EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Securing the funding to get started in Software Asset Management (SAM) or Software License Optimization can sometimes be difficult. One way to get the attention of senior business managers is to provide quick wins that point to greater cost savings over time.

This 10-minute Guide from Snow’ SAM experts will show how a short-term Software Harvesting project can pave the way for further SAM investment.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

When it comes to proving the value of Software Asset Management (SAM) and securing funding to expand the remit of software license optimization, vendor management and compliance activities, it’s always good to achieve a couple of ‘quick wins’ to get the program off to a flying start.

For many organisations, a Software Harvesting (also known as Re-Harvesting) campaign can be one of the easiest and quickest way to demonstrate the real benefits of SAM. In its simplest form, Software Harvesting means uninstalling unused applications and freeing up the corresponding entitlement so that the application can be installed and licensed elsewhere at no additional cost.

It sounds simple! And for the most part, it is.

For Software Harvesting to be effective, you need the following elements to be in place:

1. Inventory data of all installed applications (or at least, all copies of the target application – more information below)
2. Usage information about whether installed applications are actively being used and by whom
3. Mechanism to uninstall unused software – this can be done manually but will faster and more effective if automated
4. Policies to make the process repeatable in the future

We’ll take a look at each of these requirements in a moment; but first let’s look at how to get started with a Software Harvesting campaign.

2.0 GETTING STARTED – PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

As with all areas of Software Asset Management, ensuring success starts right at the very beginning by setting clear and achievable goals. In the case of Software Harvesting, this includes:

2.1 Targeting specific applications – for example Microsoft Visio, Project and MapPoint, or Adobe products are always good candidates for your initial efforts, as they are often installed for a specific purpose or period of time and then sit unused on people’s machines.

2.2 Identifying cheaper products that provide similar or lesser functionality to your chosen applications and offer them as an alternative to your users – Microsoft has a free Visio Viewer available for download, while there are several cheap MS Project viewers on the market, and of course free and low-cost pdf writers are ubiquitous these days.

2.3 Ensuring you have buy-in and approval from Senior IT Management and, if possible, Senior Business management – sell them the potential savings so that they are happy to deal with any concerns or issues raised as a result of the campaign. This will help raise user support.

2.4 Communicating with users – explain what you are doing and why. Provide users with an understanding of the savings if you can uninstall the application or provide an alternative, cheaper application. An email sent to end users could looking something like this:

Dear [Name]
According to our records you have a copy of Microsoft Project installed on your machine which has not been used in the last 90 days.
If you no longer require this product, we can either:
a) Uninstall it so the license can be reused elsewhere in the business, saving $xxx.
b) Replace it with a specialist MS Project viewer [Product X], saving $xxx. This will allow you to view MS Project Plans, but not edit them
Alternatively, please let me know asap if you need to keep this application.
If I do not hear from you by xx/xx/xx, Microsoft Project will automatically be uninstalled within the following two weeks.
If you have any queries regarding this email, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with [Software Asset Manager].
3.0 USING TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE SOFTWARE HARVESTING COST-EFFECTIVE

As outlined in the introduction, there are three distinct technology requirements to make Software Harvesting possible:

3.1 Inventory – a good inventory solution will quickly show where copies of the target application(s) have been installed across the network, including remote sites. You may need to be able to quickly differentiate between different ‘flavors’ of an application. For example, you may be targeting Adobe Acrobat installs – but many inventory solutions cannot differentiate between the commercially-licensable Acrobat and the free-to-use Adobe Reader products. Likewise, if you wish to target installs of something like Microsoft SQL, you need to be able to tell the version and editions of each install.

3.2 Usage Information – at a very basic level, you can simply send out an email like the example above and ask users to voluntarily agree to have applications uninstalled from their PCs. But this strategy is from guaranteed for success. To be effective, a Software Harvesting program needs to be based on reliable information about which applications are – and which are not – used regularly. For example, you may create a policy that says any application not used in the last 90 days (the timeframe is up to you) will be automatically submitted for uninstallation. This can only be done if the inventory tool in place provides accurate usage tracking.

3.3 Uninstallation processes and technologies – again, it is possible to use reports from the inventory solution to manually uninstall target applications. But in organizations with more than 500 PCs, or where computers are spread across multiple sites, an automated solution is preferable. The solution should be able to take an output from the inventory solution and use this to automatically remove the unused software, thus freeing up the license. It is important to verify that the application has indeed been removed (via a subsequent software audit, for example) and to record the corresponding ‘increase’ in available licenses.

3.4 License Management solution – as before, you can perform some level of software harvesting without a dedicated software license optimization solution, but you do risk missing opportunities and failing to accurately record the actual license entitlement both before and after the exercise. A good license management solution makes it easier to reconcile the entitlements held by the organization against the applications that are installed across the network.

4.0 DON’T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE TWICE

Having gone to the trouble of identifying unused applications and freeing up the entitlement (which, in most cases, the organization has already paid for), the last thing you want to do is keep buying licenses when you suddenly have a stock of ‘spares’ to be assigned.

As such, it is vital to include all the relevant stakeholders in the process, especially colleagues in procurement. They need to know which licenses have been freed up, for which products and who those licenses can potentially be re-allocated to.

If that sounds complicated; it doesn’t have to be. This is where an effective software license optimization solution – something like Snow License Manager – comes into its own. Solutions like Snow not only make it easy to record and track software licenses, they provide all sorts of different users (from IT, procurement, finance, governance etc.) with custom views of software and licensing across the organization.

5.0 SHOUT ABOUT YOUR SUCCESS!

Don’t neglect to report on the savings created through the harvesting campaign – the number of users identified as not using the application for three months, the number of users who had the application uninstalled / replaced and the cost savings (based on the commercial value of licenses harvested). Again, the better the technology you are working with, the easier this report will be to generate.

The report should be seen by the most senior person you can get it to, and everyone in between! Make sure you provide some recommendations and next steps so you can build on your success. Recommendations will depend on your current circumstances – but the harvesting campaign could help build the business case for a more wide-ranging SAM program. You could propose that applications not used for three months should be automatically uninstalled, or you might recommend that the Standard Build be modified to include a copy of the free Visio Viewer, minimizing the number of application install requests the Service Desk will receive.
6.0 CONCLUSION

A software license harvesting campaign can be a great way to show the benefits of Software Asset Management and build a business justification for further action. A harvesting campaign is simple to set up and run, as long as basic discovery (who is using what application) is in place.

Once the harvesting campaign is complete and the applications have been uninstalled and new license purchases being reduced, the savings realized can help build the business case for more investment in SAM, including more sophisticated license management tools.

7.0 NEXT STEPS

If you’d like to find out how much software on your network isn’t being used, or you’d like to look at exactly what your software licenses entitle you to, why not speak to a Snow Software SAM expert about a quick-start SAM Proof of Concept?

Contact your regional Snow office today for more information: http://www.snowsoftware.com/int/contact

ABOUT SNOW SOFTWARE

Snow Software (www.snowsoftware.com) is a global leader in the delivery of on-premise and cloud-based Software Asset Management solutions, including multi-platform inventory and advanced software license management technologies. Every day, organizations ranging from small businesses to multinational corporations and governments use Snow solutions to analyze and manage more than 1.7 billion software records.

Since 1997, Snow Software has sold over 9 million licenses to thousands of end user organizations and service providers worldwide who rely on Snow’s SAM expertise to manage compliance, optimize software availability and drive cost savings.

Privately-funded, Snow Software is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, with international offices located in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, China, The Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and Brazil.

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