

Linksys WUSB54GC

When you install the Linksys WUSB54GC (Compact Wireless-G USB Adapter) under Windows XP, your start-up and shutdown screens change to the old Windows NT/2000 look (the Welcome screen disappears), and you are prevented from changing it back. Here's why, and how to fix it.

Here's the short reason why: the Wireless Monitor software that comes with the WUSB54GC is designed to support Cisco LEAP (Linksys has been owned by Cisco since March 2003) - whether you need it to or not - and LEAP requires somewhat tighter Windows security. To make sure Windows security is tightened up, the installer modifies WinLogon by adding a file called "GtGina.DLL". This disables the Welcome screen and Fast User Switching, and also prevents you from re-enabling them.

Linksys does not ask permission to do this, nor do they give you any warning; they provide no help or support, and if you uninstall their Monitor software your system is left in its new "more secure" state (although, once you've uninstalled the Monitor, you CAN re-enable the Welcome screen.) I consider this thoughtless and irresponsible behavior. I'll rant more about that later. Right now, fortunately, the fix is easy:

(Standard disclaimer: this involves editing the Windows system Registry. If you're not careful, messing around inside the Registry can screw up Windows so thoroughly that you'll need a lifetime of psychoanalysis - or at least a format and reinstallation - to get over the damage. So be careful, BACK IT UP FIRST, and sacrifice to whatever deity you favor before proceeding. If step 1 below - "Fire up your favorite Registry editor" - confuses you, you do not have enough experience to adventure here. Continue at your own risk.)

- Fire up your favorite Registry editor - I happen to like Registrar Lite, from Resplendence, but RegEdit is already installed on every Windows machine.
- Navigate to the following key:
My Computer\HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\Current Version\Winlogon
- Find the following value entry: GinaDLL - its value should be set to GtGina.dll - if not, you're reading the wrong article! Stop!
- Delete it. I mean, right-click on GinaDLL and select Delete; do NOT delete the entire Winlogon key! Careful!
- Simple, wasn't it? This takes effect immediately - as soon as you exit from the registry editor, the "Turn off Computer" menu will go back to the new "friendly" style; if you reboot, you'll immediately get the Welcome screen.

If you already uninstalled the Linksys monitor software, then the GtGina entry is already gone. But your Welcome screen didn't come back. Grrrr!!

No sweat, actually:

- Go to Control Panel / User Accounts.
- Click on "Change the way users log on or off"
- Check both "Use the Welcome screen" and "Use Fast User Switching", then click Apply Options.
- If those options were already checked (but still no Welcome screen), then:
 - UNcheck them, and click Apply Options
 - REcheck them and click Apply Options. Windows gets confused sometimes too.
 - That's all, folks!

Now, what the hell was that all about? In brief: GINA stands for Graphical Identification 'N' Authentication (I am NOT making this up!), and it was designed by Microsoft to let software developers modify the way users log on to Windows. The version of GINA that Linksys/Cisco is using was written by a company called GemTek, hence "GtGina".

LEAP stands for Lightweight Enhanced Authentication Protocol, and its purpose is to make sure that only authorized personnel can sign on to your wireless network. It only works with Cisco wireless access points, so most users who buy the WUSB54GC won't be able to use it - but did that stop Linksys/Cisco from modifying everybody's system to enable LEAP? Hell no.