

Supporting a Small Web Hosting Business' Legacy Accounts Using Sphera

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Designed for educational purposes only.

* Sphera Logo Taken from Production System

**Parallels Logo from <http://www.parallels.com>

***Franklin University Logo from <https://www.franklin.edu/>



Please note this educational version has omitted real domain names, userids, and IP addresses.

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Introduction:

Web services are an important part of our modern computing infrastructures. Websites and the servers that run business operations for every small-large business have some sort of online presence underlying their technology or service. Companies like Facebook, Twitter, Netflix, and Amazon are just a few examples of businesses that are in the business of managing large amounts of data that their users produce and they have the ability to store all of that data on computers that are running in Data Centers all over the world connected by the internet. These types of websites can provide us with news, information, and even our email. They allow us to exchange files and send data all over the world with a click of a mouse. Therefore, it is important to be able to understand the underlying technologies and be able to manage these information systems in order to provide the platform for these types of services to run and for people to support and manage them.

This document is a manual for managing a real life IT solution for a small web hosting business. When new employees come to our business we expect that they are able to perform these basic duties as part of the support team. Not all staff have the same level of technical expertise when it comes to managing web hosting or other shared resources so we have tried to include as much information, screen shots, and instructions that they would see when performing these basic routines surrounding daily operations. This manual will review the basic functions that an entry level support staff member would perform. This manual also elaborates on other underlying processes and procedures that the company implements or supports.

History of Sphera

Sphera is a legacy web hosting platform that was originally designed to automate datacenters and manage server operations within those datacenters. The Sphera company used to be based out of Denver Colorado (Parallels, 2012), but was purchased in 2007 by the current owner Parallels who owns other web hosting software like Plesk, Cloud Server, and H-Sphere. Parallels Sphera is a scalable multi-server hosting automation solution. It provides a variety services such as web hosting, mail hosting, database hosting on both Linux and Windows based environments (Parallels, 2017). The Sphera system was designed to be a Software as a Service, or SaaS Solution, for customers to manage datacenters through processes of automation, provisioning, and virtualization.

Many systems worldwide may be using Sphera or a derivative of the platform for the management of a variety of tasks. This technical documentation will focus on technical facing systems management of a small scale web hosting company using Sphera's VDS Manger. The document assumes that a Sphera Managed Enterprise already exists. The Sphera software is only one way to mange small scale hosting companies that provide web pages or web design services that customers request for their business and personal websites. *The following documentation was designed using a production version of Sphera running on a small hosting business' servers in a Jumpline Inc. data center in Ohio, U.S.A.*

The Sphera Console

The screenshot displays the Sphera VDS Manager console. At the top right, there is a 'Logout' link and the Sphera logo. The main header reads 'Welcome to your VDS Manager' and shows the domain and IP addresses. A left-hand navigation menu titled 'Manage Your Product' includes sections for Home, Statistics (Accounts Usage, Bandwidth Usage, Webalizer), Email / FTP (Accounts, Aliases, Mail Settings), Settings (Web Server, System, IP Filtering), ValueApps (Install & Manage), and Domain Settings (Domains, Web Aliases, DNS Records). The main content area features three primary management sections: 'Email / FTP' with links to 'Add a new Email account' and 'Configure an Email alias'; 'Site Management' with links to 'Restart your VDS' and 'Start the File Manager'; and a 'Quota Usage' section with three progress bars: 'Files quota - current usage' (0% at 2303/Unlimited), 'Disk quota (MB) - current usage' (0% at 266.82/Unlimited MB), and 'Bandwidth quota (MB) - current usage' (0% at 0/5000000 MB, with a period from 10/01/12 00:01:03 to 11/01/12 00:00:01).

