

Blaser Software

WinUnlock

Version 2.6

Introduction

For the latest information, please see <http://www.blaser.us/software/WinUnlock/>

Abstract

This introduction to the Blaser Software WinUnlock utility provides a basic understanding of the system, its intent and purpose and the value that can be derived by using the program. In addition, this introduction is designed to provide its audience with the ability to explore the full documentation set in a meaningful context in order to realize maximum benefit when implementing the software.

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Executive Summary

The **Blaser Software WinUnlock** system is an advanced, Windows application whose purpose is to allow system administrators to “unlock” a “locked” workstation.

Blaser WinUnlock is a security audit and technical support tool that allows an enterprise or domain administrator to unlock and access a locked workstation and user desktop. Traditionally, workstation computers are logged-on to and used during an interactive session with the user in front of the computer. Once a workstation is locked (selecting the "Lock Computer" or "Lock Workstation" option from the "Ctrl-Alt-Delete" screen (Winlogon Desktop), Windows will lock the workstation; securing it to allow only the current user the ability to unlock and use the workstation.

By default, Windows only allows the current user to unlock the computer. An administrator can unlock the computer; however, the current session will be closed along with all the applications started by that user. As a result, any unsaved work is lost. Users often must resort to powering a system down to regain access.

Blaser WinUnlock avoids all of these problems by offering system administrators the flexibility to unlock workstations to perform necessary audits, software installations, and provide technical support – all with logged activity so that the balance between convenience and security can be maintained.

Blaser WinUnlock is a powerful software application that runs as a system service on all modern versions of Windows including: Windows 7, Windows 8, and Windows 10.

For more information and to download a fully-functioning demo, please visit the **Blaser Software WinUnlock** website at <http://www.blaser.us/software/winunlock/>

Introduction

This document provides the information needed to install and use Blaser Software's WinUnlock.

Who Should Read This Document

This introduction is intended for audiences who are installing **Blaser WinUnlock** or make decisions in the planning, development, deployment, or operational aspects of the application in their IT infrastructure. The document aims to educate the audience sufficiently to help determine what value can be derived from **Blaser WinUnlock** in their environment.

Approach & Design Goals

Blaser WinUnlock uses standard the Windows API and does not store or cache any passwords at any time. Authentication attempts are handled by the standard Windows APIs, and upon successful authentication and group membership verification, the user session is unlocked. Once a user session is unlocked, an overlay on the user desktop displays basic system environment variables for the convenience of the administrator. The overlay also provides an alert to the administrator, and those around, that this is not a regular interactive session.

Desktops will re-lock after 2 minutes of inactivity and return to the Winlogon Desktop (Ctrl+Alt+Delete screen). This is designed to avoid a situation where a workstation is unlocked and left in that unlocked state accidentally by a distracted administrator. The **Blaser WinUnlock** is designed to balance and preserve the trust and security of the user while enabling additional capabilities for authorized administrators to access to assist users' sessions.

For added security, each and every unlock request is verified with the Domain Controller for the member workstation, and then logged both in the Domain Controller and Local Computer security Event Log. This audit trail ensures that security and a log of actions can be maintained within the organization.


Benefits

Blaser WinUnlock will allow authenticated administrators the ability to unlock a locked, active user session on a workstation while maintaining a seamless integration with existing logon functionality in the Microsoft Windows system.

Blaser WinUnlock also allows for the logoff of multiple user sessions in a “Fast user Switching” scenario or “Switch User” scenario. In these cases, multiple users can have active sessions on a workstation and these activities and processes can bog-down the performance of the computer workstation. This scenario is often found in shared computing locations such as small offices, libraries, computer labs, schools, and universities where computers are configured to permit multiple users to have active sessions on computer workstations.

Customer Value

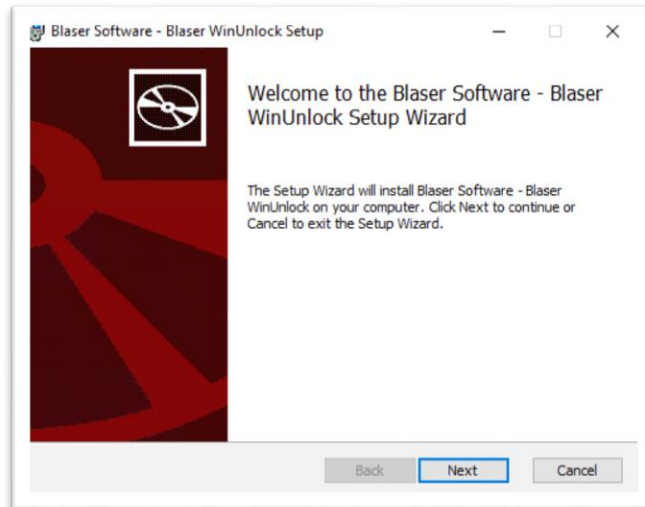
Customers who use **Blaser WinUnlock** in their Active Directory domain environment will experience many benefits:

- Enabling administrators and helpdesk staff to assist with user problems even if the user is not present.
- Unlocking user sessions to help with connectivity issues, update issues, configuration issues, printer support, per-user configuration tasks.
- Multiple idle sessions can be logged-off at once to free up system resources without having to reboot or forcibly power-down a workstation.
- Easy to install and configure on both the server and workstations. Just install and let it run! The system service runs on workstations and can be invoked from the Logon Screen with the  + F7 hotkey sequence.
- All unlock activity actions are logged in the Windows Event Log for auditing purposes.

