

se with the Prof



I talked to the prof about “early birds.” He couldn’t see how it made sense to give away parking at a lower rate before you knew how many cars were going to be in the garage for that day. I explained that you do it based on history.

If you know you are going to have 100 spaces open at all times in your garage no matter what you do, you might as well fill them. It costs little if anything to park those 100 cars, and any income generated is good. So you set an “early bird” rate to draw in an extra 100 cars at a low fee, but you fill your garage and collect that extra amount each day. You adjust the early bird rate based on how many customers you need.

We then talked about daily maximums. I explained that when the daily maximum kicked in was important, but it also could be misleading.

For instance, if the rates are \$1 a half hour, maximum \$8, you could see that the maximum hit at three hours and 31 minutes. This could be a problem. What if the majority of people in your garage stayed five hours? You were leaving \$2 for each car sitting on the table.

So far so good. But there is a problem. What if a large number of people in the lot were staying six or seven hours? That meant that your ability to park numerous cars in the same spaces was being hampered. Your lot was full, but your income was suffering.

To handle this problem, you need to set your rate based on how long the average car is in your lot. If you are supporting a doctor’s office, that might be an hour and a half; if it’s a movie theater, it might be three hours. You have to set your rate to ensure that the majority of parkers pay for the entire time they are there and that they don’t hit the daily maximum until just about the time they leave.

Quantum physics? No, but it’s complicated. It means to properly rate a garage, you have to know just how long the average length of stay is. And it could change week day to weekend. You must take each ticket over a period of a month or so and log them to see just how much time was spent in the garage by each car. Then you can know where to set the rates and when to set the daily maximum.

Shoup opined that he could see no reason for setting a daily maximum. I noted that there was a good reason. It’s nice to let parkers know what their maximum liability is when they come into the lot. Why not – that saves a lot of discussion when they leave.

And we haven’t even talked about increments, grace periods, daily vs. monthly rates, and what happens if a parker stays past a certain time of day: Does the rate start over? Are they surcharged?

The good professor seemed eager to go on, but it was time for my walk, so we toured his beautiful campus, saw the library and dorms where my master toiled all those many years ago, and left the next lesson for another day.

Woof!!

However, there is no real “term” for people working in the parking industry. The term “Parking Professional” just doesn’t cut it. It seems to Shoup that that’s not descriptive of what someone in the parking industry does. It’s like saying a “plumbing professional” or “legal professional” or “educational professional.” It describes the industry, he said, but not the underlying activity.

Shoup didn’t have an alternative, but he caused me to start thinking. He was right. Many set out to become doctors, lawyers, merchants and even chefs, but few sat out to become ... and there it stops. Become what? Parking Manager, Regional Manager, Parking Auditor, Parking Cashier?

How does one set up an educational program that results in one becoming a “parking something.” How does one set it up, particularly when those in the industry are so parochial about sharing their knowledge and allowing it to be codified and provided to those who want to learn?

I was at a regional parking association meeting once and asked why so few parking operator types were there. I was told that the operators didn’t want their staffs meeting with others, because that would expose them to potential poaching. They might lose good people to their competition. But I digress.

The question that started this column is a good one. Dr. Shoup couldn’t just “google” parking rates and get backup documentation as to how rates are set. I told him that my background came from nearly four decades of experience. Trial and error. Many rates are set based on “feel.”

If you think about it, most charges are set – at least the base price – on the cost of providing the good or service. In parking, that has little to do with it. The goal is to fill the garage with the greatest number of high-paying parkers as possible.

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The Brit Takes on the

BY PETER GUEST

In a recent *Parking Today* blog entry, JVH criticized UK authorities for ticketing vehicles that were loading and unloading. “This is patently absurd,” says our leader, and issuing a citation because the law says you can’t park there is “horsefeathers.” Well, no, John, it’s not.

Most of our towns and cities pre-date the car; buildings don’t have loading bays; and our street pattern was old when the Romans got here. Result: In many places a narrow street has to be shared by pedestrians, buses, cyclists, moving traffic and people making deliveries.