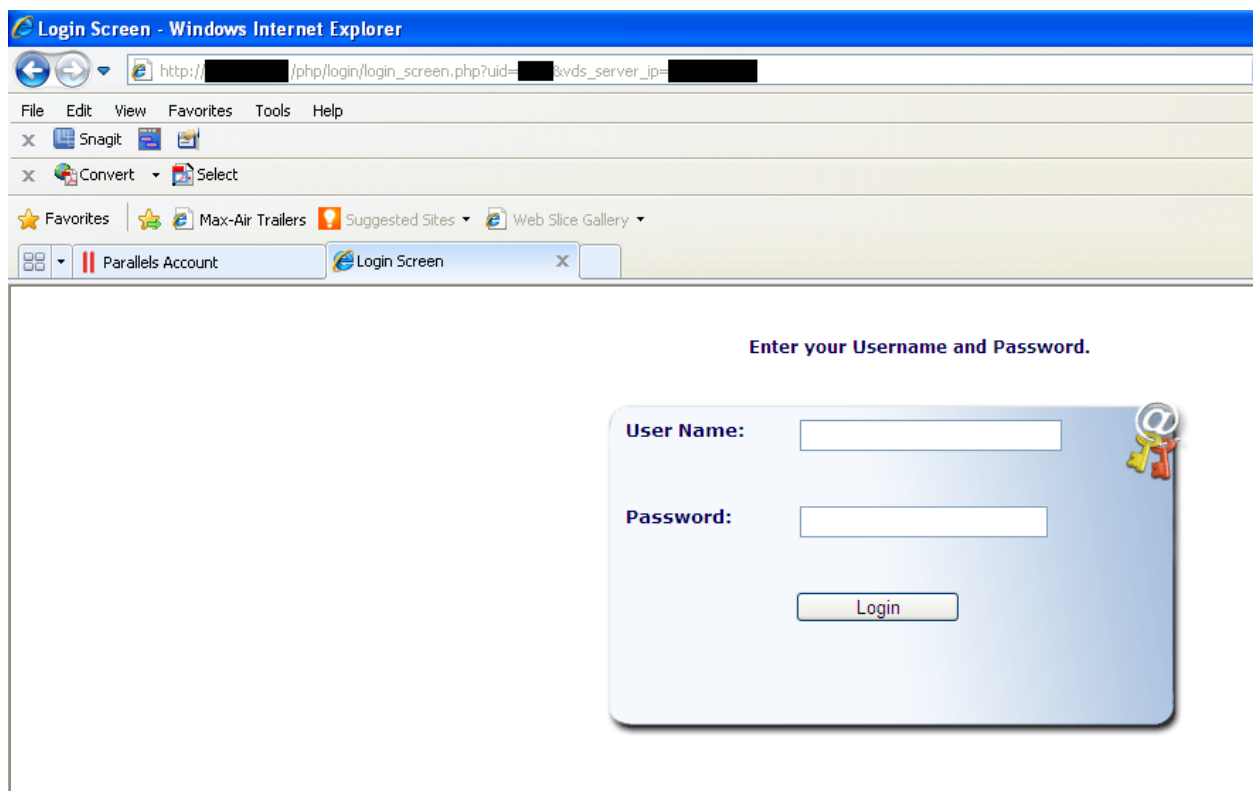
Sphera's simplistic design served as a foundation for many businesses web sites, and small scale hosting companies who were reselling space and shared applications on servers in data centers around the world. Our company has been using Sphera as our hosting platform since 2001. Its simple design allows it to be very flexible and allows for fast interactions with the most common operations of the company. All functions are accessible from this main menu. A dashboard of current statistics of disk, file, and bandwidth quotas are displayed, and more detailed statistic can be found in the Statistic Category including full detailed reports from the webalizer function built into Sphera to monitor traffic more granularly. Email, FTP, Server Settings, Value Apps, and Domain Settings can all be managed from the console as well.

Console Management Page

Step 1: Using internet explorer, navigate to <http://www.mydomainname.com/manager/>

Step 2: Login using the *username* and *password* provided to you by your system administrator.

Step 3: The Sphera console will appear. Using the Sphera Console you will be able to perform all of the tasks outlined in this documentation.



Setting up a new Domain Name on the Server

For Existing Domain Name (*If you need a new domain, see *Purchasing a New Domain*)

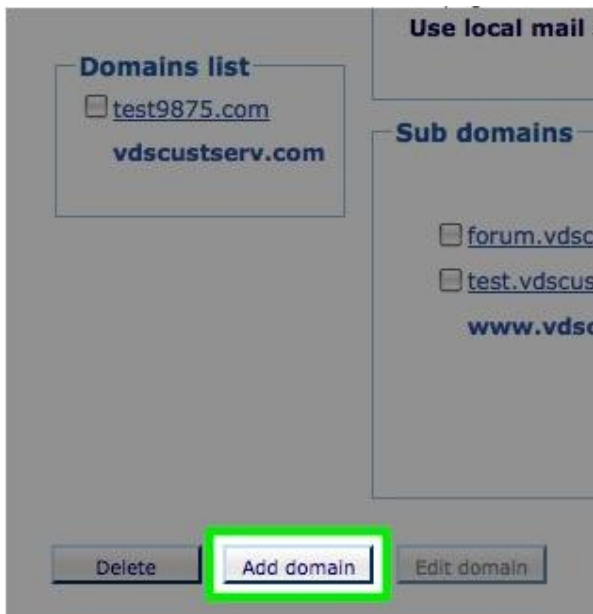
Step 1: Login to Sphera Console

Step 2: Setup a new FTP User. <See *Setting Up a New FTP User*> This will create the new directory for the domain to use to store data.

