

Is it better to convert existing user accounts for them or have the users re-register?

Asked 15 years, 11 months ago Modified 9 years, 8 months ago

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2



I'm rewriting a website and going from a home-grown authentication model where users logged in with their account id (numbers) and password, to .NET

FormsAuthentication where users will login with a username that they choose (or is available) and a stronger password. There are over 38K existing accounts and I'm trying to decide if the existing users should re-register or if I should write some code to do this on their behalf. I've already ruled out creating the usernames for the users because they won't be able to change their username. Luckily we don't have any users named Brenda Utthead.

If the user re-registers, some may gripe about having to do this step again and it may raise some support calls, but I stay with the standard process that everyone has to do. Or I can allow the user to login with their existing userid and password and then optionally give them a grace period to convert their account. I'm hesitant about the latter because it's special code and a possible threat vector because it bypasses the standard authentication

mechanism and allows users to log in using less secure credentials.

This application currently accounts for about 40% of our website traffic and I'm not worried about users not coming back to the website because of the possibility of them having to re-register.

What does everyone think?

asp.net

forms-authentication

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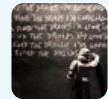
edited Apr 18, 2015 at 21:49



[niton](#)

9,169 ● 23 ● 35 ● 55

asked Jan 13, 2009 at 16:56



[Notorious2tall](#)

1,448 ● 4 ● 16 ● 27

7 Answers

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1

If you want your users to come back your best bet is to convert their accounts and send an email explaining the transition.



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answered Jan 13, 2009 at 16:58



[Otávio Décio](#)

74.2k ● 18 ● 165 ● 228



1

Do not make them re-register whatever you do.

You'll lose half of your users if you do that.



Give them a service so that they can enter their previous user id and have them provide their email address. Email them at the address provided and have them login with their email address as their new user name.



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answered Jan 13, 2009 at 17:00

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Eppz

3,196 ● 2 ● 20 ● 26



1

I am about to do the same thing. I am writing a migration page where the user logs in with his/her existing credentials and behind the scenes, I write out to the asp.net membership tables. Do a check first to make sure they haven't already migrated for all subsequent visits.



Don't make them re-register. A little work on your side is all it takes and you need to keep your customers happy.



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answered Jan 13, 2009 at 17:07

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ScottG

11.1k ● 25 ● 84 ● 113



After listening to everyone's suggestion, I've decided to modify the login. I look at the username they provide and

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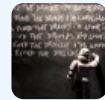
try to guess that they're an existing user. Then I look them up in the old table and if I find a match take them to a conversion screen. There they can quickly convert their account or skip the whole process and login temporarily. The conversion form has fewer fields to fill out b/c I was able to authenticate them against the old user table so I don't need them to provide as much info.

I'm not thrilled with skipping the conversion but that option is only offered for the first 45 days from go-live.

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answered Jan 17, 2009 at 23:04



[Notorious2tall](#)

1,448 ● 4 ● 16 ● 27



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Either convert them or find a way for both membership models to exist together, and somehow convert each user across at login or something.

Think about how long it took to get the 38k members and ask yourself if those were all wiped out, would those same people go through the hassle of signing up again. If you've got a really strong community you should be ok, the hit would just be a matter of time till you're built up.

The other thing you could do to mitigate the risk would be to send out a email, although spam blockers may filter them you could get to a high percentage of your users and tell them about the new membership stuff. Might get some older people back to the site as well in the process.

The biggest challenge is converting all the data that is associated with the user's accounts. People are going to be really upset if they've built up some sort of reputation that you're going to destroy with a new membership system.

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answered Jan 13, 2009 at 17:01



[rball](#)

6,955 ● 7 ● 50 ● 78



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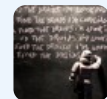
This website is a check your balance type of website. It's not a banking site per se, but it exists as a convenience tool to users. I don't believe it would be realistic for users to cancel their accounts because they are forced to re-register.



I do like some of the ideas I'm reading in the responses though.

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answered Jan 13, 2009 at 17:07



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1,448 ● 4 ● 16 ● 27



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I would migrate their information and then on their first login ask them to confirm that their membership info is correct (just to be anal).



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answered Jan 14, 2009 at 13:31



[domusvita](#)

818 ● 7 ● 7