It doesn’t all fit in, and so we to share the space, usually by time-based restrictions. Parking may be banned all day (use the car park) and loading is banned during the peak to maximize traffic flow. Loading is allowed in the middle of the day, but the length of time is limited so that a van isn’t left all day by a shopkeeper too lazy to walk a few yards. Believe it or not this happens.

Yes, we do have a problem, and that is just how to tell when someone’s loading the truck. Taking pallets off the tailgate is easy, but what about the courier? The guy takes a small high-value item and locks the vehicle while he goes up to the 10th floor to try to get a signature.

When he comes back 20 minutes later, he has a ticket. The ticket is void if he challenges it, of course, but there is no way the warden can tell what’s happening at the time. He could assume that any van is loading, but on one visit in London, a warden got 30 BT (telephone service) vans in one hit. This wasn’t at a major failure of the phone network; it was at a coffee shop.

I was recently invited to speak at the Irish Parking Association’s annual conference in Dublin. This is a one-day event with a small exhibition. I was scheduled to talk over lunch about my work in Abu Dhabi. That was the plan, but the dining room was not set up for a speech, so I was added to the conference’s afternoon session.

It’s interesting to see how another country does things, and I couldn’t help but think things would be a lot easier in Ireland without the politicians.

The first speaker was Owen Keegan, who used to be Director of Traffic in Dublin, where he introduced effective street enforce-



ment and helped to advance LUAS, their new light-rail system. He now works at Dun Laoghaire a suburb of Dublin just down the coast.

The Irish legal system has the same roots as the British, with one important difference. Their law has not really kept up with the rapid motorization of the country, and so the system of dealing with offenders is no longer up to the job.

The city employs wardens and they write tickets, but – and it’s a big but – if the ticket is not paid voluntarily, the city has to take the driver to court. The city can prosecute only a few tickets each month, after completing a nine-step process that includes serving of solicitor’s letters and serving a summons on the driver. As a result, there is a steadily growing list of persistent offenders, with some drivers now owing more than 100 unpaid tickets.

The obvious solution is to clamp, but after a campaign orchestrated by the local business association, the Councillors (those pesky politicians) kicked this idea out. It’s strange that the local traders feel it is more important to protect a few hundred persistent law breakers rather than protect the valuable parking spaces for their law-abiding customers. Keegan is rather certain that the Councillors will eventually see the light, but until then, the

bad guys will continue to ignore the rules.

Another problem in Ireland that they share with the UK is the use and abuse of disabled parking facilities. In the UK, badges are issued by the local council using an agreed set of criteria, and each badge has an expiry date and photo of the user to stop abuse. The disabled driver gets a windscreen sticker and can park in specially designed and reserved spaces.

In Ireland, permits are issued by local doctors using their own judgment. The permits last forever, so too many badges are issued and too many are misused. The solution of issuing the permits centrally and putting a sell-by date on them seems a step too far for the Irish legislators, and so badges will continue to be handed down as a treasured family heirloom and widely abused.

The Irish economy is booming, and Dublin Airport has seen phenomenal growth in traffic, with demand increasing from 14 million to 23 million passengers since 2000. The airport is now over capacity, and problems will continue until a second terminal opens in 2010, which will double capacity to 30 million.

The airport has about 29,000 public parking spaces, of which

Editor – And the Irish

2,600 are short stay at the terminal and a little over 26,000 are longer stay for fliers. To maximize use of the spaces, the airport has just implemented a new control system, provided by Designa, that has improved the efficiency and quality of the parking service by measures such as providing a single access point to serve all the short-stay terminal car parks; replacing pay-at-exit by pay-on-foot; improving taxi queue management; and encouraging better use of the more remote car parks.

The guys at Dublin Airport Authority and Designa have done a great job in squeezing every last drop of capacity out of what they have. However, for the future, those little leprechauns – “the planners” – decided to set aside the real world in favor of some theoretical la la land.

The airport has no rail links and is doubling in size in 2010. The planners have insisted that public parking can increase by only about 10%. Further staff parking is not allowed to increase at all, although there will be twice as many workers after 2010. I guess there will be a lot of people walking to work in 2010.

On one single visit in London, a warden got 30 BT (telephone service) vans in one hit.