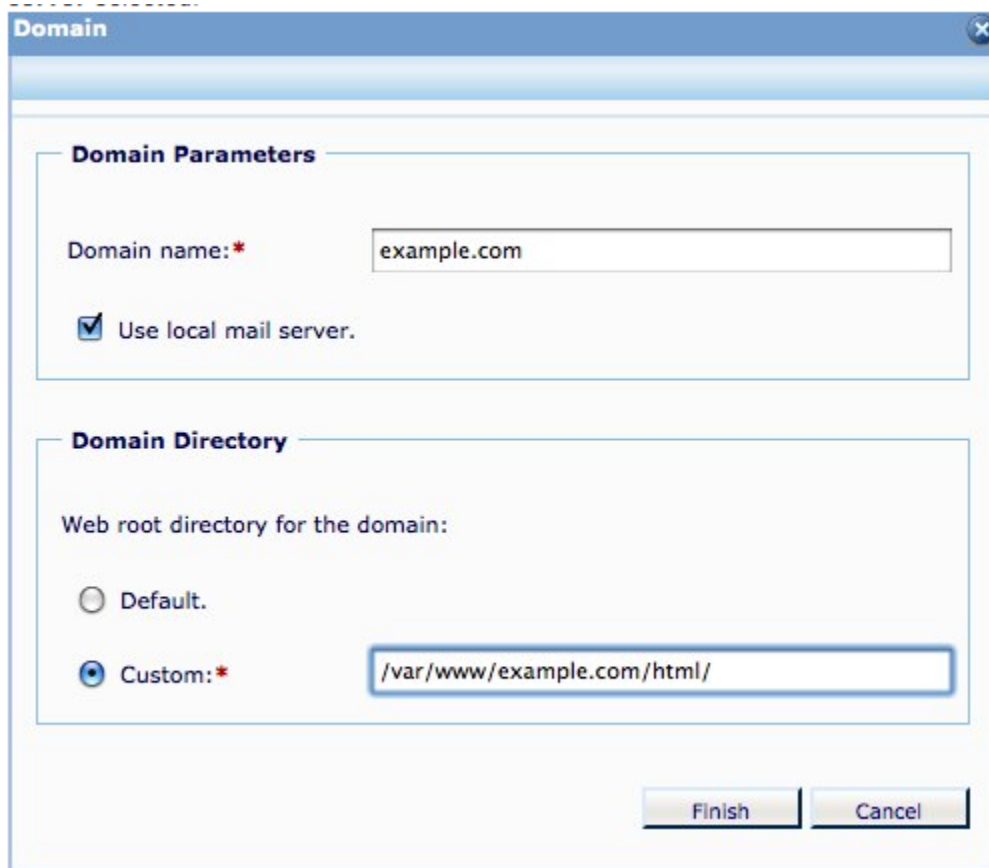
Step 3: After New FTP Account is created Click “Domains” on the left.



Step 4: Click “Add Domain” at the bottom of the page.



Step 5: In the Domain Name field, enter your new domain name (exclude www and/or other sub-domain). Leave Use local mail server selected.



The screenshot shows a window titled "Domain" with a close button in the top right corner. The window is divided into two main sections: "Domain Parameters" and "Domain Directory".

Domain Parameters

- Domain name: *
- Use local mail server.

Domain Directory

Web root directory for the domain:

- Default.
- Custom: *

At the bottom right of the window are two buttons: "Finish" and "Cancel".

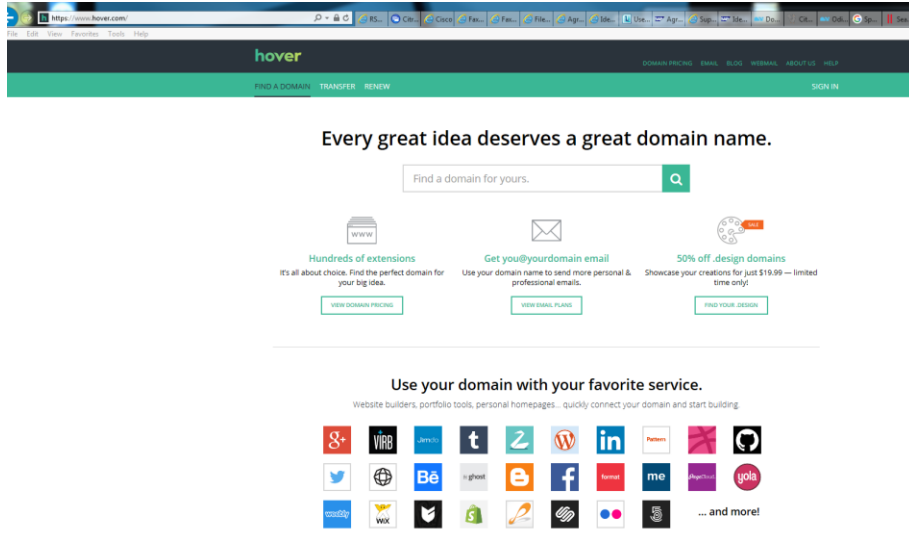
Step 6: For Domain Directory, choose Custom. Enter the same Directory Path you entered from the creation of the FTP account in Step 2.

