"ps -ef" Displays UID Rather Than User Name

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About This Document

This document contains the symptoms and reasons why the "ps -ef" command displays a UID rather than a login name. This document is applicable to AIX 3.2 and 4.1.

Symptoms:

- Running NIS (formerly called Yellow Pages*).
- The "ps -ef" shows the user ID number in the UID column rather than the login name for some users.

Reasons:

There are a few reasons why the "ps -ef" command is displaying a UID rather than the login name.

1. If the process was run by a user whose name was removed from the /etc/passwd file (i.e. during the running process), "ps" will report the UID as the owner of the process.
2. If the /etc/passwd file or the NIS master (or slave) server could not be reached at the time the "ps -ef" was issued, the UID will replace the login name for a particular process.
3. If the master server modifies the /etc/passwd file, the client machine will not immediately show the changes. If you add a user to the system on the master machine, the local machine will need to re-read the /etc/passwd file from the server to notice the changes. The client version of the passwd file contains only a few names and the NIS sequence at the end. Based on the modification time, the client may not see the changes.

In AIX releases prior to 3.2.4, the ps command looks at the /etc/ps_data file for the login names. If a name is not found in the ps_data file for a particular UID, the UID is displayed. To manually update the ps_data file, you can follow these steps:

```
rm /etc/ps_data
ps U
```

When you remove the file, ps has to rebuild the ps_data file from the information contained in /etc/passwd. If you are finding that users are added or removed between updates of the ps_data file, you can write a cron to keep the ps_data file current (use the above two commands).

This is not an AIX defect.

- "Yellow Pages" is a registered trademark in the United Kingdom of British Telecommunications plc.

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