

ManageSoft and the Windows registry

The Windows registry is a central configuration database of user, application, and computer-specific information for Windows and installed applications on a computer.

Introduction to the Windows registry

Where registry data is stored

On Windows 95, 98, and Me, the registry is contained in `user.dat` and `system.dat`, hidden files located in your Windows directory.

Windows 2000 and Windows XP store registry data in several *Hives*, located in the `\windows\system32\config` and `\Documents and Settings\{username}` folders.

Backing up the registry

If your registry becomes corrupt, you will experience problems with your entire system, and will probably lose data. You can edit the registry, but before you do so, make a backup.

On Windows 95, 98, and Me, backing up the registry is as simple as making copies of your `user.dat` and `system.dat` files.

On Windows 2000 and Windows XP, you require a registry backup tool. Consult your system administrator or search the web to locate a suitable utility.

Editing registry settings

The registry is updated when you configure Windows, and when you install or remove applications.

You can view and edit the registry:

- ▶ Using `regedit.exe`
- ▶ By creating and applying `.reg` files (registry patches)
- ▶ With code you develop yourself, or with programs such as Tweak UI (an unsupported productivity tool from Microsoft, recommended for power users only).

Using regedit

1 Start regedit (**Start** > **Run** > **regedit**).

The Registry Editor window displays. The left pane shows a tree view of the registry keys, while the right pane shows the contents of the currently-selected item in the left pane (if any).

2 You can do any of the following:

- ▶ Add keys by selecting the location for the new object and selecting **New** from the **Edit** menu.
- ▶ Rename existing keys and values by right-clicking and selecting **Rename**.
- ▶ Delete keys and values by right-clicking and selecting **Delete**.
- ▶ Select **Find** from the **Edit** menu to search for text in keys and values.
- ▶ Select **Refresh** from the **View** menu to refresh the displayed registry keys and values.
- ▶ Exit regedit to save all your changes.

Registry patches

Text files with `.reg` extensions are registration files, used to update the registry.

You create registration files:

- ▶ In regedit, by selecting the root of the registry keys and values you want to record in the registration file and selecting **Export...** from the **File** menu
- ▶ In your favorite text editor.

You apply registration files:

- ▶ In regedit, by selecting **Import...** from the **File** menu and locating the registration file for import
- ▶ By double-clicking a file with a `.reg` extension.

Format of the Windows registry

The registry has a hierarchical (or tree) structure. Branches are called *keys*, and can contain other keys, or *values*. Values contain the information recorded in the registry.

There are six main registry keys, each of which contains other keys and values:

- ▶ **HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT** - contains file type and OLE information
- ▶ **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE** - contains information about installed hardware and software. The current hardware configuration is specified in *HKEY_CURRENT_CONFIG*. This key is frequently abbreviated in documentation to *HKLM*.
- ▶ **HKEY_CURRENT_CONFIG** - points to the part of *HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE* for the current hardware configuration.
- ▶ **HKEY_USERS** - contains preferences (such as colors and control panel settings) for each user of the computer.

In Windows 95/98/Me, the default branch here contains the data for the user currently logged in.

In Windows 2000/XP, the default branch contains a template to be used for newly-added users.

- ▶ **HKEY_CURRENT_USER** - this branch points to the part of *HKEY_USERS* for the current user.
- ▶ **HKEY_DYN_DATA** (Windows 95/98/Me only) - points to the part of *HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE* used by the Windows Plug-&-Play subsystem.

There are three types of values: String, Binary, and DWORD. Their use is determined by the program that created them.

ManageSoft and the registry

Like other software applications, ManageSoft uses the registry. On devices with ManageSoft installed, you can view the registry keys and values created by ManageSoft under `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\ManageSoft Corp\ManageSoft` and `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ManageSoft Corp\ManageSoft`.

For information about the registry keys and values ManageSoft creates and uses, refer to the *ManageSoft Reference: Preferences on Managed Devices* and *ManageSoft Reference: Preferences on Warehouse and Distribution Servers* volumes.

Other applications and the registry

As you package and distribute applications with ManageSoft, you will need to develop knowledge of the effects on the registry of installation, configuration, and uninstallation of particular software. This knowledge will help you in troubleshooting tasks, and in supporting users whose devices are under management with ManageSoft.

Further information

Consult your Windows system documentation or the Microsoft website (www.microsoft.com) for more information about the registry, and other resources available to help you learn about it.