

More and More Companies are Reaping the Rewards
of IT and Software Asset Management:
What Do They Know That You Don't?

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Executive Summary

Software, inarguably, represents a key asset and investment for any organization today. Yet by not embracing active efforts to systematically and strategically manage these critical investments, too many companies fail to treat these assets with care commensurate with their value.

For many organizations, the concept of “software asset management” takes on a very narrow meaning and is primarily aimed at achieving license compliance or surviving an imminent software audit. This reactive model often leaves businesses scrambling to locate and assemble information regarding the whereabouts and entitlement status of specific software applications—wasting significant time and resources in the process—rather than looking through a longer-term lens that could truly maximize their IT and software investments across the organization.

The good news is that a steadily growing number of organizations of all sizes are realizing the inherent value of making the leap to implementing comprehensive, ongoing IT and software asset management (IT/SAM) programs that give them a complete, accurate, and dynamic picture not only of the assets they have, but also a roadmap that reveals how to best *optimize* those assets.

Organizations are discovering the power of cutting-edge technology that enables them not only to achieve full license compliance, but also recognize other significant advantages such as a substantial reduction in software licensing costs, increased IT efficiencies and reduced overhead, and the ability to more effectively manage certain business and legal risks. All of these add up to both impressive IT savings and cost-avoidance—which, collectively, have the power to completely redraw IT and corporate balance sheets.

Given such vast benefits, this pivotal market shift toward strategic IT/SAM is long overdue. Designing and implementing formalized, ongoing IT/SAM programs are proving to be more than worth the investment, as countless organizations are enthusiastically discovering. Read on to discover why.

Who Benefits from IT/SAM?

Managers and senior executives from a wide variety of organizational areas, including:

- IT Infrastructure
- Service Desks
- Security
- Risk Management
- Procurement
- Finance
- Human Resources

The Market Shift to Strategic IT/SAM

While software undeniably represents a principal asset for almost any company, until recently it hasn't been widely regarded as such. Companies all too often have viewed their software primarily as an expense rather than as a valued investment, and consequently have failed to undertake active, ongoing efforts to systematically—and *strategically*—manage software as they would other assets critical to their operation.

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Keith Phillips
SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR,
ATTORNEYS' TITLE INSURANCE; ORLANDO, FL

The good news, however, is that organizations of all types are embracing processes and technology that enable them to manage IT and software assets as the investments they truly are. Savvy organizations are realizing that implementing a well-planned, formalized IT and software asset management (IT/SAM) strategy is no longer an option, but a necessity if they are to get the most value from their investments, and stay ahead of the curve in today's exceedingly competitive business environment.

A 2005 poll conducted by Gartner confirms that a market shift is indeed underway. The survey, conducted among CIOs, IT operations heads, and data center managers at primarily North American companies, found that 49 percent of participants had already implemented an IT asset management program. This represents significant growth over 2003 estimates which pegs adoption at only about 30 percent. Furthermore, an additional 30 percent of survey participants anticipated implementing an IT asset management program by 2006, and an additional 10 percent expected to implement in 2007. The cumulative adoption among this particular audience is therefore estimated to reach nearly 90 percent by 2007.¹

While for many organizations the concept of “software asset management” (SAM) has largely been driven by the pressures of software license compliance, the “true,” more strategic model of IT/SAM goes far beyond the occasional audit.

It means not only taking stock of IT and software investments, but integrating the *inventory* of assets with the *usage* of those assets—and, more importantly, using this information to optimize IT and software investments in the long run.

This comprehensive and organized approach to IT/SAM ushers in a multitude of benefits, including higher levels of IT efficiencies, the potential for a dramatic reduction in licensing and support costs, and the ability to avoid corporate and security risks that previously left companies scrambling. As companies become aware of such opportunities, they are demanding technology that allows them to develop a holistic view of their IT and software assets on an ongoing basis. This dynamic has incubated a rapidly growing marketplace of businesses that create tools and offer services specifically to meet these needs; this, in turn, has further facilitated and fueled the adoption of IT/SAM among business consumers.