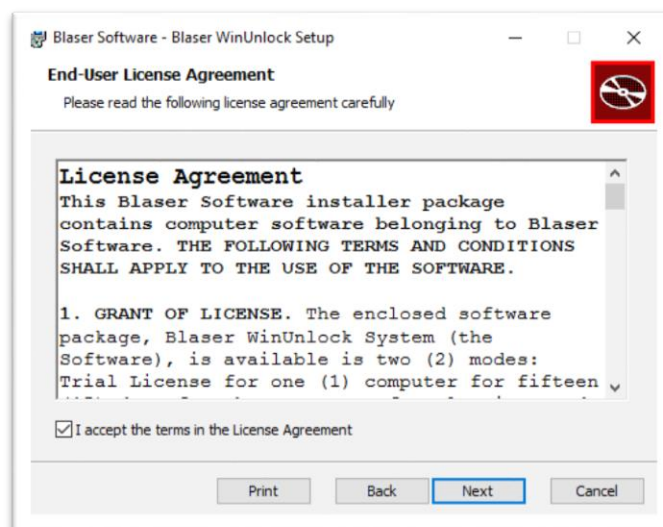
Installation and Configuration - Client

The steps below will outline the installation and configuration of **Blaser WinUnlock** client application. This application should be installed on workstations in your environment.

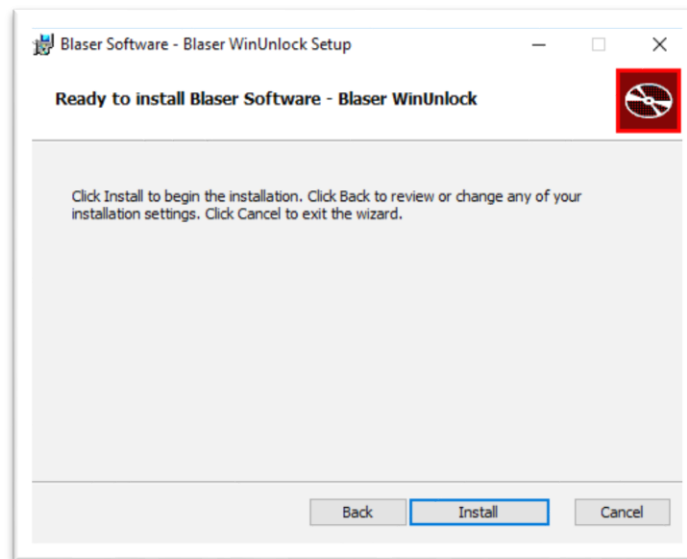
1. Download and execute the **Blaser WinUnlock** installer.



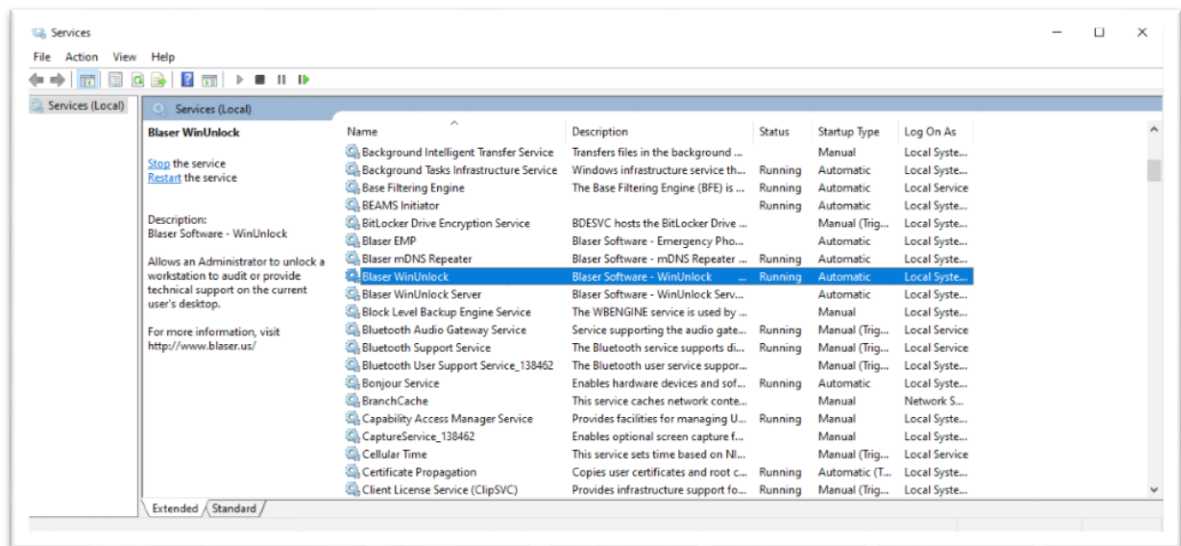
2. Read and agree to the terms in the end-user license agreement.



3. Click **Install** to begin the installation.



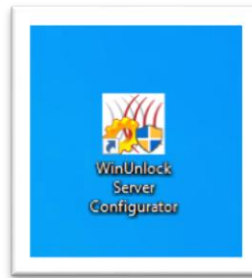
4. After installation, reboot your computer (or verify that the **Blaser WinUnlock** service is *Running*). No further configuration is required. The WinUnlock client application will use the settings of your Windows configuration to: authorize local unlock requests on a standalone workstation; or communicate with your Active Directory Domain Controllers on a domain-joined workstation.



