



Construction Company Uses Accessible Information to Improve Asset Management

Overview

Country or Region: United Kingdom

Industry: Construction

Customer Profile

The Bowmer & Kirkland Group is a leading construction and development company in the United Kingdom. Based in Belper, Derbyshire, the group has about 1,600 employees.

Business Situation

Bowmer & Kirkland sought to gain more accessible information about its software licensing. It hoped that a better understanding of licensing could help the group better manage software assets.

Solution

Bowmer & Kirkland engaged in a Software Asset Management process, including installation of the Software Organiser license management product from partner Business Continuity Services.

Benefits

- Instant access to information
- Greater licensing control
- Reduced risk
- Improved policies and training
- Easy asset management process

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Carl Stirland, Director of IT, Bowmer & Kirkland

The Bowmer & Kirkland Group, a large British construction company, wanted to better understand software licensing. The group sought to learn what type of license agreements it should use for new software and how it could best manage its software assets. As part of a Software Asset Management (SAM) implementation, Bowmer & Kirkland purchased Software Organiser from Business Continuity Services, a Microsoft Certified Partner based in Scotland. Bowmer & Kirkland used the instant access to data from this license management solution—combined with the group’s strong existing policies and inventory procedures—to gain a greater understanding of licensing issues. Overall, the SAM implementation at Bowmer & Kirkland reduced the group’s risks and improved its policies and training. The group also expects to save money on future purchases by having greater control over its software assets.



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Situation

The Bowmer & Kirkland Group is one of the largest privately held construction companies in the United Kingdom. The group includes 24 companies offering a range of complementary services for all types of construction and development, from homebuilding to multimillion-pound commercial projects throughout the United Kingdom. With headquarters in Belper, Derbyshire, and regional offices across the country, the group has about 1,600 employees.

In early 2007, Bowmer & Kirkland decided to examine its software licensing situation.

“Basically, we were seeking to improve the professionalism of the team within IT,” says Carl Stirland, Director of IT at Bowmer & Kirkland. “Although we had procedures in place for tracking and allocating software internally, licensing is a very complex subject. As we sought to make decisions about what we needed to upgrade, change, and so forth, we knew that we needed to take into consideration the licensing behind that.”

Bowmer & Kirkland kept stringent control over purchases and performed inventory using a software product called Centennial Discovery. The group also maintained records of its software in Microsoft® Office Excel® 2003 spreadsheet software and in Numara Track-It!, a software product that the group was also using for its help desk. “But these systems didn’t cater to the complexities of licensing,” says Stirland. “It’s important that we are able to inventory our equipment, but inventory tools don’t necessarily give us the capabilities to manage licenses effectively.”

As Bowmer & Kirkland looked to purchase new software, Stirland wasn’t sure what type of agreement to pursue: Original Equipment Manufacturer software, a Microsoft Open License program agreement, or select agreements.

An additional concern was that the group might have been spending more money than its software usage required. Stirland says, “We used to have a policy that every time we bought a new machine, we bought software with it. That way, we knew we were 100 percent licensed. With such a policy, at some point you will become overlicensed. But it’s not easy to know that unless you have a tool where you can easily see that you have licenses available.”

Solution

Bowmer & Kirkland examined six different licensing and compliancy tools between March and May 2007. It evaluated the tools on five criteria, seeking a product that was functionally superior, easy to use, easy to understand, easy to report from, and capable of maintaining a track record of how purchases related to licensing.

Bowmer & Kirkland decided that the best product for its needs was Software Organiser from Business Continuity Services (BCS). As a Microsoft Certified Partner based in Glasgow, Scotland, BCS has a specialization in Software Asset Management (SAM). Its Software Organiser product takes information from any inventory tool (in this case, Centennial Discovery), reconciles licenses, and provides information that helps a company manage licenses, media, and suppliers. Built on the Microsoft .NET Framework, Software Organiser ships with Microsoft SQL Server® 2000 Desktop Engine database software. Bowmer & Kirkland runs it on a virtual server running the Windows Server® 2003 operating system and SQL Server 2005 database software.

At about the same time, Bowmer & Kirkland was working with The Channel IT Services, a software vendor, to examine licensing options for potential new Microsoft purchases. With the vendor, Bowmer & Kirkland applied for a Microsoft License Statement (MLS) report, in



The Bowmer & Kirkland SAM certificate

April 2007, “with a view to look at licensing,” Stirland says. “We didn’t even really know that Microsoft had a SAM team. But the MLS led to us being contacted by a member of the Microsoft SAM team, and we found the team’s help really useful.”

Microsoft sees SAM as a process by which a company can move toward treating software as an asset—knowing what the company has, where it is running, and how it is licensed. Microsoft encourages companies to conduct SAM initiatives involving four steps: performing an inventory, matching software with licenses, reviewing policies, and developing a plan. In this case, Bowmer & Kirkland was already well on its way through such an initiative before it even engaged with Microsoft representatives.

SAM is a process for all software, not just Microsoft products, but Bowmer & Kirkland wanted to start with its most abundant software. The group uses numerous Microsoft products including the Windows Server® 2003, Windows® XP, and Windows Vista® operating systems; Microsoft Exchange Server 2003; SQL Server 2005; Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2006; and Microsoft Office products such as the Microsoft Office Outlook® 2003 messaging and collaboration client, Office PowerPoint® 2003 presentation graphics program, Office Project Server 2003, Word 2003, and Excel 2003.