This trend is substantiated by a November 2005 international survey conducted by the International Business Software Managers Association (IBSMA) and ECPweb.com, which found that a growing number of companies are now using software based on specific technologies not only to “discover” their IT and software assets, but also to track and manage those assets over their lifetime, both of which represent a significant move beyond simple spreadsheets and databases.²

“The time our new process has saved staff in retrieving and finding information about hardware and software license units has been tremendous, and we've also been able to more strategically allocate our licenses.”

Jason Bradley
SENIOR SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR,
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL; NASHVILLE, TN

By actively adopting such innovations, organizations are succeeding in moving from a one-time “audit” mentality toward a forward-looking IT/SAM model where both *tools* and *processes* become the centerpiece. This improved model actively engages personnel and decisionmakers across the enterprise, from IT staff to corporate counsel to purchasing agents, and turns them into stakeholders with a vested interest in effectively managing IT and software investments.

This market shift will likely become even more pronounced with the release of a new worldwide standard published by the International Standards Association in May 2006, entitled ISO/IEC 19770-1 Software Asset Management Processes Standard. This new ISO standard, viewed as a world-class, workable framework for implementing effective software asset management programs, is intended to become an internationally recognized standard for managing IT and software assets, as well as a helpful tool in assisting customers with their software license compliance efforts.

A company that meets the ISO standard can earn “accreditation,” the benefits of which range from demonstrating compliance to vendors, to good business PR, to the savings- and efficiency-related benefits associated with IT/SAM. In order to meet this new standard, organizations are required to demonstrate they are closely managing the lifecycle of their software assets, implementing policies and procedures as presented in the ISO standard, and showing they have received “buy-in” on the program from the company’s senior personnel.

Progress, on no small scale, is indeed underway on the IT/SAM front. The benefits are many, and it’s little wonder that so many organizations are now favoring a more strategic IT/SAM approach.

The IT/SAM Approach: Reaping The Rewards

Organizations that are implementing strategic IT/SAM programs vary widely; under the IT/SAM umbrella one can now find everything from Fortune 500 companies, mid-sized firms, and small, growing businesses to nonprofits, universities, and branches of the military. These organizations have discovered the need to effectively manage their software assets just as they’d manage other key assets of their operation: with precision, solid planning, and an eye toward a healthy bottom line.

Organizations that are implementing well-formulated, ongoing IT/SAM programs are realizing savings so pronounced that they’ve had the power to redraw their companies’ entire IT balance sheets. According to Gartner, IT assets and the associated support systems to ensure high availability can account for as much as 40 to 60 percent of a company’s total IT operational budget.³

A November 2005 international survey conducted by the International Business Software Managers Association (IBSMA) and ECPweb.com supports this mindset: the survey found that among mid- to large-sized companies, IT/SAM generated an average **131 percent return investment and an average savings of \$717,000**—no meager sum on the savings spectrum.

ECPweb.com

“SOFTWARE ASSET MANAGEMENT IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS:
A REPORT ON SOFTWARE ASSET MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
AND PROGRAM MATURITY” NOVEMBER 2005

It’s clear, then, that decisions regarding the management of these assets can have significant budgetary impact. Software asset management specialist Cynthia Farren, founder and CEO of the Walnut Creek, California-based consulting firm that bears her name, recalls one 2,700-desktop client company that saved more than \$1 million over three years after implementing a software asset management program. On average, Farren says, a 700-employee company can expect a software asset management initiative to help it save about \$200,000 annually.

So how, more specifically, are organizations benefiting from IT/SAM, and why are so many making the shift to this paradigm? The answer can be distilled into three core components of savings and cost-avoidance: 1) increased IT efficiencies, 2) lowered licensing costs, and 3) reduced business and legal risks.