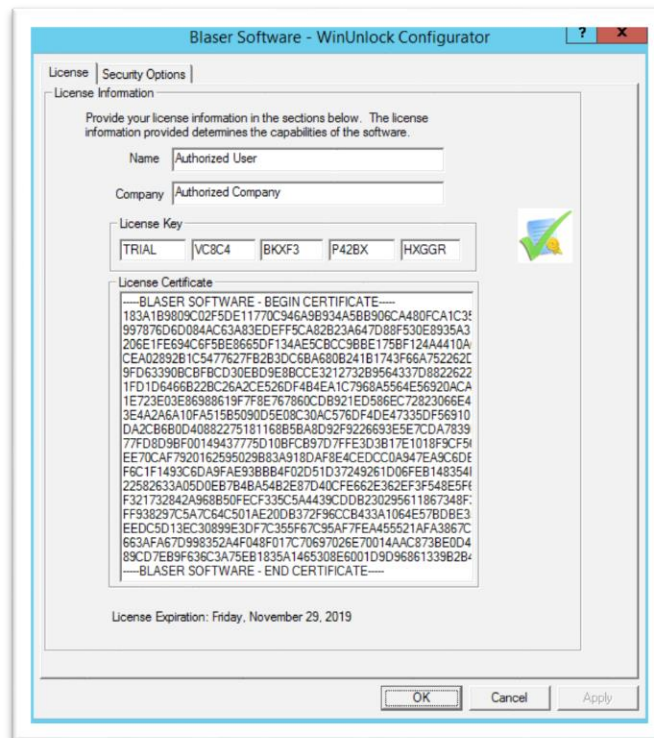
Installation and Configuration - Server

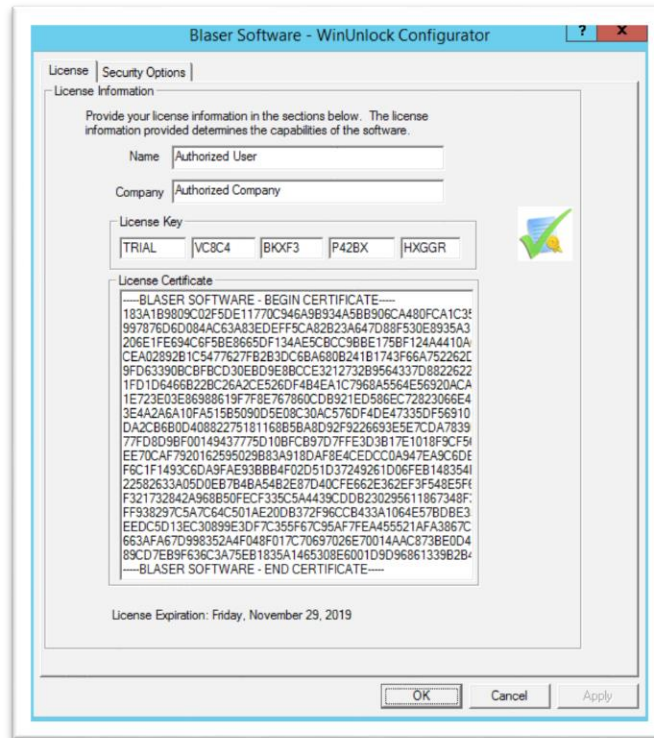
The WinUnlock Server setup follows the same steps as the client. The WinUnlock Server consists of two components: the **WinUnlock Server** service; and a companion **Configurator** program which is used to manage the settings of WinUnlock in your network environment.

After installation of the WinUnlock Server on your Domain Controller, run the **WinUnlock Server Configurator**.



The WinUnlock Configurator has two configuration tabs: “*License*” and “*Security Options*”. The *License* tab is where you can apply your trial or full license key and certificate to unlock features of the WinUnlock system. To request a free trial license go to: <http://www.blaser.us/license/>

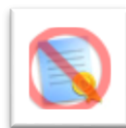




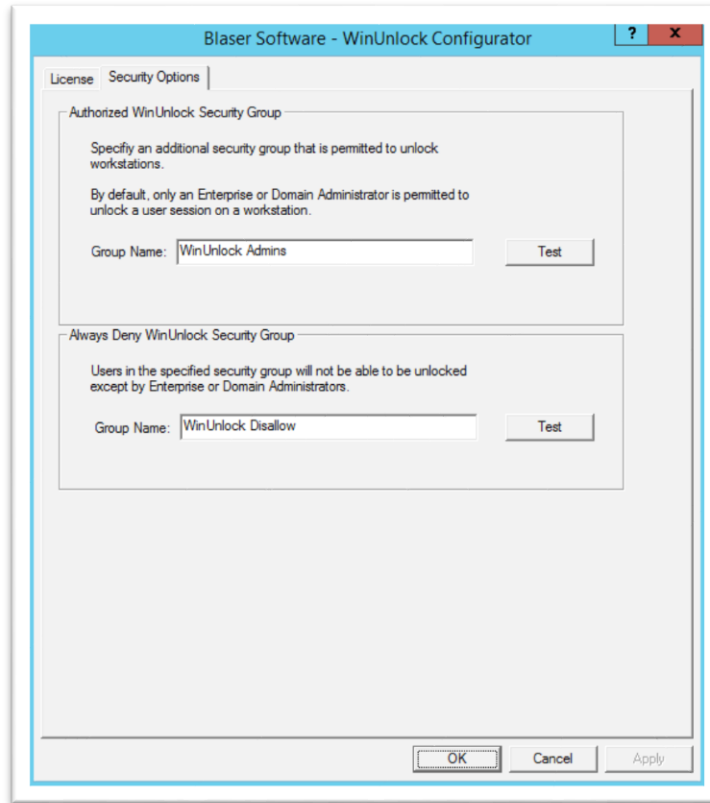
1. In the **License Key** field, provide your 25-character alpha-numeric license key. In the **License Certificate** field, paste in your certificate file that accompanied the license key. Both of these items can be found in your e-mail from Blaser Software Sales (sales@blaser.us).
2. After you enter the license information, click the **Apply** button to activate the license and enable the features of the WinUnlock system. If the license information is valid you will see the *green check* indicator.



