

## **Software Asset management – Does it matter to us?**

According to the [Information Technology Infrastructure Library](#) (ITIL), SAM is defined as “...all of the infrastructure and processes necessary for the effective management, control and protection of the software assets...throughout all stages of their lifecycle.”

The Goals of SAM are to reduce IT costs and limit business and legal risk related to the ownership and use of software while maximizing IT responsiveness and end-user productivity.

### **Why SAM?**

In many organizations software procurement is not centralized and each department procures software licenses thro different sources including retail outlets. On many situations there is no record of the procurement and with high turnover or resource reduction the information is lost with nobody accountable. Organizations are required to be compliant and when they run an audit they will find themselves with many software titles with no record of procurement or license documentation.

Procuring software titles from unauthorized sources is another problem. Without proper guidance employees may (driven by price factors) end up procuring software titles online from illegal sources thereby exposing the organization to liability.

Another side to this problem is the various departments will be having different versions of the software or different products providing similar functionality. This manifests as a bigger problem when it comes to interoperability of departments when they try to share information or transfer data. This will result in significant IT resources to solve a problem which should not have been there.

Lack of not centralizing license information and documentation is another problem. When it comes to looking for product manuals or original CDs, employees end up spending lot of time looking for these internally and also searching with the application vendor. This is a significant productivity loss!

So over a period an organization finds that it loses track of what software title it has and end up being non-compliant in more than one way. It also would have spent more on software procurement by not taking advantage of the right volume pricing. When it comes to renewing software maintenance with software vendors, they might end up spending more or paying for software those they no longer use. All the above translates to waste and inefficient utilization of resources which translates to increased IT cost and dissatisfied users affecting the bottom-line of the business.

Like anything else, accepting the problem is the first step. SAM is a multi-step process.

**Implementing SAM** is a step-by-step process

(<http://www.microsoft.com/resources/sam/Implementing.mspx>)

Know what you have!

Taking stock of the current install base of all software titles is the first step to this process. There are several tools available to run a discovery across the network and provide formatted reports. This can take from few days to week or more depending on the complexity of the network and access to computers. Information can also be gathered on if the users are really using the software installed and this can potentially be saving thro cost reduction for unused software.

This becomes your install base. For those computers that are not part of the network, there are ways to collect inventory from computers that are not part of the network also. This will be the install base and this can be in a database that gets updated periodically.

### **Reconciling Licenses**

The next step is to reconcile the install base with what has been procured. For an organization with no centralized procurement, this can be a long drawn process. The documentation or proof of purchase could be credit card statements, cancelled checks, paid invoices or records from the vendor.

At the end of the reconciliation effort could be a list of software titles in the installed base with no proof of purchase (termed as deficiency) or having surplus software titles with no record of utilization (termed as overage).

To cure deficiency of software licenses, appropriate actions can be taken to procure additional licenses or uninstalling the overage. There are tools available to install or uninstall software remotely across network. One can also move software licenses from users not utilizing the software to those who need it. Illegal software should be removed.

### **Centralizing software license info**

Once the base is reconciled and necessary changes made as above, it will be a good idea to centralize all information and also secure original media and proof of purchase. This will make future audits easy and easy access to documentation and media.

Identify a department like IT or Finance to be responsible and accountable for SAM.

The next step is standardization of software titles. This will save significantly in support and interoperability. Go thro the various software titles that you have and ensure that you are using the right version and not using outdated or unsupported versions.

As part of the SAM reconciliation process, ensure you have installed all the vendor provided updates and patches. This will ensure security and user productivity.

## **Do away with what you do not need**

Ensure you are not using different titles providing the same functionality. These will have significant impact when trying to get support from vendors. Many software titles also provide free upgrade through the maintenance program thereby providing cost savings thro free upgrades.

Form a centralized software procurement policy and make software procurement through authorized vendors via competitive bidding by consolidating procurement. This will give more buying power and ensure the best pricing. Ensure all newly procured titles are deployed thro a centralized organization ensuring that you continue to stay compliant.

Educating the employees and new hires on the software asset management policy is an ongoing effort. Their cooperation is fully required to ensure you are compliant and you reap the benefits of the SAM plan. They should be educated on the need to stick to the license terms of the software they all use.

Once you have a good SAM plan in place, maintaining it is not involved and you will reap the benefits in terms of increased productivity, reduced support costs, reduced procurement and increasing your bottom line!

*By Maha Mahadevan, a certified SAM professional – is the President of BOSS ([www.Boss-Solutions.com](http://www.Boss-Solutions.com)) an Asset Management solutions firm based in GA. BOSS provides Asset Management solutions and services. He can be contacted at [maha@boss-solutions.com](mailto:maha@boss-solutions.com)*