Realizing Increased IT Efficiencies

Adopting an overarching IT/SAM program can produce previously unimagined soft-dollar savings in the form of increased IT efficiencies and reduction of IT overhead. The primary mechanism for doing so is through the adoption of technology and processes that not only automate the tracking of IT and software assets on an ongoing basis, but empower IT departments to use this data in new and innovative ways.

Automating the Inventory Process

At its most basic level, any IT/SAM initiative must answer the question of “Who owns what?”. Far too often, software and hardware inventory data—if it exists at all—is scattered throughout a company in varying formats, lacks formal ownership or oversight, and is fraught with error. IT staff

typically obtain this data in one of two ways: by physically inspecting every PC—a process that typically takes between 15 to 30 minutes per PC—or by relying on employees to conduct their own assessments.

Organizations are finding that they can be more successful and prepared in their IT/SAM efforts by investing in technology that automates the software and hardware inventory process, thereby reducing the excessive overhead associated with manual inventories and virtually eliminating error. Furthermore, effective tools automatically reconcile an organization's inventory data with purchasing information and pinpoint the location of any unlicensed software—a key benefit for companies concerned with compliance. Perhaps most importantly, these inventories can be easily run on a regular basis, which means that inventory data is always up-to-date and accurate.

Gaining IT and Help Desk Efficiencies

Improved IT and help desk efficiencies are another significant benefit of embracing IT/SAM. Studies have shown that, on average, 50 percent of time spent on help desk calls involves trying to determine the configuration of a troubled computer. With a well-planned IT/SAM framework that includes the right tools, inventory data can be extended to help desk staff so they can view employees' PC hardware and software configurations from their desks, however remote those PCs may be.

This means support staff can rapidly troubleshoot a variety of problems, without spending valuable time investigating (or asking employees to investigate) issues such as how much free disk space is available, what applications are installed, what kind of network card is being used, or whether they are running the most recent version of a particular program. Additionally, inventory data can be parlayed into more effective and efficient upgrade or migration planning by providing information that can be used to identify which workstations do not meet minimum hardware or software requirements for a new technology rollout.

There is practically no limit to the number of ways inventory data can be used to improve IT efficiencies; as IT/SAM processes and technology become more deeply rooted within any given organization, its personnel will continue to find new ways to exploit this data to their advantage.

Reducing Software Costs through License Optimization

Implementing a comprehensive IT/SAM program accomplishes several objectives from a financial standpoint. One major benefit to organizations that implement IT/SAM is the ability to purchase and maintain only the software they need. Businesses are insisting on knowing not only what software exists within their environments, but how those software assets are being used. This kind of information helps companies approach decisions in less of a short-term, tactical way, and to aim instead for a longer-term, strategic, and ultimately money-saving model.

A November 2005 international survey conducted by IBSMA and ECPweb.com supports this mindset: the survey found that among mid- to large-sized companies, IT/SAM generated an average 131 percent return investment and an average savings of \$717,000—no meager sum on the savings spectrum.⁴

Further, these savings may well increase over time. According to Steven Russman, publisher of ECPweb.com, "Our survey respondents have overwhelmingly said that IT/SAM was good for business. Our studies of end-user IT/SAM practices reveal increases in savings and return on investment as they implement and improve IT/SAM practices. It's not unusual to see costs decrease 10 percent for each step up the IT/SAM maturity level."

The solution lies in implementing comprehensive processes and tools that enable organizations to not only track the whereabouts of software licenses, but also monitor their usage patterns, so they can identify which licenses are not being used—or used enough—to justify their ownership or current allocation.

Eliminating or Reallocating Unused Software Licenses

By deploying tools that provide application usage data across the enterprise, organizations can easily identify which software licenses have not been used within specified timeframes. They may, in turn, reallocate those licenses to employees or departments that are more likely to utilize them, rather than unnecessarily purchase new licenses for those users. Or, with this information, companies can renegotiate their licensing and/or maintenance agreements so they are paying only for licenses they are confident are actually being used. Not only

can this kind of data be used to optimize existing software investments, but it can also assist with ongoing software budgeting by allowing organizations to more accurately forecast future needs of users.