If the license information is invalid, or the license time period has expired, you will see the *“no-go”* indicator.



The next tab, *Security Options*, allows you to specify additional security options for your WinUnlock installation based on your individual Windows environment, preferences, and needs.



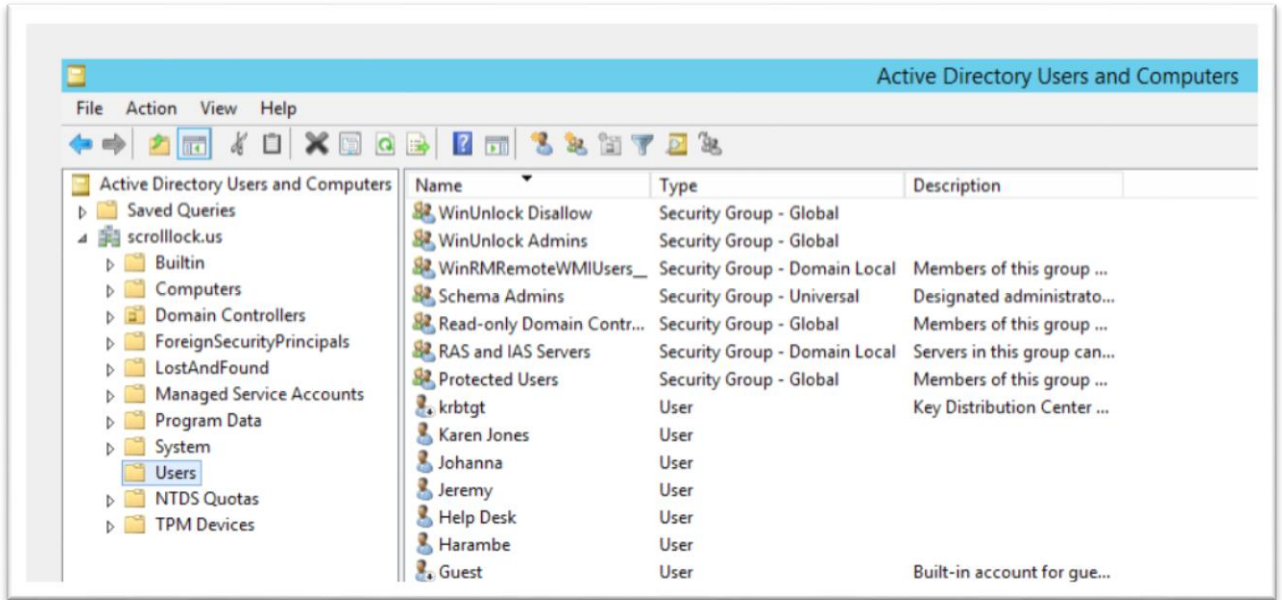
By default, only *Domain Administrators* and *Enterprise Administrators* have the authority to unlock a user's session on a workstation. In some environments, you may wish to allow other staff, such as helpdesk support, or other sub-administrator groups, to also have the ability to unlock user sessions.

Using the **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group** section, you can add additional security groups whose members will also be permitted to unlock a user's session on a workstation.

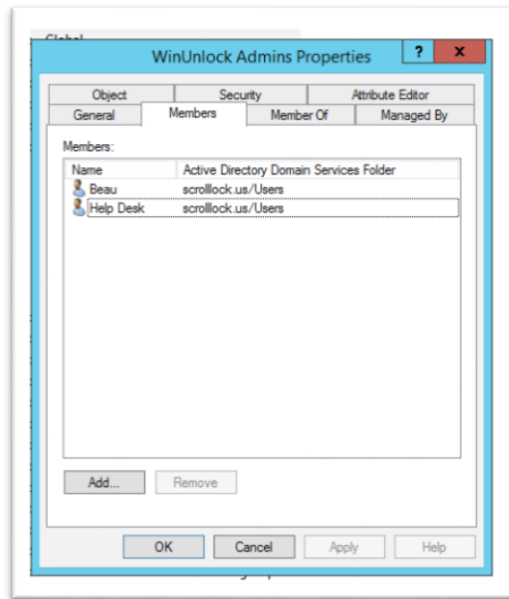
In the **Always Deny WinUnlock Security Group** section, you can specify a security group whose members will not be able to be unlocked by the **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group**. For example, for certain staff of your organization (employees in your finance department, in the chief executive's office, or other secure business areas) you may not want the helpdesk staff to have the ability to unlock these user's sessions. Adding key staff to the **Always Deny WinUnlock Security Group** security group will prevent WinUnlock from authorizing an unlock request by your sub-administrators.

