrator accounts are marked with a blue icon.

Non-Administrator accounts (Users, Power Users, Guests, etc...) are marked with a white icon.

Disabled/Locked accounts are marked with a red cross.

Change Account's Password and Attributes

After you've chosen the Local User Account you will see account description and attributes:



At the left column you can see the account's current existing attributes.

At the right column you can set new values for these attributes. Default values are acceptable for most cases and guarantee the logon to the system without password.

To reset Account's password - make sure that Clear this User's Password option is selected.

Click Save to store changes back to the SAM database. You'll see the successful completion:

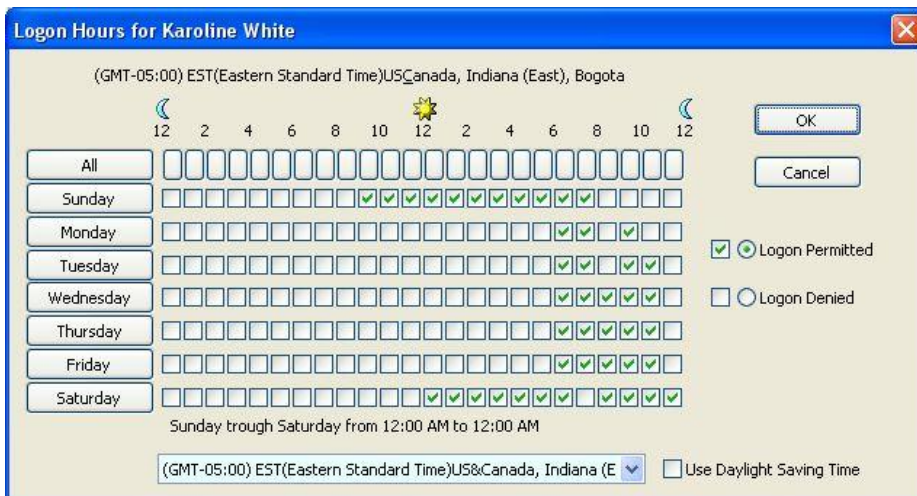


Click OK to close confirmation message and to go back to change account attributes for another user.

Click Cancel to finish the Wizard and exit the program.

Note

If for the particular account there is a Logon Hours limitation exists - you'll see the Logon Hours button and would be able to change it:



Specify logon hours, click OK to close the dialog and Save account's attributes.

Technical Questions

I've reset local Administrator's password, but after re-boot on Welcome Screen I do not see user Administrator, just list of regular users. I have Windows XP. How can I log in as Administrator?

Operating System Windows XP (Home and Professional Editions) when booting suggests only names of regular users on Welcome Screen by default. Administrator's account is hidden. Press key combination Ctrl+Alt+Del two times to display Login Dialog Window and you will be able to type both user name and password. Type Administrator and use empty password.

I'm unable to find user Administrator in the list of the users after selection of proper SAM database in Active@ Password Changer. Where it is?

Most likely local account Administrator has been renamed due to security reasons. Active@ Password Changer always displays built-in Administrator's account on top (even it was renamed). Write down this account name to be able to type it in later on, after its password has been reset.

Will the User Profile be saved, after user's password has been reset?

User Profile depends on User Name and Security ID (SID) so it can not be spoiled by changing the user's password.

Will the file restrictions be saved, after user's password has been reset?

File and folder security settings are based on User Security ID (SID) that is produced during user account creation and does not depend on user password. You can change your password as often as you wish without files/folders security settings changes.

Do you have a Windows 98 version of Password Changer? Can Password Changer reset password in Windows 9x operating systems?

You do not need any software to remove local user passwords in Windows 95(98) operating system(s). Just find and delete the USERNAME.PWL file (where USERNAME is the name of a user account) and the user will have an empty password.

Can Password Changer help me in meeting the complexity requirements (such as digits, small and capital letters, and length of password) set by the PC's Local Security policy?

Local Security Account Policy affects the new passwords setting process in Windows environment, but not existing passwords, even absolutely empty ones. So you can reset the password for this account with Active@ Password Changer then logon with this user account name with the empty password.

I have erased the password using Active@ Password Changer on a system where the administrator is no longer with the company. The system is a NON ENGLISH (localized) version of Windows 2000. The Password Changer gave a message saying that the password was changed, but system is still asking me to type the password ("Wrong username or password").

It is possible that the Administrator account in your localized version is renamed (for example Administrateur in

French version), or has national (non English) symbols. Try to start Active@ Password Changer and find out the real username for Administrator account. It has to be first in the user's list with RID = 000001f4. Write down this username and use it for login.

Glossary of Terms

boot record

- See boot sector.

boot sector

- The boot sector continues the process of loading the operating system into computer memory. It can be either the MBR (see MBR, below) or the partition boot sector (see partition boot sector, below).

cluster

- A group of disk sectors that contain file data. It is the smallest allocation unit for storing a file. For example, if the file size is 100 bytes and the cluster size is 4096 bytes, the file system reserves one cluster, or 4096 bytes for file data.

FAT

- File Allocation Table. An area that contains the records of every other file data and directory in a FAT-formatted hard disk drive. The operating system needs this information to access the files and define the data cluster's chain. There are FAT32, FAT16 and FAT versions.

HDD

- Hard disk drive.

logical drive

- A partition is a logical drive because it does not affect the physical hard disk other than the defined space that it occupies, yet it behaves like a separate disk drive.

MBR

- The Master Boot Record (MBR) is a small program that is executed when the computer is first turned on. Typically, the MBR can be found on the first sector of a disk. The MBR first reads the disk's partition table to determine which partition is used to load the operating system. The MBR then transfers control to this partition's "boot sector" to continue the process. Loading the operating system is called "booting" the computer.

MFT

- Master File Table. A file that contains the records of every other file and directory in an NTFS-formatted hard disk drive. The operating system needs this information to access the files.

NTFS

- NT File System. NTFS was created to provide a more reliable operating system, compared to the FAT file system.

partition

- A section of memory or hard disk isolated for a specific purpose. Each partition can behave like a separate disk drive.

partition boot sector

- On NTFS or FAT file systems, the partition boot sector is a small program that is executed when the operating system tries to access a particular partition. On personal computers, the Master Boot Record uses the partition boot sector on the system partition to determine file system type, cluster size, etc. and to load the operating system kernel files. Partition boot sector is the first sector of the partition.

partition status

- SuperScan gives each partition a rating depending on how likely it is to recover data on the partition. A status rating of 1 is very bad. A status rating of 8 is excellent.

physical device

- A piece of hardware that is attached to your computer by screws or wires. A hard disk drive is a physical device. It is also referred to as a physical drive.

root area (and root folder)

- An object that can contain a group of files in a FAT file system. In other words, a directory or folder. The root folder is the top-level folder that has no parent and can have children. A logical drive can have only one root folder. Its name is usually '.' (dot).

sector

- The smallest unit that can be accessed on a disk. Tracks are concentric circles around the disk and the sectors are segments within each circle.

volume

- A fixed amount of storage on a hard disk. A physical device may contain a number of volumes. It is also possible for a single volume to span a number of physical devices.