Standardizing the Desktop Environment

Another concrete savings-related benefit which businesses are able to secure through effective IT/SAM involves negotiating volume license discounts. By effectively tracking software usage, organizations are able to determine which applications in their offices are most frequently and broadly used, and subsequently utilize this information to move toward standardized software packages. By standardizing on specific applications, they can purchase fewer titles in greater volume, resulting in the elimination of underutilized software and improved negotiating power with software vendors. This effect, of course, cascades into savings in the realm of support as well. With fewer titles to support—and fewer applications on which to train employees—companies can dramatically reduce the overall total cost of ownership of their software assets.

Clearly, the more firm the grasp organizations have on their software needs by using a long-term, focused IT/SAM approach, the more likely they will be able to maximize their existing licenses to the fullest extent and eliminate unnecessary costs.

Limiting Business and Legal Risks

It is widely understood that IT/SAM can help organizations avoid unwittingly violating licensing agreements. However, there are several additional risks related to regulatory compliance, intellectual property, and network security that can be mitigated through effective IT/SAM. By embracing processes and tools that allow organizations to be methodical about tracking and controlling the inventory and usage of their IT and software assets, IT staff and senior management alike can rest easier knowing they can identify and resolve issues before they turn into liabilities.

Complying with Government Regulations

IT/SAM programs effectively support organizations' efforts toward achieving compliance with recently legislated government regulations such as the U.S. Government's Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX). SOX pertains to U.S.

federal requirements that public companies regularly report their financial conditions, which include both tangible and intangible assets such as hardware, software, copyrights and agreements. In short, these companies need to treat their IT hardware and software as balance sheet line items. Having the tools and processes in place to effectively identify and track IT and software assets—and produce verifiable, accurate information needed for successful compliance reporting—can prove to be particularly advantageous in this area.

Enhancing Network Security

Many organizations also find IT/SAM useful in enforcing their own corporate governance standards, particularly with respect to securing the network and confidential information. Enforcing such policies has long been a daunting challenge for almost every company.

While countless security products are available on the market, there are simple and effective measures that can be taken as part of a broader IT/SAM initiative that address fundamental gaps that many traditional security products cannot easily fill. Specifically, by implementing cutting-edge technologies and processes such as software usage tracking and application control as part of an IT/SAM program, organizations can make great strides toward avoiding inevitable risks.

For example, businesses may utilize inventory or software usage tracking data to identify the installation and/or use of harmful or unauthorized applications. Likewise, they can leverage the same technology to identify which computers do *not* have specific applications installed, such as updated security software or critical patches. Once this information has been obtained, companies can determine the most appropriate course of action to curb the use of rogue applications, such as communicating and promoting software usage policies among employees that help mitigate such risk, or, if need be, completely locking down the desktop by prohibiting the launch of applications deemed to be a threat.

Strategic IT/SAM Success Stories: Practical Examples

Increased efficiencies, reduced licensing costs, and containment of business and legal risk—all important objectives for any organization—are each in their own right worthy of the investment required to achieve them. With an eye toward these goals, businesses are becoming more sophisticated in their understanding of IT/SAM processes, and are demanding technology and training that will help them be more strategic in how they manage their IT and software assets.

The examples that follow describe several Express Metrix customers who have implemented effective, ongoing IT/SAM programs as valued components of their day-to-day operations. By doing so, through a combination of strategic processes and technology products, each organization has been able to achieve a variety of far-reaching benefits.

Attorneys' Title Insurance Fund

Attorneys' Title Insurance Fund, the leading title insurance underwriter in Florida and the sixth largest in the United States, provides an excellent example of an organization that was able to organize its inventory processes using a well-planned, systematic approach to IT/SAM—and which saw its investment quickly recouped in the process.