NOTE: *Domain Administrators* and *Enterprise Administrators* will always have the ability to unlock any user's session.

In **Active Directory Users and Computers**, set up two security groups: one for your **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group** and one for your **Always Deny WinUnlock Security Group**.

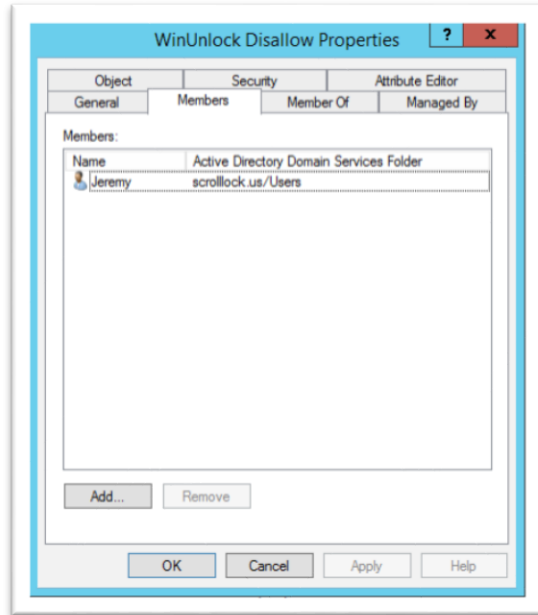


In this example, we are adding two users to the **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group**. These users, along with the Domain Administrators and the Enterprise Administrators will be able to unlock user workstations.



Next, in the **Always Deny WinUnlock Security Group**, we have added a single user. This user, and any others that are added to this security group, will not be able to have their workstations unlocked by members of the **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group**.

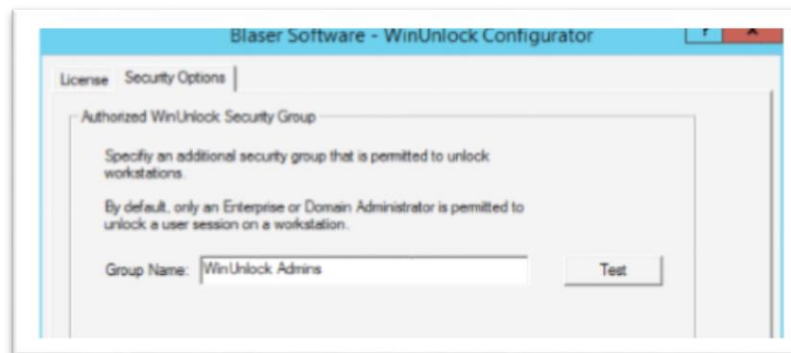
Only Domain Administrators and Enterprise Administrators will be able to unlock this user's workstations.



Testing your Security Group Configuration

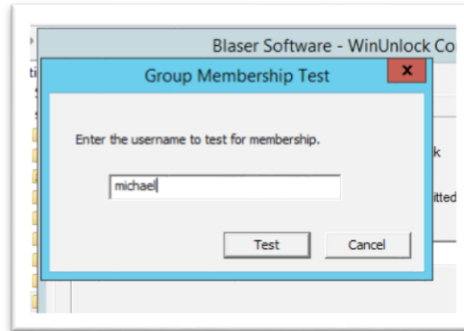
The test button for each section can be used to verify membership in the specified security group. In the following example, we are testing to see whether the user "Michael" is a member of the **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group**.

To begin, click the **Test** button in the **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group** section.

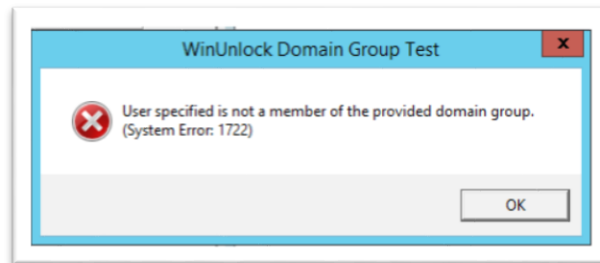


In the **Group Membership Test** dialog, type in the username to test. In this example, we are testing whether the user “**Michael**” is a member of the **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group**.

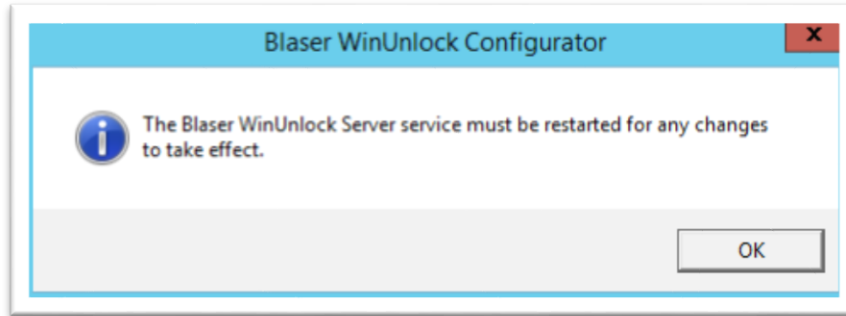
Type in the username, and click the **Test** button.