Finally, at the British Parking Association, we have just had our annual President’s dinner in the sumptuous surroundings of Draper’s Hall in the London. This is a glitzy black-tie affair in one of the ancient City Livery company buildings. The City Livery companies are the successors of the medieval trade guilds, where 400 years ago one would have had to be a member of the drapers company to sell cloth within the city of London.

My main memory from my year as BPA President was the requirement to shake hands with

all 210 guests and then make a speech in front of some of the most senior people in the business.

See PT’s Parking Blog at www.parkingtoday.com for my response to Peter’s challenge. JVH

Peter Guest is PT’s Correspondent for Europe and the Middle East. He can be reached at peterguestparking@hotmail.co.uk.

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JINGLE HELLS

Parking During the Holidays Was No Picnic

BY MELISSA BEAN STERZICK

Ah, the holiday season, a time of peace and generosity, parties and pies, traditions and family gatherings. There are so many things to love about this time of year. Then again, there are so many things to hate. Squabbling with in-laws, taming greedy children, cooking dinner for 30 people while your spouse watches football, standing in line at the post office, and the very worst of it all – trying to find parking at the mall.

If all you had to do was find the perfect gift for everybody on your list that would be challenging enough. But you have to buy the gifts, send the cards, decorate the house, attend functions (enjoyable or not) for work, church, school and relatives, and continue with the everyday aspects of life at the same time: jobs, bills, laundry, greedy children...



Parking at the mall anytime after Thanksgiving is like driving your car into a Venus fly trap. It's a slow, agonizing, suffocating death. You are completely aware of what is happening to you the entire time and you know there is no escape. It's not an experience that can be compared to any fair competition. Nobody wins during the holidays, not even the most aggressive parker. Twice as many cars as parking spots means everybody drives in circles for 30 minutes until they are lucky enough to stop behind a pair of glowing reverse lights. Following bag-laden shoppers around the lot or garage never works, if you can keep up with them, because often they are unloading not leaving. Heading for the back corner doesn't work either because even the least desirable spaces are in demand.

As an amateur parker, I do my best to avoid the mall after turkey day. I shop early, or buy gifts online. I'm not patient or cheerful enough to face the mall intentionally. Inevitably, however, I find myself making one desperate trip to the Gap or Barnes & Noble or The Sharper Image for that last gift that will make my loved one deliriously happy for at least 30 seconds. I drive over to the mall thinking I only need one thing so I will just zip in and out and how long could it really take? As I sink into the quicksand I question my own intelligence with profanity and vehemence.

This year, before I found myself steaming mad and swearing at the wheel of my car in a bubbled over parking garage, I made a few resolutions that eased my angst.

No weekends. I did not go near any shopping mall, shopping district, shopping center or shopping promenade on a

It's a slow, agonizing, suffocating death.

Saturday or Sunday between December 1 and January 1. No exceptions. If I had to shop anywhere with a food court I did it during the week, as early in the day as possible.

Try the bus. I know they are out there. I know they go right to the mall and possibly don't go anywhere else. It only cost \$1. It took a little longer than I wanted, but it was much less stressful.

Carpool. Even smothering Venus fly trap deaths are easier to take when you are with a friend. When I had to dive into the quagmire, I invited a few friends, made the person with the smallest car drive and called it an expedition. We wore matching shirts. We synchronized our watches and cell phones. Everyone shopped, everyone ate lunch, no one got left behind.

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Parking During the Holidays Was No Picnic

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I considered hiring a chauffeur. Or better yet, asked one of those loved ones on my list to drive me as close as possible to my purchase destination (even if that's 2 blocks away) and slow down enough that I could jump out safely. I promised to return to that exact place in two hours precisely or walk home.

I actually used the valet. OK, this was the most difficult. I hate to valet park because I'd rather park my own car and give myself a \$5 tip. But there's no sense boiling my own blood when such a service is available.

Maybe we put too much pressure on ourselves during the holiday season. Maybe we've bought into the idea that consumption equals happiness. Too many parties, too many gifts, too much to eat – stuffed stockings, stuffed turkeys, stuffed bellies, stuffed parking lots – it's all part of the tradition. But, let's face it, the hustle and bustle is it what makes it the holiday season. And next year, I'm still sticking to my strategy.