Step 7: Click Finish (If you get a directory doesn't exist error, the directory may not have been created correctly in Step Two. You may need to go back to Step two and verify)

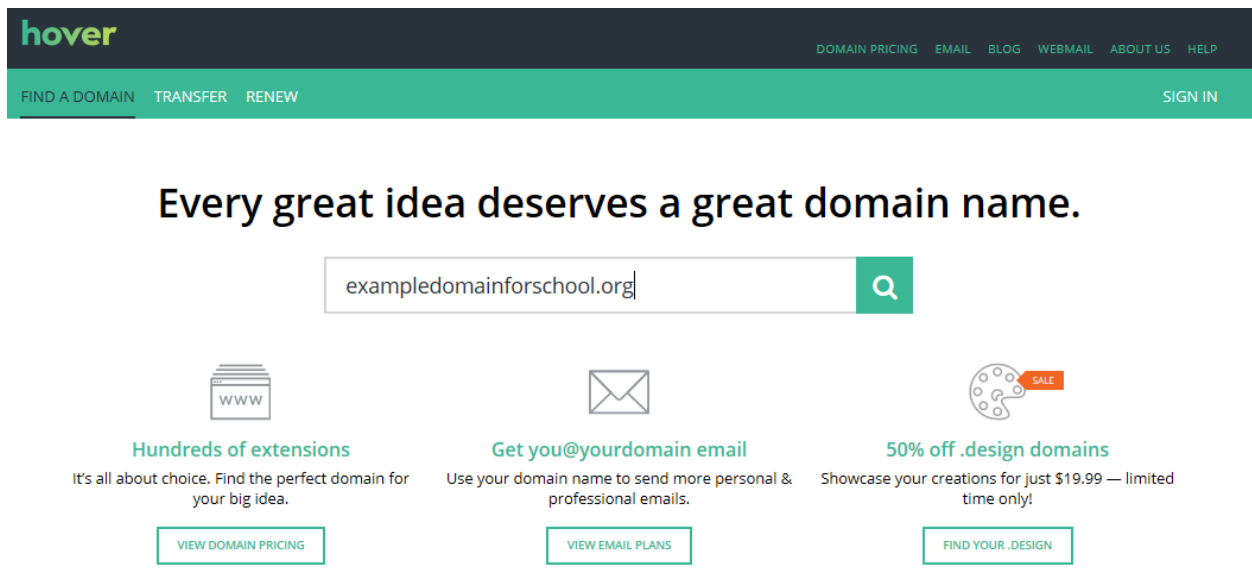
You will now be able to upload files to the new site using FTP. <See *FTP Access to Site*>

Purchasing a New Domain Name

Step 1: Go to the website www.hover.com



Step 2: Type the name of the domain you wish to purchase, and click Search.



Step 3: A screen will come back stating whether your domain is available and will offer other suggestions if it is already taken. If your domain requested is not available try

searching for other variants of the desired name, different names, or choose one of the suggestions that the site provides you until a suitable domain name that suites the customer is available.

The screenshot shows the Hover website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Hover logo and links for DOMAIN PRICING, EMAIL, BLOG, WEBMAIL, ABOUT US, and HELP. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with FIND A DOMAIN, TRANSFER, RENEW, and SIGN IN. The main content area features a search bar with the text 'exampledomainforschool.org' and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, there are three sections of domain suggestions: EXACT MATCH, FEATURED, and GENERIC. The EXACT MATCH section shows 'exampledomainforschool.org' for \$13.99. The FEATURED section lists several domains with their original and discounted prices, such as 'exampledomainforschool.design' for \$19.99 (discounted from \$39.99) and 'exampledomainforschool.ca' for \$9.99 (discounted from \$14.99). The GENERIC section lists domains like 'exampledomainforschool.com' for \$12.99. On the right side, there is a FILTERS panel with a list of categories and sub-categories, each with a checkbox. The 'Show All' checkbox is checked.

