

## Re: What is the maximal length of usernames on Solaris?

**Source:** <http://unix.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.sys.sun.admin/2003-12/0435.html>

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**From:** Josh McKee ([jtmckee\\_at\\_rm-bogus-ac.net](mailto:jtmckee_at_rm-bogus-ac.net))

**Date:** 12/28/03

Date: Sun, 28 Dec 2003 21:15:47 GMT

On Sun, 28 Dec 2003 21:03:41 -0000,  
Richard.L.Hamilton@mindwarp.smart.net (Richard L. Hamilton) wrote:

>In article <ko1uuvk77av3h7b6i4rg18be320v5agg40@4ax.com>,  
> Josh McKee <jtmckee@rm-bogus-ac.net> writes:  
>> On Sun, 28 Dec 2003 16:27:03 -0000,  
>> Richard.L.Hamilton@mindwarp.smart.net (Richard L. Hamilton) wrote:  
>>  
>>>In article <che9svgfd2dnfn8spaqekh0knb8fcen47c@4ax.com>,  
>>> Josh McKee <jtmckee@rm-bogus-ac.net> writes:  
>>>> On Mon, 24 Nov 2003 13:19:22 +0000, Gregory <ccsqihg@herts.ac.uk>  
>>>> wrote:  
>>>>  
>>>>>On Sun, 23 Nov 2003, Josh McKee wrote:  
>>>>>  
>>>>>> "Why are you calling them lusers?"  
>>>>>>  
>>>>>>This newsgroup is called comp.sys.sun.ADMIN  
>>>>>>  
>>>>>>In the same way that ambulance crews call drowning victims  
>>>>>>"floaters", unix admins call average users "lusers". It is  
>>>>>>standard on the job humor and is what helps keep us sane.  
>>>>>>  
>>>>>> That's fine. Did you happen to catch the original message where I  
>>>>>> asked him why he did it? He didn't answer with "because it's sysadmin  
>>>>>> humor".  
>>>>>>  
>>>>>>>As far as I am aware the general consensus amongst unix  
>>>>>>>admins is that the standard 8 character limit for usernames  
>>>>>>>is reasonable - I certainly see no reason to increase it.  
>>>>>>>  
>>>>>>> That's the problem. You've determined that it's reasonable while the  
>>>>>>> users apparently want longer user ID's. You're not listening to your  
>>>>>>> users. You've just made the determination that eight characters is it  
>>>>>>> instead of maybe thinking that it should be increased. While I  
>>>>>>> understand that this limitation has been an integral part of UNIX for

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>>>> *quite sometime and as such would be difficult to change I don't think  
>>>> that this is a reason not to try and change it.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *I don't know how many times I've been preaching the merits of UNIX to  
>>>> Windows users only to find that they want to use user ID's longer than  
>>>> eight characters. Recently I was trying to convince a friend of mine  
>>>> who owns his own company to use Linux with OpenOffice. I setup a test  
>>>> system for him to try out. When I went to create his user account I  
>>>> learned that his user ID was going to be ten characters (first initial  
>>>> and last name). He asked me why it had to be limited to eight  
>>>> characters when it wasn't a problem on Windows. People notice these  
>>>> things. While this one particular issue was not the cause of his  
>>>> failure to adopt Linux it was a combination of little things like this  
>>>> that were. No matter what the technical merits of the platform he  
>>>> didn't feel like the system was working for him like Windows did. He  
>>>> liked using his first initial and full last name. And he didn't  
>>>> understand the reason for the limitation because Windows didn't have  
>>>> it.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *Well, then tell him the choice comes down to breaking apps every version  
>>>> so you can add new features (like long user names), or saving the money  
>>>> for updating all the apps and spending it on his bonus.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *The choice was not to use UNIX but instead to use Windows. Thus the  
>>>> reason for my comment that people prefer Windows because it meets  
>>>> their needs, no matter how trivial, better.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *And I'm saying I find it hard to believe that an intelligent and  
>>>> sophisticated evaluation would come down to that being the only difference  
>>>> or the one that outweighs almost any other offsetting difference.*

It wasn't the only difference. Did you even read what I wrote:

"While this one particular issue was not the cause of his failure to adopt Linux it was a combination of little things like this that were."