Melissa Bean Sterzick is a writer, proofreader, mom and amateur parker in the Los Angeles area. She can be reached at Melissa@parkingtoday.com.

PT

Houston Amends Valet Parking Ordinance

To protect citizens and help rid neighborhoods of cluttered street parking, valet operators doing on-street business in Houston must submit a parking plan and other information to obtain a city permit under an amended ordinance that took effect Nov. 1.

The ordinance covers operation of all permanent valet stands within the city limits and those established for special events and other one-time uses. The ordinance is designed to improve the application process and increase enforceability. It also includes provisions to make the valet company owner directly responsible and citable for offenses committed by company attendants.

“Valet operators outside the central business district will be required to submit a formal application to be reviewed by various city departments,” said Joe Martin, chair of the Valet Parking Committee of the Public Parking Commission. “Operators must submit proof of insurance and occupational license, a parking plan detailing traffic flow, and proof of the vehicle storage location for valet customers.”

“We're a customer service-driven organization, and our No. 1 priority is to improve the safety, traffic management and awareness of parking within our city,” said Liliana Rambo, who heads the Houston's Parking Management division. “This new ordinance directly addresses concerns from citizens and area businesses. By requiring an approved parking plan in place, we hope to work toward the mayor's initiative to keep traffic on our streets running smoothly.”

DEATH BY PARKING THE PHANTOM

CHAPTER 6

Our Lives Become Complicated

By JVH



Paul Manning and his 16-year-old son were “staking out” a three-story parking garage that one of Paul Junior’s friends had said was “haunted.” They saw a light and what appeared to be an “apparition” walking along. Two bodies had been found at the garage where the “haunting” – which was really a garage repair – took place. The Mannings were hired to help find out what happened. Paul Junior had an idea: “You know, Dad, I’ve been thinking about all this. Maybe there’s a body buried in one of the floors and they are afraid the repair guys will find it. Someone who disappeared in August of 1962 when the concrete was wet.” Paul Senior said: “You may have something, Paulo. But killing the contractor wouldn’t stop the job. My guess is that something has already been found and contractors Segal and Straer found it. And they may have been trying to sell it. We better find out who else is involved in this project. They’re probably in danger, too.” When the Mannings interviewed the previous owner, Rick Johnson, he became testy, and as they were leaving, a woman outside his home clandestinely told them that “if certain people knew that the garage was being torn down or opened up, it could change what we know about much of the history in the ‘60s.” The only thing Paul Senior could remember happening in August of 1962 was the strange death of Marilyn Monroe.

So what else did happen in August of 1962? We went to the L.A. Times and gained access to its morgue. That’s what newspapers call their library. We checked the paper thoroughly. There was nothing, nada, zip, except the tragic death of the movie goddess.

Marilyn Monroe had been found by her housekeeper in her Brentwood home. The L.A. County coroner’s report showed no foul play. It reported she had overdosed on sedatives that had been prescribed to her. Her death was ruled a “probable suicide.” But the rumors swirled around the event.

She partied with the “Rat Pack,” and in those days, one of its stalwart members was Peter Lawford, President Kennedy’s brother-in-law. Monroe supposedly had had an affair with JFK.

Of course, the conspiracy nuts were coming out of the woodwork. Everyone from the FBI and CIA to aliens from outer space were supposed to have been involved in her death. As with most conspiracy theories, these were strongly denied and discounted by all involved.

But what if ...

Good detectives don’t speculate. They get facts, look for data, run timelines, and poke holes in other people’s stories. Speculating on the nearly 45-year-old death of a movie star was fruitless. We needed more information; we needed to talk to that woman at Rick Johnson’s home.

Paulo and I were pretty sure she was his wife. She was the right age, and she was there. A bit of research in the morgue and

we found that her name was Helen, and a picture in the society pages of The Times confirmed our theory. The problem was how were we going to get her to talk to us, and keep her husband out of it for now?

We looked back through the society pages and found that she was a member of the Riviera Tennis Club on Motor Avenue. Although the place was a bit ritzy for my blood, I had a friend who moved in those circles. He was CEO of a small finance company but had made a good living. I called him and he told me that a Clarence Jackson sat on the board and would help.

