

## Introduction to Group Policy

The Group Policy management solution in Microsoft® Windows Server™ allows administrators to define configurations for both servers and user machines. Local policy settings can be applied to all machines, and for those that are part of a domain, an administrator can use Group Policy to set policies that apply across a given site, domain, or range of organizational units (OUs) in the Active Directory® directory service.

Support for Group Policy is available on machines running Microsoft Windows 2000 Server, Microsoft Windows 2000 Professional, Microsoft Windows® XP Professional, and Windows Server 2003.

Through this Active Directory infrastructure and Group Policy, administrators can take advantage of policy-based management to do the following:

- Enable one-to-many management of users and computers throughout the enterprise.
- Automate enforcement of IT policies.
- Simplify administrative tasks, such as system updates and application installations.
- Consistently implement security settings across the enterprise.
- Efficiently implement standard computing environments for groups of users.

Group Policy can be used to define user-related policies as well as security, networking, and other policies applied at the machine level. In addition, Group Policy enables management of domain controllers and member servers as well as desktop user machines. The new Group Policy Management Console (GPMC) provides a unified, graphical user interface for deploying and managing Group Policy implementations and enables script-based management of Group Policy operations. In addition, Windows Server 2003 adds even greater administrative control to Group Policy, including more than 200 new policy settings for the operating system. Additionally, support for Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) filters provides a greater degree of control over how Group Policy is applied to users and computers.

Group Policy and Active Directory are key components of the IntelliMirror® management technologies. Through these technologies, IT administrators can implement standard computing environments for groups of users and computers.