With 1,300 dispersed desktops running 329 applications across 17 different locations, the company needed to ensure software compliance, reduce licensing costs, maintain desktop standards, and monitor the use of unauthorized applications, such as games. Keith Phillips, Systems Administrator for Attorneys', needed to find an effective way to manage Attorneys' IT and software assets.

"Our previous inventory system was failing on all accounts," according to Phillips. "It was broken more than it worked. We never did know what software assets we had out there, but we did know we really needed to reduce our number of applications. We were also concerned about any pirated software that could be installed, and wanted greater peace of mind over license compliance."

Attorneys' chose to deploy state-of-the-art technology to assist them with overcoming their IT and software

management hurdles. "We use our IT asset management solution regularly for centralized inventory. It always gives us numbers that we can trust," according to Phillips. "With centralized software inventory, we know not just what software we have, but where it's located, and what applications have been installed. Without centralized inventory, you just can't do that. This organized solution makes all the difference in the world."

Phillips also cites the improved efficiencies the company quickly achieved. "Using these tools has dramatically improved our ability to manage our software assets," he said. "It's just as important for us to know what's installed as it is to know what's *not* installed. We've been able to set a baseline. We've been able to standardize our desktops, and that's been especially important given that we have 17 offices. To do a physical inventory would take us an entire month."

The savings aspect of adopting a strategic IT/SAM approach definitely has been embraced by Attorneys', as well. "Our IT asset management initiative allowed us to save \$30,000 to \$40,000 just by not having to buy software we didn't need," Phillips added. "The investment paid for itself within a year with the reduction of software costs alone."

Roger Ferris & Partners

Roger Ferris & Partners, an internationally recognized, award-winning design firm based in Westport, Connecticut, faced organizational and efficiency-related challenges when it came to effectively managing their IT and software investments.

Peter Theis, the firm's Director of Technology, remembers coming on board and telling the firm's principals that he had no way of comprehensively determining what applications had been installed on each of the company's PCs. The firm's approach needed to shift from achieving license compliance via random spreadsheets, Microsoft Word documents—even Post-it Notes!—to more streamlined, organized inventory processes.

By implementing a broad-reaching IT/SAM program, Roger Ferris & Partners was able to achieve several concrete goals concurrently. After introducing effective, automated IT/SAM tools, the firm became able to quickly and accurately answer the "who has what" question. "If someone on staff needed

specific software, I was able to tell who else had that software installed, who was using it, and who wasn't," according to Theis. "This meant I could transfer the license to an employee who required that software, and not have to purchase an additional license when we really didn't need it."

Theis specifically found that implementing a software inventory and usage tracking tool as part of their IT/SAM initiative was helpful in terms of moving toward a standard desktop; through their IT/SAM efforts, he gained the ability to know exactly which hardware and software the company currently had licensed, which software was outdated, which software was the most popular—even which software hadn't run in two months (this software would clearly show up marked as such on inventory reports).

The firm has made significant efficiency- and productivity-related improvements since implementing its IT/SAM approach, most notably through effective migration and upgrade planning, improved time-to-resolution for support incidents, and centralized inventory. "Centralized inventory alone makes our new system worthwhile," according to Theis. "Even if I use our new automated inventory tool once a year, it would pay for itself—versus having to go to every separate machine to see what's installed."

"It's also been great to be able to identify alternative approaches to licensing software, and to really have a definitive idea about which licenses make the most sense for us," Theis added. "If you're not using IT/SAM tools today, and you have any size of network, you are fooling yourself if you think you know what's on your network. You don't realize all that you *don't* know, and that challenge becomes even greater the larger the network. This approach has instantly given us a crystal-clear picture of what's out there on every PC in our network. It has fit our needs perfectly."

Vanderbilt University Law School

Nashville's Vanderbilt University Law School has quickly embraced technology solutions that are vital to its ongoing IT/SAM initiative. In addition to wanting to achieve full license compliance, Vanderbilt Law needed to provide first-class support for its faculty's desktops, while cutting down on the time its existing manual inventory processes required.