My friend paved the way, and I called Jackson, who was able to get Helen Johnson’s tennis schedule. She was slat-

ed for a lesson that afternoon.

Paulo and I dropped by the house and put on some “tennis” looking clothes and headed down Laurel Canyon to Sunset, across to La Cienega and then down to Pico. Motor ends at Pico, just at the Fox Studios. The area is ritzy. A perfect place for a tennis club.

We turned left on Motor, drove through the Rancho Park Golf Course, and were giving the car to the valet at the Riviera just as Mrs. Johnson was starting her lesson.

We sat in the bleachers and watched a bronze god of a tennis pro put her through her paces. In 30 minutes or so, she was finished and started to walk back to the clubhouse. Paulo walked up to her and asked her to join us. How could she turn down a cute 16-year-old in tennis togs? She looked puzzled at first, then when she recognized me, very concerned.

“Mrs. Johnson,” I said, “I’m Paul Manning, and this is my

The only thing that we found that happened in August of 1962 was the death of Marilyn Monroe.

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Death by Parking – The Phantom

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son, Paul. We need to follow up on our conversation this morning. You mentioned ‘certain people’ and ‘changing history.’ We need more to go on than that.”

She began to squirm and then looked around as if we were having a clandestine meeting in a back alley, not sitting in the bleachers at the Riviera Tennis Club.

“I really can’t talk to you. There’s just too much going on.” She started to stand up and I caught her arm.

“Look, Mrs. Johnson, we just need a hint. The only thing that we found that happened in August of 1962 was the death of Marilyn Monroe.”

Mrs. Johnson looked confused, then surprised, then started to laugh. “No, they didn’t bury Marilyn in the garage, if that’s what you mean. This has nothing to do with her. I would suggest you spend less time at the newspaper library and more time at the county Recorder’s Office.” With that she got up and strode away.

“County recorder’s office?” said Paulo. “What do they record?”

“Let’s get in the car. I’ll explain on the way.”

I told Paulo that the Recorder’s Office is where all the records are kept as to who owns what in real estate in the county. It also keeps records of marriages and divorces and all major business and financial transactions, and so on. In some cases, I told him, you can trace land ownership all the way back to the Land Grants given to court favorites by the king of Spain.

The king granted large tracts of land to his friends and allies, and when the U.S. took over California, it agreed by treaty that it would honor the grants. However, nothing is quite that simple. Congress changed the rules after the Gold Rush, and many grants were contested in court.

It was a real mess, I told Paulo, and just who owned what became blurry. Often the cost of litigation was more than the land was worth.

I was proud I had remembered what Miss Weaver had taught in my seventh-grade California History class. Paulo was impressed.

When we arrived at the Recorder’s Office in Norwalk, a small city southeast of downtown Los Angeles, we asked to see the history of the land where the garage was built.

It took a few minutes as the clerk found the microfilm and queued it up for us. There it was, plain as day, Johnson’s company had purchased the land from Caldwell Properties. It all seemed completely above board.

“Who is Caldwell,” Paulo asked.

We searched the Recorder’s databases, and after a lot of false leads, we found the owner of Caldwell Properties. It was a New Jersey-based partnership: “Palermo Ltd.”

We could have dug deeper, but I didn’t think it was necessary. Our lives had become much more complicated.

Helen Johnson’s husband had purchased the land where the garage stood – and where two people had been killed – from the mob.

To be continued ...

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Construction Strong Despite Sub-prime Lending Issues

Turner Construction Company announced that construction costs increased in the Fourth Quarter. According to the Turner Building Cost Index, the Fourth Quarter 2007 Index value is 876 which represents a 1.51 percent increase in construction costs over the Third Quarter 2007 and a 7.09 percent increase over the Fourth Quarter 2006 index. Turner has issued this quarterly forecast for more than 80 years.

According to Karl F. Almstead, the Turner vice president responsible for the Turner Building Cost Index, "Activity in the non-residential construction market remains strong in spite of the residential mortgage sub-prime issues and concerns over its impact on the credit markets. In many markets, the large volume of work has stretched the available labor and trade contractor resources driving construction cost increases. From the materials perspective, commodity prices have eased slightly over the past quarter, but global demand, especially from the emerging economies, continues to drive an upward trend in prices. Manufacturing and transportation cost increases, reflecting increased energy costs, have also added to the escalation of construction costs."

