ExtremeZ-IP®
Support for DFS
Frequently Asked Questions

Acronis®

ExtremeZ-IP brings native Microsoft DFS support to Mac OS X 10.4 through OS X 10.7, a key request of many organizations that are deploying Macs in the enterprise. ExtremeZ-IP supports DFS Namespaces by providing the full virtual DFS Namespace access to Mac clients in a unified, intuitive manner.
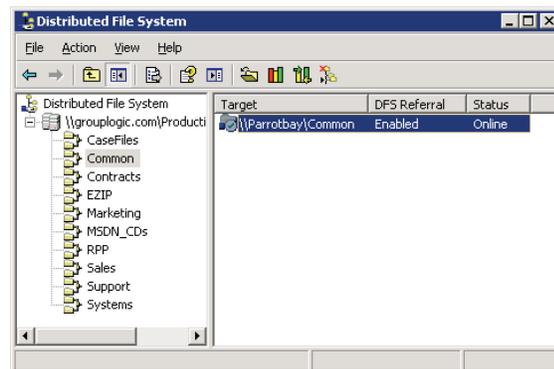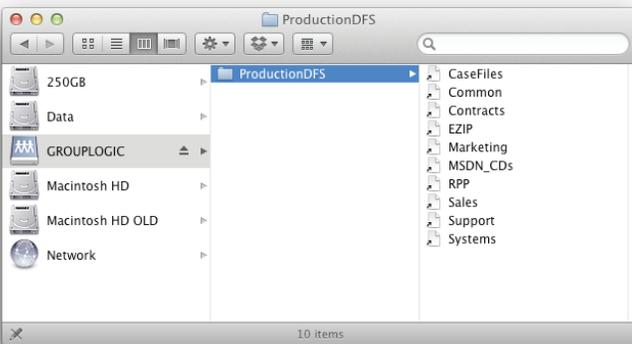
How does ExtremeZ-IP support DFS?

There are three options for browsing the DFS namespace on the Mac. The first leverages the ExtremeZ-IP Zidget Dashboard Widget or a web page to allow the user to browse and mount the DFS target shares.

The second option is a Finder-integrated browsing experience. ExtremeZ-IP creates a new share which emulates one or more DFS namespaces. This share contains a dynamically generated file which is used by the Mac OS X autofs system facilities to automatically mount DFS volumes. The file is dynamic in that the share referrals are unique for each client and for the current configuration and status of DFS. Mac clients leverage these referrals through the use of symbolic links on the DFS volume that represent potential DFS targets.

Finally, ExtremeZ-IP can integrate into the logon process to support DFS Home Directories.*

What is the end-user experience when using Finder-integrated DFS?

When a Mac user mounts the DFS root volume, they will see the same DFS hierarchy as their Windows users, and navigating into a DFS target will refer them to the appropriate target file share. From the user's perspective it will appear as if the remote file share is part of the single ExtremeZ-IP DFS root volume.

What is the end-user experience when using the Zidget for DFS Browsing?

The Zidget can be accessed as a Dashboard Widget or directly from a web browser. The user can navigate the DFS namespace, select their target and ExtremeZ-IP handles the target selection and site costing automatically to mount the share.

Which DFS Browsing option should I use?

It depends on your workflow and end users. The Zidget-based approach is the most compatible option, with support for Mac OS X 10.4 and later, does not require Macs to be bound to Active Directory, and supports searching on the mounted file share.

The Finder-integrated DFS browsing option provides a more Windows-like browsing experience, but requires 10.5 or later, Macs bound to Active Directory, and search is not available on file shares that are mounted through DFS.

Do I have to install any software on the Mac?

For Zidget browsing, a small helper application and optionally the Zidget Dashboard Widget must be installed. For Finder-integrated DFS browsing, a single line change is required to a standard configuration file (/etc/auto_master). For DFS Home Directory support, a small client-side script is installed. All of these changes can be pushed out using Apple Remote Desktop or client management software such as Casper or LANrev.

Does ExtremeZ-IP support DFS Home Directories?

Yes, DFS home directories are supported for both the native Active Directory plug-in as well as 3rd party solutions such as Centrify's DirectControl. An optional small client side script can be used to dynamically recognize changes to the DFS structure and load new configuration settings for DFS before the user logs in.*

Do I need to upgrade to ExtremeZ-IP on all DFS target servers?

No, ExtremeZ-IP DFS support can redirect to target servers running earlier versions of ExtremeZ-IP. However, if you are using ExtremeZ-IP 5.x or earlier as a target of Finder-integrated DFS browsing, those servers need to be configured to enable guest access, due to the way autofs on Mac OS X works. ExtremeZ-IP 6.0 and later works around this limitation, so guest access does not need to be enabled.

Can ExtremeZ-IP redirect to SMB file share targets?

Yes, ExtremeZ-IP DFS support can be configured to redirect to file share targets over the SMB protocol for those servers that are not running an AFP service. However, we recommend using AFP on all of your target servers to maximize performance and compatibility.

Does ExtremeZ-IP support site costing?

Yes, ExtremeZ-IP's DFS support uses Active Directory's site costing algorithms to refer clients to the target that is most appropriate.

Does ExtremeZ-IP support access-based enumerations of the DFS root?

Not at this time. The user will see all targets in the DFS root, but will not be able to navigate successfully to those targets that they do not have access to. This is because ExtremeZ-IP cannot easily determine the logged in users permissions on that remote share.

Does ExtremeZ-IP support DFS replication?

Yes, ExtremeZ-IP has always supported DFS replication. DFS replication properly replicates the special Mac alternative data streams such as resource forks, Finder information and extended metadata.

What are the supported platforms for the ExtremeZ-IP DFS server?

Windows 2003 Server or later, including Windows 2008 and R2 versions. ExtremeZ-IP DFS Server can also run on Microsoft Failover Clusters.

What are the licensing requirements for ExtremeZ-IP with DFS?

ExtremeZ-IP DFS Virtual Root support is included in the ExtremeZ-IP Unlimited, Cluster, and Enterprise License Program (ELP) versions.

DFS support can also be added to the 10, 25, 50, and 100-client versions of ExtremeZ-IP by purchasing the DFSConnect add-on from the Acronis Logic Online Store.

Any license of ExtremeZ-IP can be a DFS target, however. We now offer an Enteprise License Program for large scale deployments.

What are the system requirements for DFS support?

Zidget-based browsing is available for Mac OS X 10.4 and later, and the Macs do not need to be bound to Active Directory.

Finder-integrated DFS browsing and DFS Home Directory support is only available for Mac OS X 10.5 and later*, and Mac clients must be bound to Active Directory. Please note that searching the file share volumes is not available with Finder-integrated DFS browsing.

* DFS-based home directories are not yet supported for Mac OS X 10.7 Lion clients. Support for DFS-based home directories will require a follow-up release of ExtremeZ-IP and/or Mac OS 10.7.

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