Here are some great domains for your website or idea
We make it easy to register and connect with just a few clicks.

exampledomainforschool.org

EXACT MATCH

exampledomainforschool.org	\$13.99 +
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FEATURED

exampledomainforschool.design <small>For those who can't help but create.</small>	\$19.99 / \$39.99 +
exampledomainforschool.ca <small>For Canadians, Canadian companies, and Canadian trademark holders.</small>	\$9.99 / \$14.99 +
exampledomainforschool.online	\$4.99 / \$29.99 +
exampledomainforschool.store	\$64.99 +
exampledomainforschool.tech	\$49.99 +
exampledomainforschool.cloud	\$19.99 +
exampledomainforschool.io	\$49.99 +
exampledomainforschool.co	\$25.99 +

GENERIC

exampledomainforschool.com	\$12.99 +
exampledomainforschool.xyz	\$11.99 +
exampledomainforschool.net	\$14.49 +
exampledomainforschool.global	\$57.99 +
exampledomainforschool.today	\$19.99 +

FILTERS

- Show All
- Top Picks
- Featured
- Generic
- Suggestions
- Personal
- Professional
- Businesses
- Organizations
- Computers and Internet
- Audio and Video
- Media and Music
- Sports, Hobbies and Games
- Arts and Culture
- Food and Drink
- Lifestyles and Relationships
- Educational and Academic
- Financial and Banking
- Real Estate
- Health and Fitness
- Marketing and Sales
- Travel and Tourism
- Fun and Unique
- Descriptive
- Trades and Construction
- Products
- Services
- Shopping
- Adult
- Colors
- Geographic
- Cities
- Regions
- Americas
- Europe
- Africa
- Asia Pacific
- South America
- French
- German

Step 4: Once you have found your suitable domain name(s). Click “+” to move on to add it to the shopping cart and/or “buy now” to complete the next step in the order process.

Step 5: Follow the on screen prompts until your order is complete.

*Note: You will need to have our business' login to complete the transaction.

Step 6: hover.com will send our support email box a confirmation that the domain has been purchased and created, along with an IP address, a login name, and a password of where the domain is currently “parked” with Hover.

Use this information to login and complete the steps for forwarding your domain to our Sphera server's DNS. (See *Forwarding an Existing Domain.* for further instructions)

Forwarding an Existing Domain Name

Step 1: Verify whether the customer has purchased hosting with us or if they have a domain that they have purchased from us via Hover.

Note: You can use our customer database to identify who they were currently hosted with, if they are hosted with us, if they have a domain name, what domain name they have purchased, or if they are making a change from hosting with our company to another company.

Step 2: If the customer has hosting with a third party refer them to the third party for support in setting up DNS forwarding. However, be sure to provide the user with the Primary and Secondary DNS Server addresses needed to complete their domain forwarding with the third party.

Step 3: If they have setup the hosting service through us and our provider Hover.com, then login to our hover.com account and edit the DNS service information under the Domain Settings Tab for their domain name that they purchased.

Our DNS server addresses and their friendly names are listed below:

