PROWLER PROOF

Insight is the key to audit-readiness and greater productivity

COMPANY BACKGROUND

Prowler Proof is a manufacturer and distributor of security doors and windows with headquarters in Banyo, Queensland. The family-owned business operates Australia's only fully automated production line out of its factory in Brisbane. This culture of ambition and technology extends to its IT: Prowler Proof was selling its products online as early as 1996.

CHALLENGE

The company needed a Software Asset Management (SAM) solution for two reasons: first, to prepare for audits – predominantly from Microsoft ¬– as its infrastructure is Windows based with a number of virtual machines. Second it wanted to ratchet up productivity by discovering to what extent its wide range of bespoke software was actually being used, and used by the right people. Audits used to be a haphazard and very time-consuming affair, interfering far too much with the daily running and long-term projects of the IT team, which is going through a legacy systems upgrade.

SNOW'S CONTRIBUTION

Snow's SAM Platform was rolled out very recently, in September 2017, so it is too early to single out any specific cost savings or other ROI. The company is confident these benefits will come through soon, but is also at pains to point out that their ambitions for Snow reach far beyond that. Just as its Brisbane plant is fully automated, Prowler Proof wants to do SAM at the cutting edge of accuracy and automation. Another consideration for implementing Snow is to de-risk the estate; a business that sells safety and security can ill afford to give away its proprietary software through less-than-perfect SAM.

ANTICIPATED BUSINESS BENEFITS AND ROI

- Audit readiness
- Enhanced cyber security and blacklisting of software
- Increased operational efficiency through insight into usage

SAM HERO

Matthew Siveter, Head of IT, says: "We are looking to Snow to help us get more mature. To help us get better in our use of applications, better in our use of software and to get smarter in how we license our products."

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AUDIT READINESS & SOFTWARE OPTIMIZATION

The company's immediate reason for investing in a Software Asset Management (SAM) solution was audit readiness: preparation for a Microsoft review could take up to three valuable weeks – "a complete and utter nightmare", as Matthew Siveter, Head of IT, describes it.

The method, such as it was, had IT sifting through its emails to track down license keys which were then entered into the audit report. He adds: "Then the next year it's: 'I'm not even sure I recognize that key. Are we actually using it? I don't know.' We had no real clarity on the use of the software or the extent that the license was being used, which meant searching around for evidence to support the use or not of that software."

Snow was already on Siveter's radar through previous jobs, Gartner briefings and industry conferences, but what clinched it for him was when he was at a Gartner Summit he saw a demonstration of how reports – that would be accepted in response to a Microsoft audit – come straight out of Snow.

In September 2017, Snow License Manager, Snow Inventory and Software Recognition Service were rolled out across Prowler Proof's head office and factory. Siveter's next job is to get all his license data into Snow: "A one-off operational pain and just a part of an implementation."

He says. "Having a push-button solution is critical, so that we can set this up once, do the effort once and then, every time we purchase something new, we input that information into Snow. Of course, we'll spend time optimizing the estate but it'll become a very low burden for us when an audit is requested, all we'll have to do is click a few buttons and the job is done."

Prowler Proof has a strong tradition of technological innovation; its fully automated Brisbane plant has robots that weld with an accuracy of one-tenth of a millimeter. Within that culture, the SAM team has to do more than just rely on best-guesses for a picture of its software usage. Some of Prowler Proof's software is very specialized and proprietary, so accurate insight into usage could result in considerable operational benefits.

This is the part of the Snow journey that excites Siveter the most. "We need to know if the staff are logging into the right software for the task at hand. I'll get to see that from Snow. I've never had that information before. A co-worker tells you: 'Yeah, I use that program, absolutely', and you never actually know if they are. In future, with Snow, I will know and that is going to be able to allow me to drive benefits in the factory. We can make sure that people are using the software to its full potential. And if not, I can go and teach them how."

The investment in a SAM solution is part of a larger, business-wide project to upgrade legacy systems. Prowler Proof was an early – not to say pioneering – adopter of digital technology but seemed to be in danger of falling victim to its own forward-looking vision. Siveter explains. "Some of our legacy systems were implemented in 1995. We've got programs that are written in old codebases and they've got to be replaced."

IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

The Snow Platform will immediately impose structure and process on the bespoke or off-the-shelf applications that Siveter needs to update his IT infrastructure. Again, he is taking no risks with audits. "Every time we take on a new product, there's a risk that somebody's just going to come knocking on the door and they want the information yesterday," he says.

Siveter's co-workers take their Surface laptops home with them, blurring the line between business and personal use. Siveter knows some of this must be going on, but needs Snow to find out to what extent. File-sharing has already been identified as an issue: co-workers have used their personal accounts on company devices, risking a bill from providers for an unpaid license fee.

> "Snow helps us become as operationally effective as we can"
>
> **Matthew Siveter, Head of IT**

"Our cultural message is: we don't use file-sharing software or such-and-such an application because it's not secure for our intellectual property. With Snow's blacklist functionality, I can actually prove internally to our management team and externally to the vendors that these applications don't exist on our estate anymore. That's a fantastic message.

A few months in, it is too early for cost savings or specific numbers around ROI – confident though Siveter is that these will materialize soon enough, especially with Microsoft Office 365, where he suspects many of his co-workers are "over-licensed" and not on the optimal plan to suit their needs.

However, he is not overly focused on costs. "We will have that [savings] story, I'm sure, but we'll also have a story about our own estate, without a shadow of a doubt," he says.

Siveter's vision for Snow is a great example of how Software Asset Management can be used to drive business-wide learning and growth. "Thanks to the insight Snow provides we can challenge concepts about use of our own software – I see that as one of the biggest benefits."

He concludes: "What is going to keep me awake at night, is making sure that we are the most effective that we can be. We as a company, decide to use technology and use software, to help us be good at what we do. We need Snow to make sure we understand that the software is being used and is making us as operationally effective as we can."

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