

# The original name for Flexible Single Master Operations in Active Directory

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One of the features of Active Directory is known as FSMO, short for Flexible Single Master Operation. A now-retired colleague of mine shared that this was not the original name of the feature.

The original name for the feature was *Floating* Single Master Operation. My limited understanding of Active Directory tells me that the original name used the term *floating* because domain administrators could transfer roles that were covered by it between different domain controllers in the domain. Prior to this innovation, these roles were locked to the Primary Domain Controller.

When the team announced this new feature to their enterprise customers, those customers became very concerned. The word *floating* suggested that the role could flit capriciously from one domain controller to another like a balloon floating aimlessly around a room, and the customers didn't like the idea of these roles moving around on their own without supervision.

My colleague went back through all of the settings, API names, group policies, *etc*, and found that none of them actually used the word *floating*. At best, they just used the abbreviation FSMO. So the team decided to change what the letter F stood for and renamed the feature from *Floating* Single Master Operation to *Flexible* Single Master Operation. The words have similar meanings, but the new word *flexible* more strongly suggests that you are in charge of where the role resides. It doesn't "float around" randomly. Rather, you have the *flexibility* to choose where it goes. All the team had to do to effect this rename was some editing in the documentation (mostly a search-and-replace). No code had to change.

This new name was viewed by enterprise customers much more favorably and calmed their anxiety. Flexible Single Master Operation it is.

**Bonus chatter:** There was one place that the name could not be changed: The patent application.