Primary DNS Server - NS0.mycompany.com

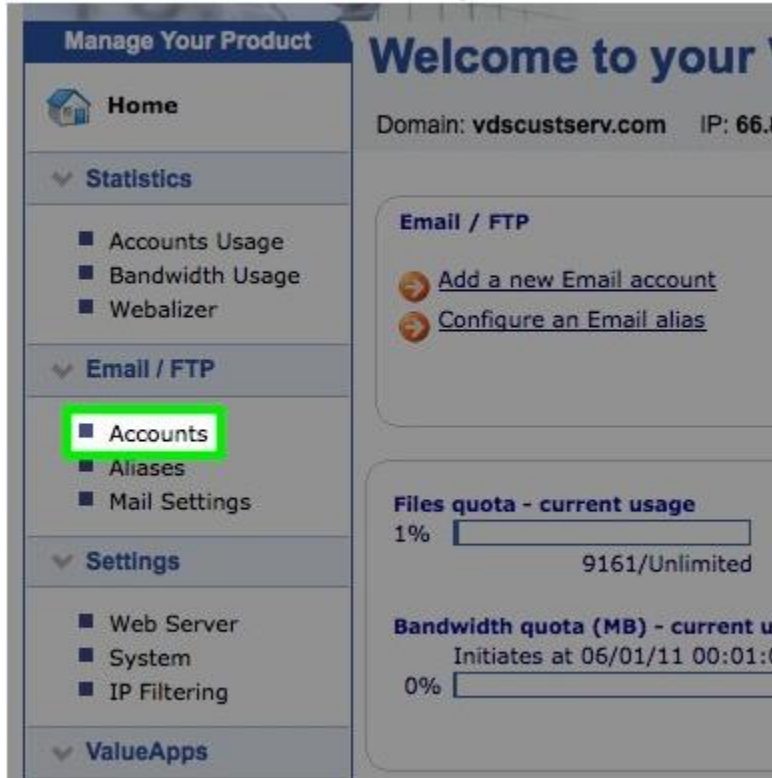
IP Address - 33.333.333.3

Secondary DNS Server – NS1.mycompany.com

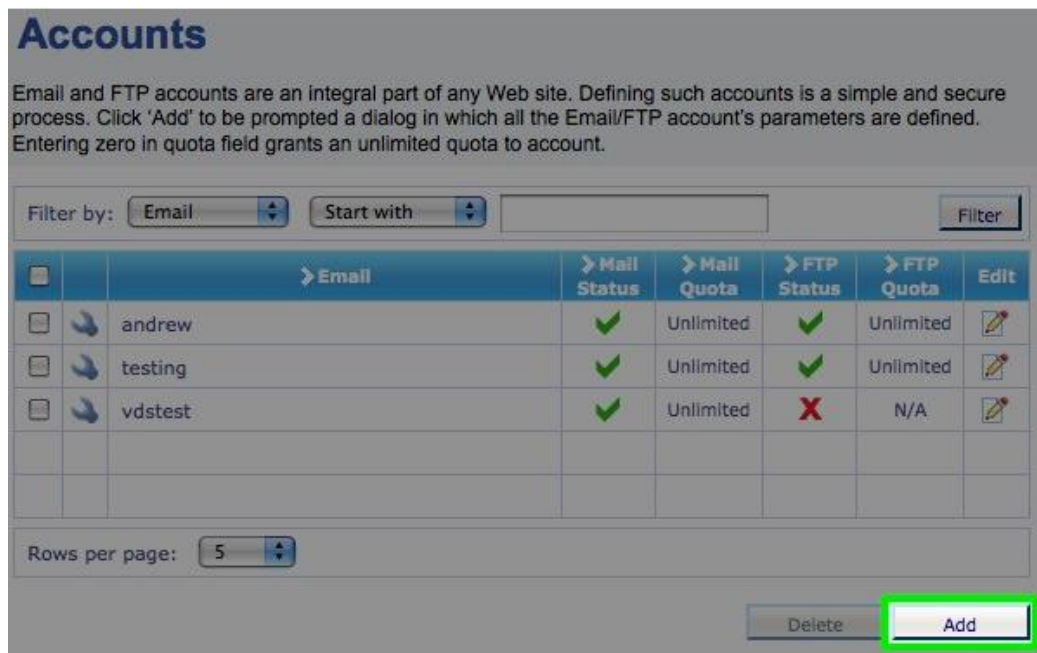
IP Address – 33.333.222.4

Setting up an FTP Account

Step 1: After logging into Sphera click on the “Accounts” link under the Email/FTP tab on the left hand side of the console.



Step Two: Click the Add Button at the bottom of the list of accounts.



Step 3: Enter the following information as illustrated in Figure 1.

Username: The username that the user will use to login.

Account Description: A short description of the account and what is being used for.

Password: Enter the new password twice. Be sure to follow the company's password policy. In this case it will be 6-8 characters long containing only printable ASCII Characters of the English Alphabet.

E-Mail: Do not enable this feature for FTP Accounts.

FTP: Enable FTP, with a quota of x number of MBs. You will set this feature based on the space that the user will need to upload their files.

Home Directory:

Prefix: “/”

Name: var/www/<thewebsitesname.com> i.e. “var/www/mywebsite.net”

The screenshot shows a configuration window titled "Email/FTP Account". It is divided into several sections:

- Account details:** "User name:" is set to "username". "Account description:" is set to "Email and FTP Account".
- Password:** "New password:" and "Retype password:" are both masked with asterisks. A note states: "Password should be 6 - 8 characters long, containing only printable ASCII characters of the English alphabet."
- Email:** "Enable, with quota of 0 MB." is checked. "Enable auto responder." is unchecked.
- FTP:** "Enable, with quota of 0 MB." is checked. "Home directory:" is set to "Prefix: /" and "Name: var/www/". "Use existing directory." is checked.

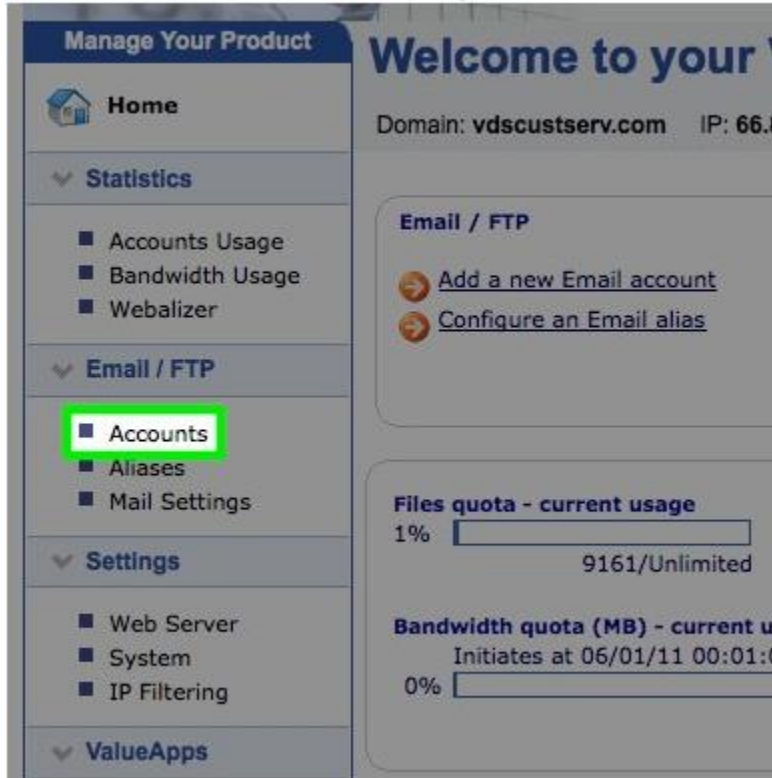
At the bottom right, there are "Finish" and "Cancel" buttons.