The school has more than reached these goals, and also achieved significant savings. Jason Bradley, Senior Systems Administrator with Vanderbilt Law, credits the adoption of an IT/SAM program for the progress made. "By being able to inventory all of our hardware and software installations in an automated way, we can now not only monitor for any license or policy violations, but also maintain accurate reporting. This has been an important achievement for us," Bradley stated.

Furthermore, the IT/SAM solutions Bradley deployed allow IT staff to quickly and efficiently retrieve information that accurately reveals the capabilities of faculty members' and classrooms' PCs.

"A faculty member may ask if their office computer is capable of playing a DVD video," according to Bradley. "Depending on the deployment cycle when they received their computer, the answer could be 'yes' or 'no'. This approach allows our team to quickly locate specific characteristics of a computer remotely through a Web interface, without having to physically inspect each machine or talk faculty members through finding the answers they're looking for. The greatest advantage is that we can now identify in under 30 seconds what a particular computer has installed, and what's available to its user."

"The time our new process has saved staff in retrieving and finding information about hardware and software licenses has been tremendous, and we've also been able to more strategically allocate our licenses," Bradley added. "We can now recover and redeploy license units to alternative computers from unused areas."

Conclusion

The benefits of adopting and implementing a strategic IT/SAM approach, as explored in this report, are being fully realized by countless organizations of all sizes around the globe.

At its core, the market shift to a strategic IT/SAM approach comes down to this: A CIO sends down the message, “We need to reduce our software licensing costs, our support costs—our overall IT costs. We need to know exactly what’s out there on the network, how it’s being used, and where our potential liabilities are. Get it done.”

The good news is that more and more companies are realizing that strategic IT and software asset management enables them to do just that. Through IT/SAM, companies can boost their IT efficiencies, reduce licensing and support costs, and more skillfully manage business and legal risks—all of which contribute to a healthier financial bottom line.

IT/SAM undeniably has the power to address the concerns and questions companies have been raising for years about how to effectively manage their IT and software investments.

The only key question remaining is: When will *your* organization make the shift to IT/SAM?

Endnotes

- ¹ Patricia Adams and Kris Brittain, “Polling Results Reveal Intriguing Data About IT Asset Management Trends,” Gartner, (April 2006)
- ² ECPweb.com, “Software Asset Management is Good for Business: A Report on Software Asset Management Practices and Program Maturity,” www.ecpmedia.com/publications.html (November 2005)
- ³ Jack Heine presentation, “IT Asset Management Basics,” Gartner IT and Software Asset Management Summit, 2005
- ⁴ ECPweb.com, “Software Asset Management is Good for Business: A Report on Software Asset Management Practices and Program Maturity,” www.ecpmedia.com/publications.html (November 2005)

Resources

- **Express Metrix’s “Best Practices for Implementing Software Asset Management”**
http://www.expressmetrix.com/pdf/SAM_tool.pdf
- **Express Metrix’s “Quantifying ROI: Building the Business Case for IT and Software Asset Management”**
http://www.expressmetrix.com/pdf/ROI_6.pdf
- **Microsoft’s “Implementing SAM into your Business”**
<http://www.microsoft.com/resources/sam/Implementing.msp>

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Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

About Express Metrix

Express Metrix® has proven leadership in software license metering and asset management software during more than 12 years of experience focused on this field and through its installed base of over 950 active customers. Winner of the 2005 Software Asset Management Partner of the Year award from Microsoft, Express Metrix solutions allow enterprises to ensure software license compliance, plan for technology migrations and software upgrades, and effectively manage their IT assets and budgets.

Express Metrix offers a suite of software asset management tools that provide the streamlined solutions companies need to conduct in-depth analysis and management of desktop PCs and applications. The Express product line includes Express Software Manager Professional®, Express Software Manager Standard®, Express Inventory® and Express Meter®. Express Metrix currently holds Gold Certified Partner status in the Microsoft® Partner Program. More information on Express Metrix can be found on the company's web site at <http://www.expressmetrix.com>.

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