



DIMENSIONS

Snow Helps Dimensions Keep Down Costs

COMPANY BACKGROUND

Dimensions provides support for about 4,000 people with learning disabilities or autism. Based in Reading, the not-for-profit company has some 1,000 tenants living in a mix of houses, flats and registered care homes in England and Wales. Dimensions employs 7,000 staff and has a turnover of £180m a year.

CHALLENGE

Dimensions had no formalized structure in place to manage its software. It used to contract a consultant to carry out a compliance review that gave the company “a rough idea” of its license positions. This wasn't an effective solution, so it sought an automated SAM solution to ensure it would pass annual licensing reviews as well as optimize the software estate and Snow was the most cost-effective.

SNOW'S CONTRIBUTION

The Snow SAM platform comprising Snow License Manager, Software Recognition Service, Snow Inventory ensure the company has the insight and intelligence for effective Software Asset Management. The integration with Snow Automation Platform gives additional value through automated authorization process for software requests and distribution and the ability to reharvest unused software.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Accurate software usage reports
- Trusted data for negotiating better vendor deals
- Fast turnaround of license reviews with actionable intelligence
- Cost effective – saving money and time
- Ability to optimize Cloud spend

SAM HERO

James Shepherd, IT Operations Manager at Dimensions, cannot wait to get Snow up and running. “You have something that will get results right out of the box, but actually we're investing in a product that's developing and market-leading, so we'll continue to get the benefit from that.

FORMALIZING THE SAM PROCESS

As well as a personalized care provider for people with a wide range of support needs, Dimensions is also a landlord. As a result, the range of software it has to license and manage is extensive – especially relative to the size of the company. IT budgets are always tight, but nowhere more so than at a not-for-profit organization when government spending on social care is being squeezed.

Dimensions had no formalized structure in place to manage its software. In 2015, it contracted a consultant to carry out a compliance review that gave Shepherd “a rough idea” of his license positions. The experience made him think. “Is this the best way? To get someone in to do this once every four or five years, and then to trim our holdings?”

He decided to start looking for a SAM solution.

Shepherd did his due diligence on a handful of market-leading solutions. Of all the vendors he engaged with, only Snow showed sensitivity to the particular difficulties faced by Dimensions. “The engagement from the team at Snow was far better than anyone else,” Shepherd says. “It’s good when someone actually takes the time to listen and understand, being in the sector we’re in, social care, which even two years ago was struggling financially.”

Shepherd was committed to Snow but had to postpone purchase and implementation due to time and budgetary constrictions. The sales team at Snow, Shepherd says, were discreet and understanding. “I find it really annoying when you show interest in a product, you get to a point and go, ‘Okay, I’d really love to do it, but I can’t do it for a year,’ and then three months later you get a call going, ‘We’re just checking to see if anything had changed and we could move this forward.’ I didn’t get any of that from Snow.”

Before Dimensions decided to implement Snow in 2015, it went through two exercises where it worked through their Microsoft licences to identify and verify its license volumes against actual usage. Although Shepherd had nothing but “vast arrays of Excel spreadsheets” and SCCM to identify license numbers and allocation to reach a final license position. “We could true it up okay,” he says.



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James Shepherd,
IT Operations Manager

MAKING SAVINGS FROM THE OUTSET

The time and cost required to complete the licensing review exercise vindicated his decision to purchase Snow. “When I look at the whole-life cost of Snow versus doing all that painstaking work and the cost of every so often doing a licensing review or just dropping everything because Microsoft or another vendor comes along and says, ‘We want to make sure that you’re licensed correctly,’ it saves us money to have a SAM solution doing it for us. And out of all the products that we looked at, Snow was the most cost-effective.”

Dimensions are deploying a piece of software, Dragon Naturally Speaking, developed especially for people with dyslexia and other kinds of learning impairment. Dragon licenses are “phenomenally expensive”, Shepherd explains, but usage data from Snow will help keep down costs. “I think we’ve got 25 licenses for Dragon. We get people who try it, then go, ‘Oh yes, it’s great.’ Once we have Snow we can use the intelligence information to comment, ‘Well, you say it’s great, but you never use it’ and make an informed decision when another request comes in as to whether to move a license from one user to another or buy one more.

Shepherd also hopes to make savings on every-day software such as Microsoft Visio and Project and the popular screen grab tool Snagit. “I get requests for Snagit all the time. People see their colleagues using it and they go, ‘Ah, that’s amazing. Can I have that?’ But if I give them a license, will they really use it? I’ll be able to tell with Snow.”

Microsoft Office 365 E1 and E2 licenses are currently free to charities; Snow will help Dimensions evaluate if co-workers with an E3 license are actually using those components that require a paid-for license. If not, the E3 license will be reharvested or Dimensions will cut back on its E3 license count.

Shepherd expects Snow Automation Platform with its automated workflow to improve the working life of his team and reduce the time it takes to either remote-connect to someone to install a piece of software, or set it up as a deployment package through SCCM, and then deploy it. File share and mapping automation will also take away many mundane and unnecessary tasks from the helpdesk team. “All things that the Automation Platform will do far better, through workflow,” comments Shepherd.

No organization wants to spend unnecessarily on software, but the urgency for Shepherd lies in the fact that every penny he saves can be spent on helping the 4,000 people Dimensions supports. Not only that, the target for 2020 is for technical staff to have the time to work directly with those four thousand. And it is technology – the insight and automation from Snow – that will free up the time to step away from IT and spend it with people instead.