Figure 1

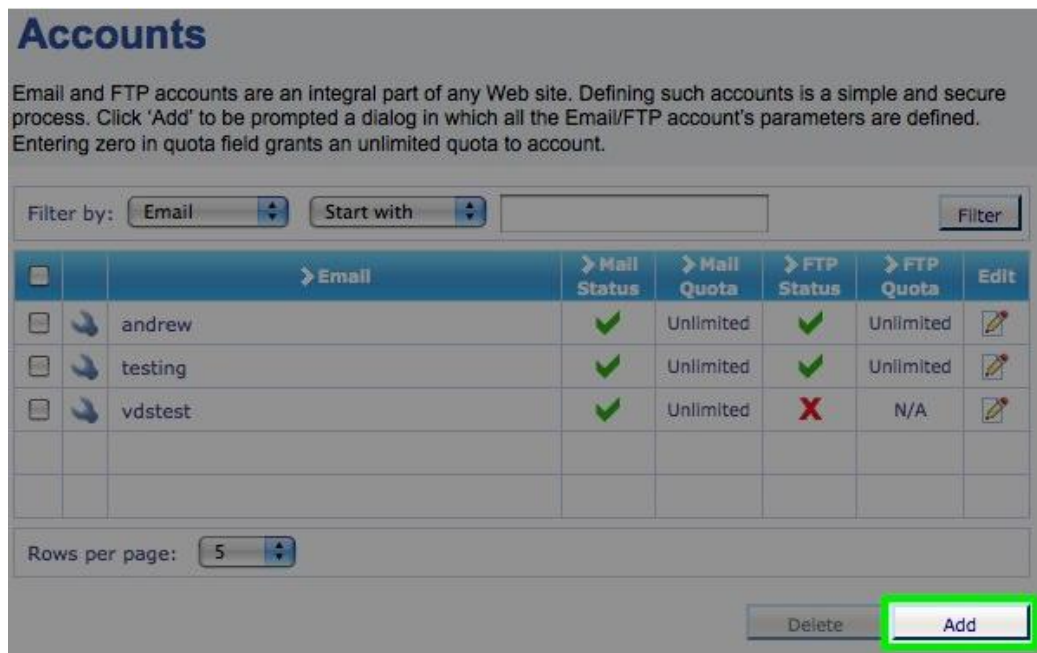
Step 4: Verify the information and Click Finish. This will setup an account with FTP access to the specified site hosted on the server. The account will appear in the user list.

Setting up an E-Mail Account

Step 1: After Logging into Sphera click on the “Accounts” link under the Email/FTP tab on the left hand side of the console.



Step 2: Click the Add Button at the bottom of the list of accounts.



Step 3: Enter the following information:

Username: The username that the user will use to login. For E-mail <username>@<domainname> i.e. Joe.User@mywebsite.net

Account Description: A short description of the account and what is being used for.

i.e. Joe User CIO of mywebsite.net

Password: Enter the new password twice. Be sure to follow the company's password policy. In this case it will be 6-8 characters long containing only printable ASCII Characters of the English Alphabet.

E-Mail: Enable. with quota of x number of MBs. You will set this feature based on the space that the user will need to store their e-mail. Default Recommended is 1.5GB or 1500MB

The screenshot shows a configuration window titled "Email/FTP Account". It is divided into four main sections:

- Account details:** Contains two text input fields. "User name:" has the value "username". "Account description:" has the value "Email and FTP Account".
- Password:** Contains two password input fields, both masked with dots. To the right, a note reads: "Password should be 6 - 8 characters long, containing only printable ASCII characters of the English alphabet."
- Email:** Contains two checkboxes. The first is checked and labeled "Enable, with quota of 0 MB.". The second is unchecked and labeled "Enable auto responder."
- FTP:** Contains two checkboxes. The first is checked and labeled "Enable, with quota of 0 MB.". Below it, "Home directory:" is set to "/" and "var/www/". There is a "Prefix:" dropdown menu set to "/". A "Name:" field is set to "var/www/". A third checkbox is checked and labeled "Use existing directory."