If the user is not a member of the specified group, a message box will appear to alert you of this fact, along with any corresponding Windows system error code.



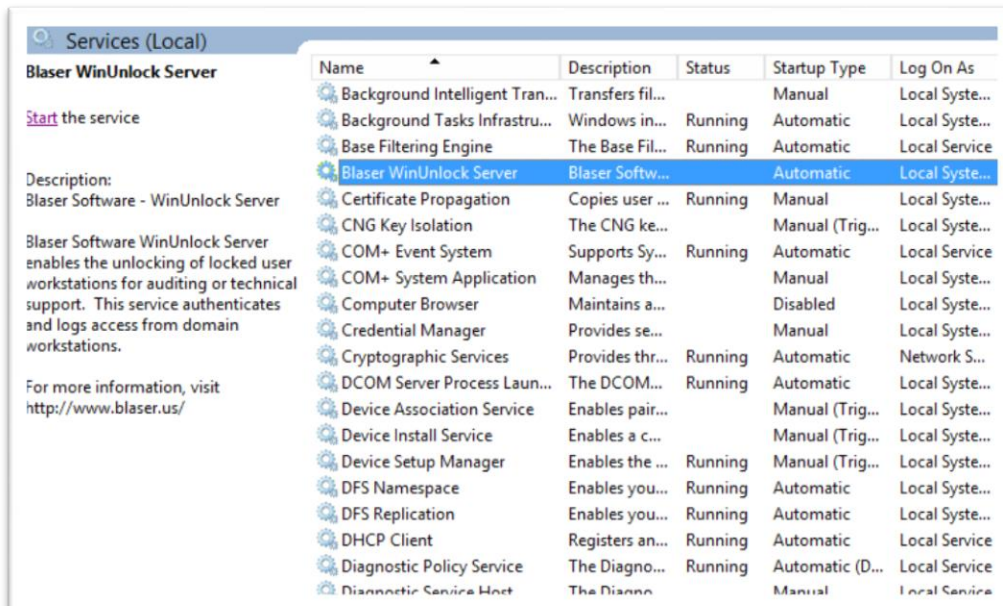
When you have finished establishing and testing your settings, click the **OK** button and you will see the following dialog:



WinUnlock loads its settings from the registry at startup. For any new changes to take effect, the **Blaser WinUnlock Server** service must be restarted.

To do this, go to: **Control Panel, Administrative Tools, Services**

Find and **Restart** (or **Start** if Blaser WinUnlock Server is not running) the service named **Blaser WinUnlock Server**



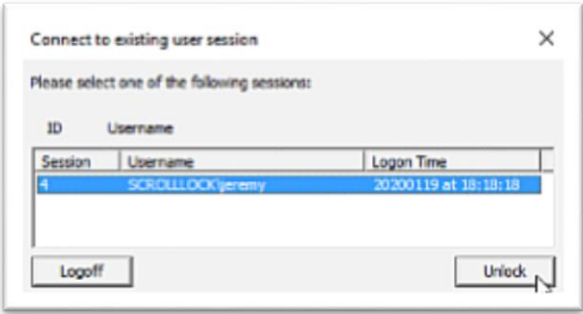
Client Operation and Usage

Once the **Blaser WinUnlock** service has been installed and is running on a workstation, it will provide unlock functionality as long as there is at least one user session active on the workstation. To invoke the unlock operation, use the hotkey sequence **Win + F7**.

This action will present the **Blaser WinUnlock** dialog of options.

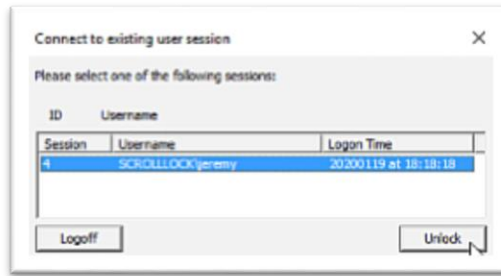


The selection dialog contains information for all active sessions on the local workstation. This information includes the session number, the username, and the logon time in *Year-Month-Day Hour:Minute:Second* format.

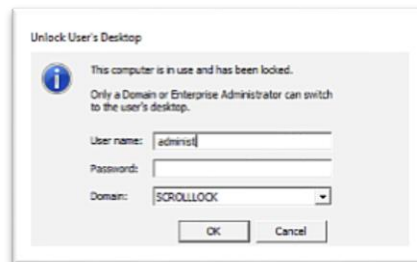


The dialog will allow for the selection of one or more sessions to use with the **Logoff** button. This permits an administrator to logoff multiple user sessions at once, freeing up system resources, without the need to reboot or forcibly power-down the computer.

To unlock a user session, click to select any session listed in the dialog followed by a click of the **Unlock** button.



This will display a second dialog requesting credentials of a **Domain Administrator** or an **Enterprise Administrator** (or a member of the **Authorized WinUnlock Security Group**).



Enter the appropriate credentials and click **OK** to authenticate and approve the unlock action.

