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How to Set Up Directory Synchronization for Office 365

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Many organizations that use Office 365 have a hybrid deployment which means that they have an on-premises Active Directory, which is the primary storage for identity information. Hybrid identity and directory synchronization provide many benefits to your organization, including reduction of administrative programs in your organization, having the option to enabling single sign-on scenario and automating account changes in Microsoft 365.

In order to be able to synchronize your Active Directory with Office 365 you need to make sure that your on-premise server is running Windows Server 2008 or later. It is recommended to create new Domain Administrator and Office 365 Administrator for the synchronization, also the Azure AD Synchronization tool should be installed on a 24/7 server but not the Domain Controller.

Before you start the synchronization in your Active Directory, complete the following clean-up tasks for each user account that will be synchronized with Office 365 account:

1. Ensure a valid and unique email address in the **proxyAddresses** attribute.
2. Remove any duplicate values in the **proxyAddresses** attribute.
3. If possible, ensure a valid and unique value for the **userPrincipalName** attribute in the user's **user** object.
4. You may need to add an alternative UPN suffix to associate the user's corporate credentials with the Microsoft 365 environment. A UPN suffix is the part of a UPN to the right of the @ character. UPNs that are used for single sign-on can contain letters, numbers, periods, dashes, and underscores, but no other types of characters

When you complete the tasks above, follow the below steps to download and install the synchronization tool.

1. Sign-in as a local administrator to the server you wish to install Azure AD Connect on. You should do this on the server you wish to be the sync server.
2. Sign into the Office 365 Admin centre and choose **Users** > **Active Users** on the left navigation panel.

3. On the **Active users** page, choose **More** (three dots) > **Directory synchronization**.

4. On the **Azure Active Directory preparation** page, select the **Go to the Download center to get the Azure AD Connect tool** link to get started.

5. Navigate to the downloaded file and double-click **AzureADConnect.msi**.

6. On the Welcome screen, select the box agreeing to the licensing terms and click **Continue**.

7. On the Express settings screen, click **Use express settings**.

8. On the Connect to Azure AD screen, enter the username and password of a global administrator for your Azure AD. Click **Next**.

9. On the Connect to AD DS screen, enter the username and password for an enterprise admin account. You can enter the domain part in either NetBios or FQDN format, that is, domain\administrator or domain.com\administrator. Click **Next**.

10. On the Ready to configure screen, click **Install**.

11. After the installation has completed, reboot the machine.

12. Launch the Synchronization Service Manager

13. Select Connectors.

14. Open the properties of the Active Directory Domain Services connector.

15. In Configure Directory Partitions, go to Containers. Enter your credentials to proceed.

16. Select the Organization Units you want to synchronize and then click OK.

Following the above steps, you will be able to synchronize your on-premise Active Directory with Office 365. Later, you can choose what exactly you want to synchronize and even what user's attributes, providing grate flexibility to System Administrators.

Kyriakos Ioannou is working as a systems consultant with IBSCY LTD for the last 3 years. He is a member of the maintenance and support team responsible for the day-to-day support of our clients in Cyprus and international. He is also running small to medium size projects of office 365, Windows Azure and infrastructure. He holds several certifications of Microsoft, HPE and other vendors.