Distribution Agent reporting Subscription is not active yet

Last updated by | Vitor Tomaz | Jun 8, 2022 at 5:37 AM PDT

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Issue

The Distribution Agent execution details and history show the following error message:

```
Error 18857
The subscription to this publication is not active yet. No user action is required.
```

Investigation / Analysis

This is a harmless error that very likely will resolve by itself. It occurs if the Distribution Agent is running while creating a new subscription with the "replication support only" option, e.g. `sp_addsubscription ... @sync_type = 'replication support only'` . This option is used if the Subscriber already has the schema and data and no snapshots needs to be applied.

It is also possible that something went wrong while creating the publication, e.g. a deadlock while executing `sp_addarticle` . This might leave the article and subscription metadata in an inconsistent state.

You can confirm if the subscriptions are active by checking the `status` values on the `syssubscriptions` and `sysarticles` system tables in the Publisher database:

```sql
select status, * from syssubscriptions where dest_db = '<subscriber database name>' order by artid
-- status = 0 means "inactive"
-- status = 1 means "subscribed" but not "active"
-- status = 2 means "active"

select status, * from sysarticles -- where pubid = 12 -- narrow down on publication ID if necessary (check sys
-- status = 56 or 40 meaning that the "active" flag is missing (would be 57 or 41 otherwise
```

Mitigation

Mitigation Step 1

If the issue is persistent after step #1, restarting the Distribution Agent might resolve the it.
Monitor the agent history in Replication Monitor for any further errors or status messages.

Mitigation Step 2

If the issue persists, then try to explicitly set the status to active. You can do this by executing the following stored procedures:

```
-- if syssubscriptions is not set to active:
exec sp_changesubstatus
    @publication = '<publication name>',
    @subscriber = '<subscriberserver>.<dns-suffix>.DATABASE.WINDOWS.NET',
    @status = 'active'

-- if sysarticles is not set to active:
exec sp_changepublication
    @publication = '<publication name>',
    @property = 'status',
    @value = 'active'
```

Mitigation Step 3

If step #3 still not solves the issue, you might try dropping the subscription and recreating it.
You might also try dropping the publication as well and redo the creation steps from the beginning.

Public Doc Reference

sysarticles ↗
syssubscriptions ↗

Discussion on MSDN user forum ↗

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