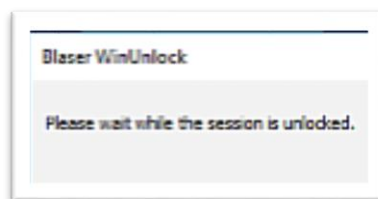


NOTE: By default, **Blaser WinUnlock**, will attempt to authenticate to any **Domain Controller** that serves the domain listed in the dialog box. Since Blaser WinUnlock relies on the Windows API to handle authentication, and this authentication will select domain controllers in a round-robin fashion, if the **Blaser WinUnlock Server** is not running on the domain controller that is contacted, the authentication request will fail.

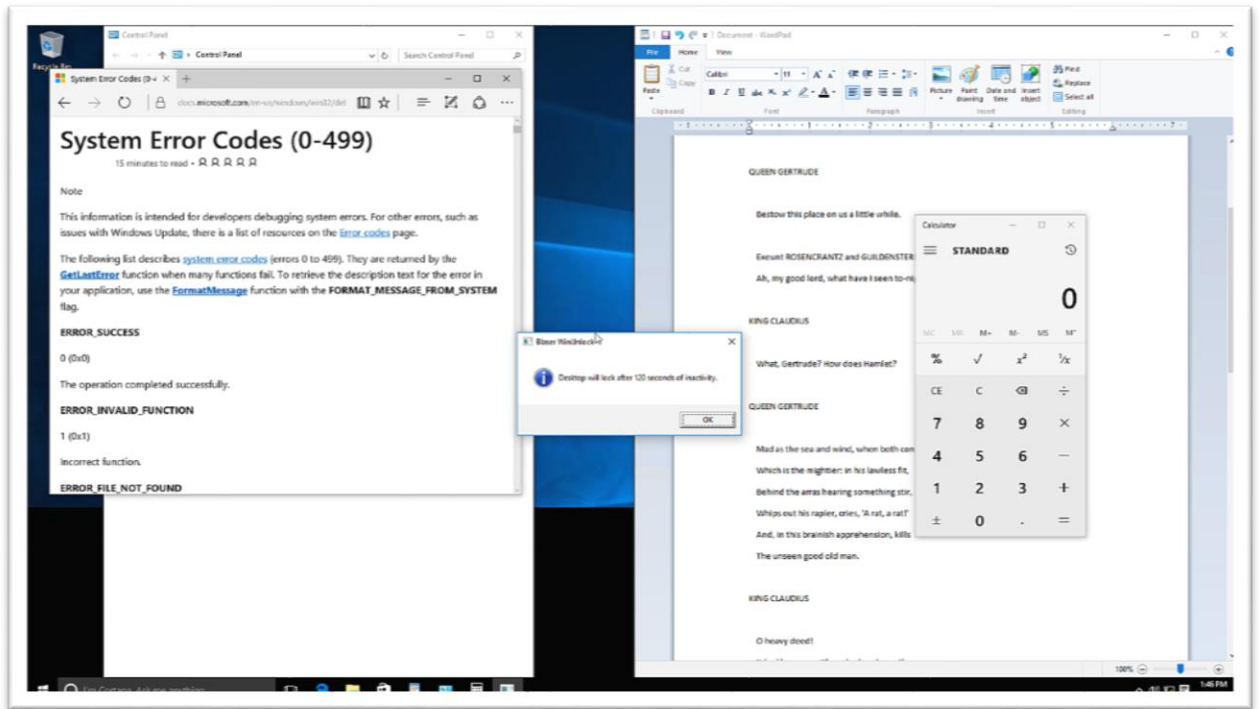
If you only have **Blaser WinUnlock Server** installed on one or a few specific domain controllers (in an effort to concentrate all authentication logs to a single server, for example), you can hold down the **Ctrl** key on your keyboard while clicking the **expand** (*down-arrow* icon) of the domain pulldown list. This action will enumerate all of the domain controllers in your Windows domain, and allow you to target your authentication request to a domain controller that has the **Blaser WinUnlock Server** installed and running.



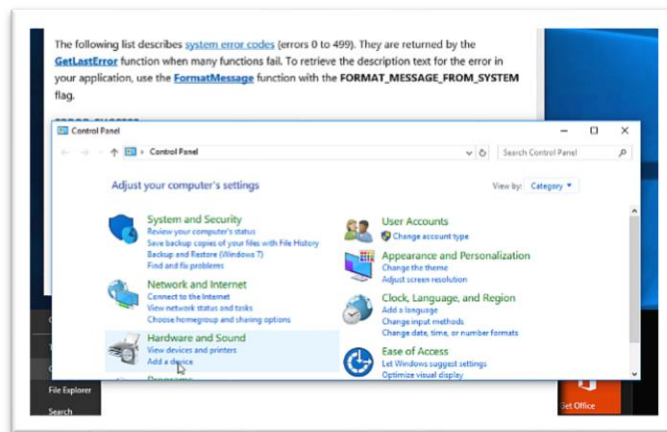
If the authentication is successful, a small process dialog will be displayed to alert you to wait while the session is unlocked.



Blaser WinUnlock will then switch into the selected user's session. A message box will appear in the center of the screen alerting you that after 120 seconds of inactivity, the session will automatically re-lock.