At the bottom of the window are "Finish" and "Cancel" buttons.

*This will setup an e-mail account without FTP access to the specified site hosted on the server.

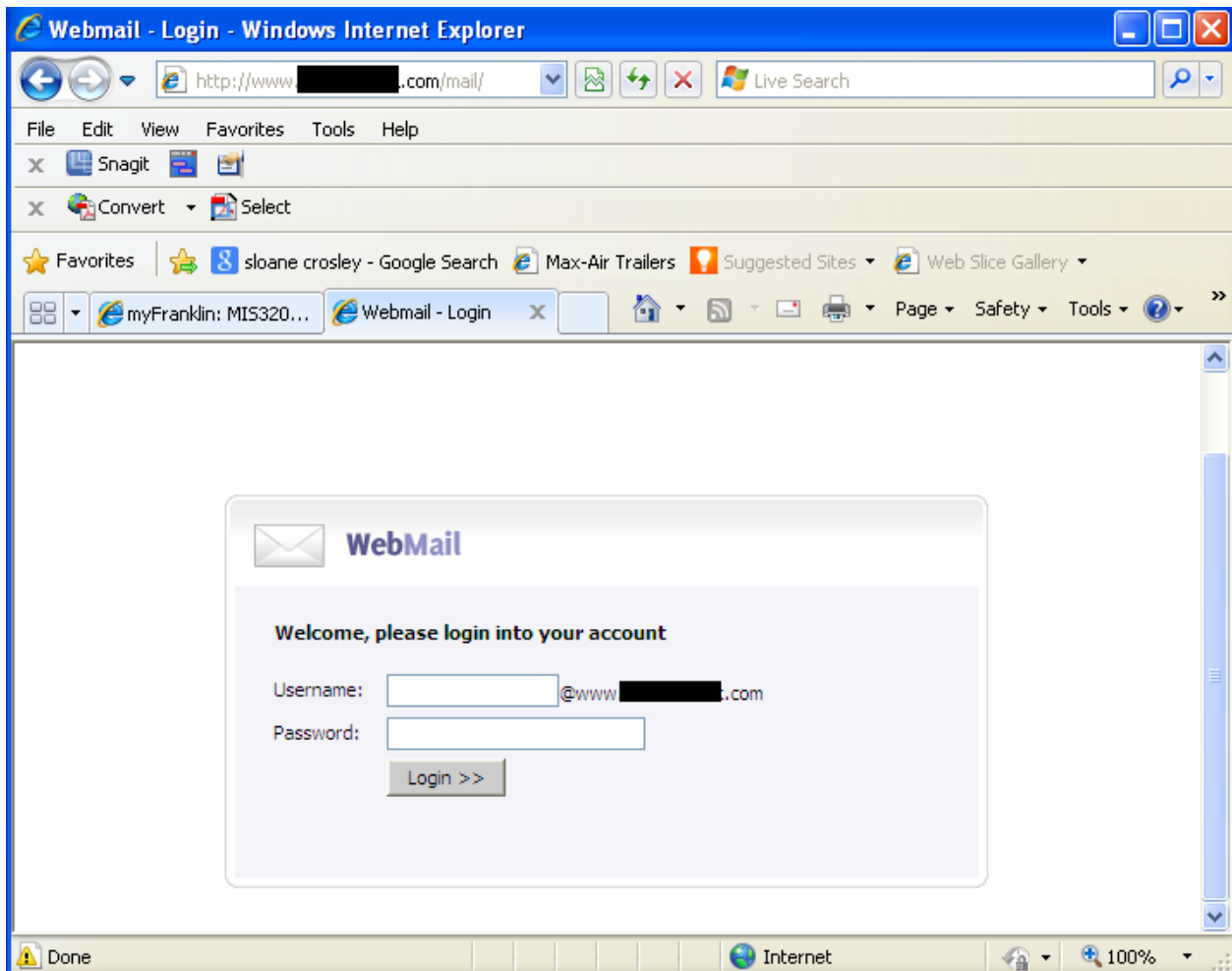
Supporting Email Accounts (Webmail)

Step 1:

Make sure that the user can get to the webmail login at their domain name.

www.domainname.com/mail

Should look like this:



- Note: if the user is unable to get this page, check their browser settings and check your local system to see if the page comes up.

Step 2: If the user is able to get to this page, and still unable to login check their account settings to make sure that the password has not expired or being entered incorrectly. If the user needs to reset their password, verify their security info in the customer service portal and reset in the account settings.

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