Chapter **16**

Using Group Policy

Group Policy is a feature of Windows operating systems that lets you control how certain aspects of Windows and other Microsoft software work throughout your network. Many features that you may expect to find in a management console, such as Active Directory Users and Computers, are controlled by Group Policy instead. You must use Group Policy to control how often users must change their passwords, for example, and how complicated their passwords must be. As a result, Group Policy is an important tool for any Windows network administrator.

Unfortunately, Group Policy can be a confusing beast. In fact, it's one of the most confusing aspects of Windows network administration. So, don't be put off if you find this chapter more confusing than other chapters in this part. Group Policy becomes clear after you spend some time actually working with it.

Understanding Group Policy

Here it is in a nutshell: A *policy* defines configuration options for specific Windows features. Each policy specifies how some aspect of Windows or some other Microsoft software should be configured. For example, a policy might specify the home page that's initially displayed when any user launches Internet Explorer. When a user logs on to the domain, that policy is retrieved and applied to the user's Internet Explorer configuration.