In June 2007, Bowmer & Kirkland imported its license records from Excel and Track-It! into Software Organiser. (It no longer uses Excel or Track-It! for these purposes.) BCS staff were then able to verify license compliancy and confirm that Bowmer & Kirkland was completing the four steps of the SAM process, including the establishment of policies and procedures for future Software Asset Management.

At the end of the Bowmer & Kirkland SAM initiative, in October 2007, Microsoft presented the group with a certificate, which also states that Microsoft should not review the group’s licensing status for 12 months. Stirland is proud that the certificate was the first to be issued under the new SAM program in the United Kingdom.

Benefits

By completing its SAM implementation and using Software Organiser, Bowmer & Kirkland has greater control over its software purchasing. As a result, the group is saving money and reducing risk. The group established policies and training to maintain such benefits in the future, and it gained comfort in its knowledge of its software licensing.

Instant Access to Information

“Thanks to our SAM process, we can now look at our software compliancy in an instant,” says Stirland. Previously, the group sometimes had difficulty consolidating data from its many divisions. Stirland says, “In the past, we had to get information from what seemed like the four corners of the earth.”

Now all that data resides in one place—and the process of putting it there was simple. “The ability of Software Organiser to import from any discovery tool made it easy for us, because we had a choice of which tools we would use,” says Stirland.

The result is information that’s readily accessible. “Whenever we decide to review our licensing to make sure we’re compliant, the data is available,” Stirland says. “I think that’s extremely important—probably the most important benefit we’ve gained from the SAM initiative.”

Greater Licensing Control

“The SAM process really opened our eyes as to how licensing works,” says Stirland. “You

go to vendors and they offer you licensing in this form or that form, but it's not always obvious what's best for you. Having this information does give us that understanding."

Stirland expects that this greater information and understanding will help Bowmer & Kirkland save money on software purchases in the future, although he's not yet ready to try to estimate how much. "Software Organiser does, for example, give us the facility to say, 'I know I have these licenses; if I upgrade them, it will cost me this much.' So it will make a difference in the way we decide upon future purchases of licenses."

The initiative also uncovered a small amount of overlicensing in certain areas. "That was also a benefit because we were able to reuse that licensing," he says.

Reduced Risk

Another element of licensing involves risk. "It's inevitable that at some point in time you'll come across counterfeit software," says Stirland. "We're particularly proud that during the course of our SAM process, we discovered just one set of counterfeit software, on a very small number of machines that were due to be replaced anyway."

Stirland was pleased with the help offered by the Microsoft SAM team in identifying the counterfeit editions of Microsoft Office 97. "The products had come with what I presume to be stolen authentic certificates on the top. We purchased from a legitimate source, but our supplier may have also been duped."

Because the counterfeit software was more than seven years old, there was no recourse against the counterfeiters. But identifying and removing the software reduced risk for Bowmer & Kirkland. Furthermore, because the group's SAM policy now calls for annual inventories, counterfeits can be exposed

more quickly, resulting in ease of recompense against a supplier. "We'll know exactly who it is," says Andy Fisher, New Business Development Director at BCS, "and Software Organiser will hold the evidence for Bowmer & Kirkland to say, 'We did buy that from you and here is the relevant documentation.'"

Improved Policies and Training

For some companies, the idea of creating policies regarding Software Asset Management is a new one, but many companies—like Bowmer & Kirkland—already have the pieces in place. "Quite often we find that an organization has a lot of processes," says Fisher of BCS, "but they're not joined into one overall SAM process. The individual processes are often robust and sound, but going through a SAM initiative helps bring them together as one coherent and consistent policy."

Stirland agrees, noting the particular importance of SAM in a large, distributed organization. "To properly manage a large and growing organization takes a process and training. Our SAM initiative has given us both. The people here responsible for ongoing licensing are now scheduled for training from Microsoft," he says. In the future, the main subjects of training in the Bowmer & Kirkland IT department—such as applications, hardware, and health and safety—will include SAM.

Easy Asset Management Process

Stirland describes the SAM implementation, which Bowmer & Kirkland completed in less than eight months, as smooth and painless. He attributes much of that to BCS and its Software Organiser product. "Implementation of Software Organiser was professional, and BCS staff provided us with service beyond expectations."

For More Information

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For more information about Business Continuity Services products and services, call (44) 01292 283828 or visit the Web site at: www.bcsltd.com or www.right2use.com

For more information about Bowmer & Kirkland products and services, call (44) 01773 853131 or visit the Web site at: www.bandk.co.uk

At BCS, Fisher is also quick to credit the clarity and simplicity of the Bowmer & Kirkland approach. “The SAM process is fairly simple,” he says. “Too many companies spend lots and lots of money on technology that makes things overly complicated. The simple reality is that Bowmer & Kirkland said, ‘We want to know what we have installed, what we’re entitled to use, and what our compliance position is—and we want to maintain that.’ Those are simple objectives. Bowmer & Kirkland fulfilled those simple objectives by using a simple methodology effectively.”

In the end, Bowmer & Kirkland not only achieved all of those objectives—and not only used that process to gain a greater understanding of licensing in general—but also had Microsoft validate its work at controlling and managing its software assets.

Microsoft Software Asset Management

Software Asset Management (SAM) is a program to help optimize your technology investment. Software is an asset, and knowing what you have, acquiring only what you need, and establishing current and ongoing policies and procedures to track and maintain software are critical functions of any organization.

For additional information, including free tools and resources, visit: www.microsoft.com/sam

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