It was a combination of many little, inconsequential (in your opinion), things that pushed the decision towards Windows.

>>>> *It's not so much the OS that can't do it – given full OS and associated  
>>>> utility source, I could change a Unix implementation to handle longer  
>>>> names with a couple of days work. But the evolving standards have for  
>>>> many years allowed apps to assume that user names were no more than eight  
>>>> characters (and some other constraints); even if one could change the OS  
>>>> and its utilities, making the change would break the existing apps, unless  
>>>> they were updated at the same time. And making a change unilaterally  
>>>> would violate the standard, which would mean that the OS in question would  
>>>> no longer be entitled to be called Unix.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *The point being there are always arbitrary limits of some sort; the*

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>>>question is whether it's worth supporting the largest such that people may  
>>>have grown accustomed to even at the expense of whatever consequences  
>>>(like apps breakage) can't help but follow.

>>>

>>>What people really want varies; most haven't really thought it through.  
>>>In the extreme, they may want their computer to earn their paycheck for  
>>>them while they stay at home and make like a couch potato. Wanting  
>>>all the arbitrary limits to be as high as any they've previously  
>>>encountered is a bit more reasonable, but if they understand that there  
>>>are indeed sound reasons why the change hasn't been made and can't quickly  
>>>be made (and would likely still have some limitations, such as that the  
>>>name would have to remain unique with 8 characters even if it could be  
>>>longer), they just may appreciate that once a particular arbitrary limit  
>>>has been chosen and in long use, it can't be trivially raised without  
>>>some serious consequences, and as such both the decision not to change  
>>>it and the other benefits of the Unix platform might well be worth  
>>>considering on the merits rather than engaging in unproductive and  
>>>largely non-functional complaining.

>>

>> Agreed. If you go back and re-read my original response you'll see  
>> that I wasn't complaining about the eight character limit but the  
>> portrayal of the user as a luser because they were unaware of such a  
>> limitation. You did this yourself (actually you called them idiots) in  
>> your previous message.

>

>I've lost track; but if I'm being nice, I'm saying that as a matter of  
>safe policy and responsible allocation of resources, they're  
>\_presumptively\_ idiots.

Why? Aren't you the one telling me how users don't know what they want? Why would you expect these people to know what limitations a given OS has?

Regardless they don't know...so why are they idiots? It's not their job to know. Just as it's not your job to know the details of the law or accounting. Are you an idiot because you don't know the details of the law or accounting?

Josh

>I've dealt with a few that weren't, that were  
>both practical and almost frighteningly intelligent; those, I would do  
>whatever I could for on little more than their say-so. But I've dealt  
>with more that were neither practical nor intelligent, and more than a  
>couple that were little more than permanent victims of life. As a class,  
>user complaints should be heard but cannot be taken at face value.

>

>> My point is that you shouldn't be calling someone a luser because of  
>> their belief that a system should accommodate their needs instead of  
>> the other way around. The change to the eight character user ID limit  
>> is a side discussion that is unrelated to that point.

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- >
- > *My issues probably aren't even the same as your point. Roughly, it's:*
- >
- > *\* luser is not something I'd tend to call a user to their face; it's*
- > *just an informal term that isn't always derogatory but does certainly*
- > *imply the possibility that any given user to which it's applied deserves*
- > *the derogatory interpretation*
- >
- > *\* presumptive idiot, or to be more polite, of unverified credibility, is*
- > *what I'd call anyone I hadn't already worked with (be they user, SA,*
- > *developer, or some random person on the street), although the former*
- > *also not to their face (as for the latter, I'd just as soon that*
- > *strangers knew I didn't trust them until they demonstrated that I*
- > *should, it'd probably save time in some cases)*
- >
- > *\* a human being is more flexible than a computer; if not, they're not*
- > *worth hiring. At some time when it can be done right, eventually,*
- > *and if the cost is minor enough, their wishes should be heard and*
- > *taken into account. But until then, the people should be the ones*
- > *to do the adapting. And if they think otherwise, they're perhaps*
- > *very nice people, but definitely not thinking it all the way through.*
- >
- > *\* there are some nontrivial issues and costs associated with a longer*
- > *account name that make it something to which the previous paragraph*
- > *applies.*