"The market remains strong and the factors that have influenced the almost double digit escalation of the past three years are still in the market. However, the market has eased from the hyper levels of activity to levels that are better supported by the industry resources." Approximately 90% of Turner's business is performed under contract arrangements where Turner provides extensive preconstruction planning services before the contract price is fixed and before construction starts. By providing high quality pre-construction phase services and utilizing alternative procurement strategies, Turner continues to effectively serve its clients and manage the market risks associated with cost escalation issues.

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“Envelope Technology” and of the “Never-Changing Pas

BY ODED VALIN

Sometimes when I look at envelopes, I understand technology. When I was a college student, I worked in the computer server room where we had a secret lock-box full of envelopes.

Every time I had to upgrade a database or create a new user, I remember looking for the correct envelope (will it be this yellow one or this blue one?). After I found it, I went happily to the designated server.

You can imagine how disappointed I was when I went to the Windows server or to the Unix server, typed the password stored in the envelope, and got “Username and password do not match” or “The sys-

tem could not log you on. Make sure your user name and domain are correct.”

Imagine yourself on a cold night, all you want to do is finish this shift and you can't. Just because someone forgot to update the password in the envelope!

In another company where I worked, we didn't have envelopes. However, any employee who had worked there during the previous four to five years could come whenever he wanted (and I mean any year that he wanted ...) and type the “standard” password – Password? The name of the company? Top secret? Admin? Q1w2e3? And like magic, they were in with the most powerful permissions.

Standard passwords become widely known to every worker, vendor and technician who visits your company; I assume you wouldn't let this happen in your own

home, would you?

Well, in a world where we don't have extra time and everything is automatic, why should we waste time managing administrative passwords manually?

What should you look for in a password-management system?

- You want it to be safe and secure. These are the most powerful passwords in the organization; you don't want them stored in an Excel file or in an Access database. Just imagine what could happen if someone accessed the local administrator password for the Active Directory or the Web server?

- Full integration with your organization. Many companies can write a nice application to store passwords in an Access database, but you need much more than this. For example: backup integration

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the Story Password”

(Veritas, Backup Exec, etc.); monitor integration (HP OpenView, Tivoli, etc.); transparent user management (LDAP integration, user’s point of view, etc.) – you don’t want to redefine all the IT department users again.

- Automatic synchronization. Machines are added and removed from the network on a daily basis. You want a system that can automatically reflect these changes.

- “2 clicks to a password” Web interface. In the end, your IT department will need to use these administrative passwords quite often; it should be easy for them to access them.

- Full audit. You, as a manager, want to know exactly who used the last root password. Who used the administrative password of the CEO laptop? Who took the emergency password of the mainframe? You must comply with regulations, and you should ask for state-of-the-art security software that will store the audit trails.

- Disaster recovery. You are going to store keys to your most sensitive and important data; you had better have a robust disaster recovery component.