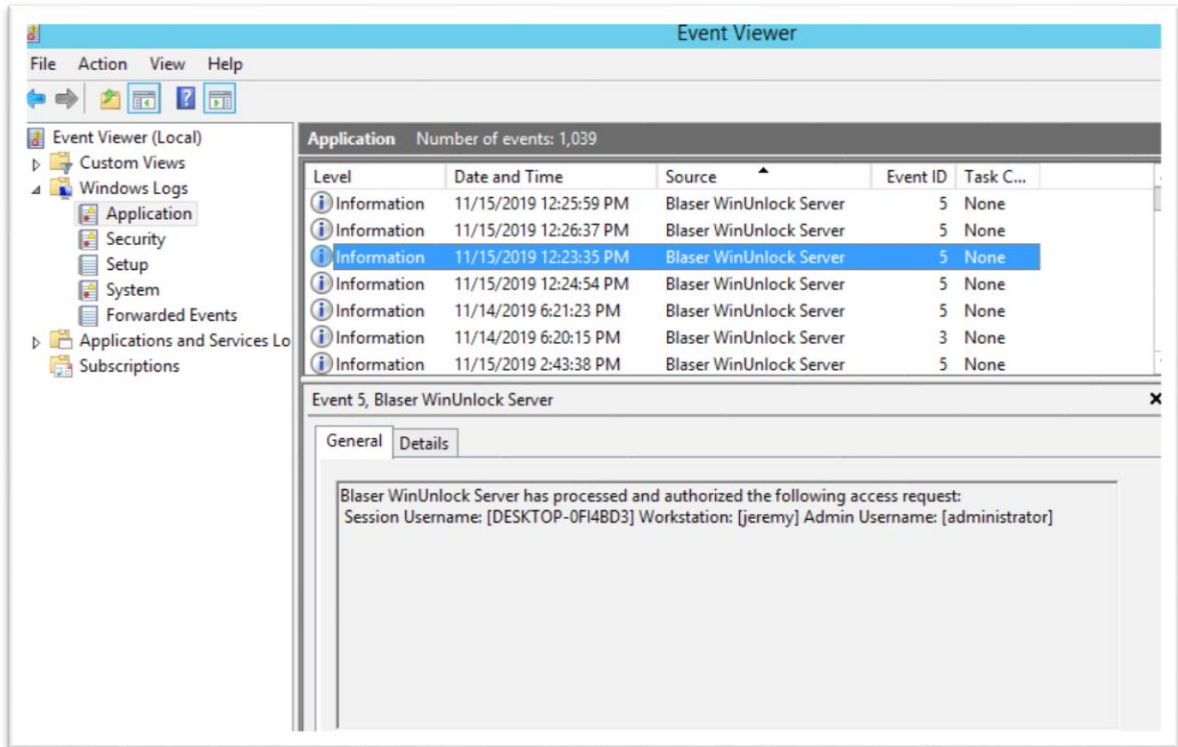
While the session is unlocked, you are acting as the user whose session has been unlocked. They are the one who is logged-in and you are operating in the same capacity as they would be. From this vantage point, you can troubleshoot reported problems, modify settings in the control panel; do anything and everything the user would be able to do.



After you have completed your work, always be sure to **re-lock** the session. This can be accomplished by pressing **Ctrl+Alt+Del** and selecting the **Lock Workstation** option – or the **Lock** option from the Windows Start Menu. Both of these actions will re-lock the workstation and take you back to the Winlogon Desktop again.

Auditing Activity

Upon successful unlock of a user session, the Domain Controller running the **Blaser WinUnlock Server** service that processed and authorized the unlock request will create an audit entry in the Windows **Application** Event Log. This entry will denote the date and time of the unlock approval and additionally include the *session username* that was unlocked, the *workstation* that is in use, and the *administrator that unlocked* the user session.



Using this auditing functionality, you can ensure that the capabilities of the **Blaser WinUnlock** system are being used for your intended purposes.

Summary

The goal of the WinUnlock system is to allow system administrators to “unlock” a “locked” workstation to help system administrators the flexibility of unlocking workstations to perform necessary audits, software installations, and provide technical support – all with logged activity so that the balance between convenience and security can be maintained.

We encourage you to download a fully-functioning demo of **Blaser WinUnlock** at <http://www.blaser.us/software/winunlock/> and try it for yourself. If you have suggestions that would improve the product, or requirements that you need in the product that would make you purchase it, let us know!

Blaser Software is committed to making software that is easy to install, configure and use; and software that is useful! All of our products are coded in C++ using documented standards. Our code is clean (not messy) and we pride ourselves on robust and efficient products that are fast and easy to setup and use.

References

Blaser WinUnlock application information and additional available details can be found at: <http://www.blaser.us/software/winunlock/>

For feedback and information, send e-mail to: contact@blaser.us

A few words from Beau...

I hope that you like the WinUnlock system and that it can bring great value to your organization. WinUnlock was created after discussions with system administrators and helpdesk technicians in small to medium sized organizations that had limited technical staff. In organizations of this size, system administrators can have several different roles and “wear many different hats”, so to speak. Finding a time to assist a user that’s convenient for both the administrator and the user is challenging and usually inconvenient for the user.

Blaser Software is a small sized business itself though we offer software solutions that can meet the needs of any sized business or organization. We pride ourselves on high quality software that offers innovative features at a competitive price. We also listen to our customer feedback – not only to enhance current products but for ideas to assist with real-world challenges in different markets. The only way for our products to improve and become more useful is for people to let us know if we’re achieving our stated goal. I invite you to send me an e-mail and let me know what you think.

Sincerely,

Beau