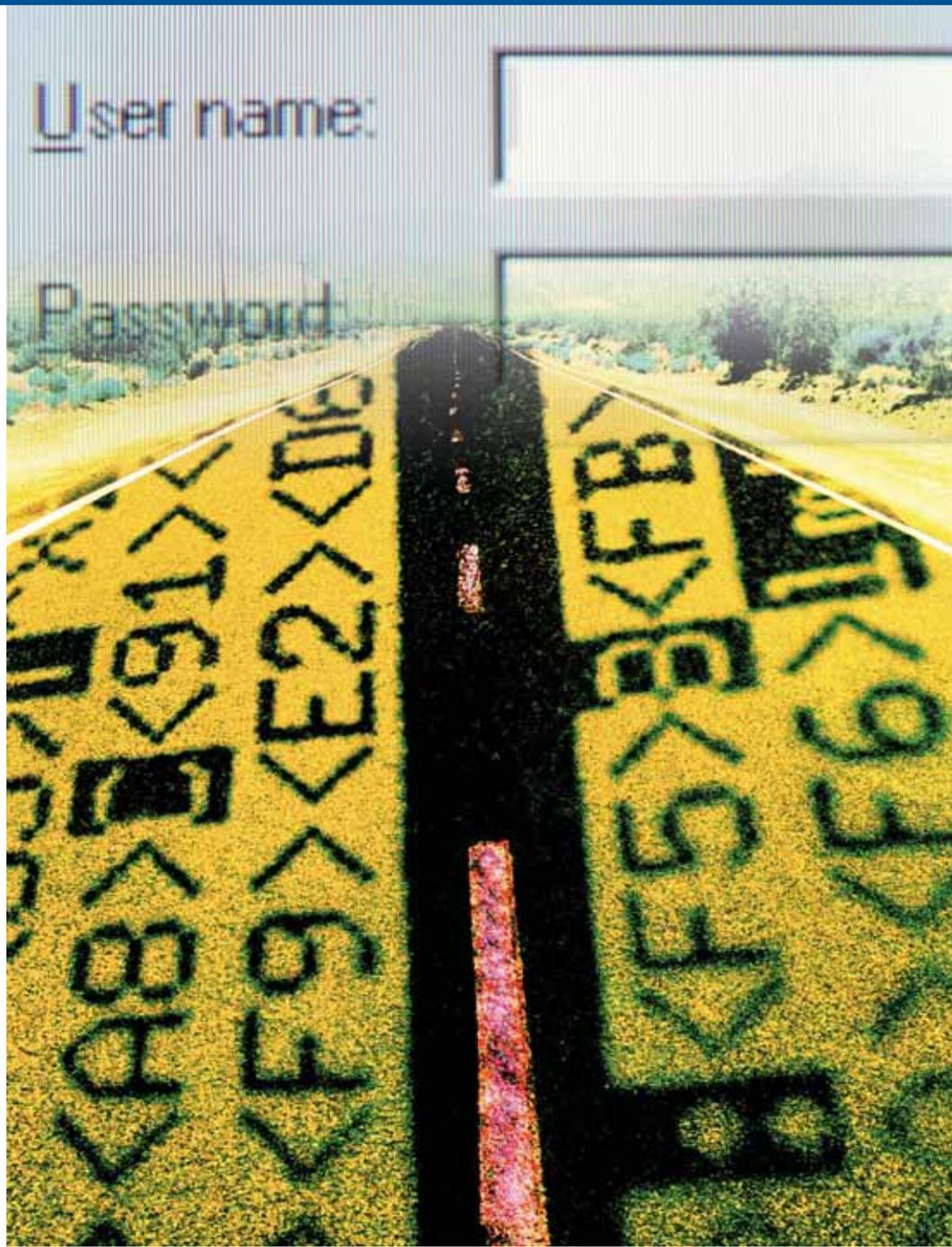
- Automatic change of passwords. Regulations force you to change your passwords every 30 days. This means the end of the manual era.

You need a password-management system to change the local administrator passwords on the 10,000 desktops that you have, as well as the entire set of Unix servers’ root passwords.

In addition, I recommend the following devices as a comprehensive list of supported platforms that password-management systems should support:

- High availability. Dealing with the most sensitive passwords in your organization, you want the password-management system to provide maximum availability to the enterprise and ensure business continuity.

- Management dashboard. You, as a manager, should be able to see a real-time snapshot of administrative passwords and privileged account usage. The dashboard should include a group of different charts



that graphically display your compliance with policies, usage status and, of course, anomaly activities.

- Hard-coded passwords. Many scripts contain hard-coded passwords. These scripts are not secured, and they contain the password in plain text.

Any “new employee” can look at these scripts and take the passwords to “explore their limits.” You need a component in the password-management system that will solve this problem and integrate easily with your application server.

- Distributed architecture. You probably have more than two network areas, so your password-management system

should have centralized management with the ability to change passwords on a distributed network, without needing to redesign your entire network structure.

- Proven enterprise class scalability. Check that enterprises such as yours are totally satisfied with their chosen solution.

I hope I’ve helped you understand what a password-management system should look like.

Oded Valin is a regional sales engineer for Cyber-Ark Software. He can be reached through its Web site (www.cyber-ark.com).

PT

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