

Maintaining Your Software Asset Management Processes through Technology

Written by Microsoft in combination with Project Leadership Associates

Abstract

Software Asset Management (SAM) puts the people, processes, and technology in place for the effective management and control of software assets within an organization. Upon completion of a SAM project, many companies implement significant changes to software acquisition policies and procedures based on needs revealed during the SAM project. There are many technology tools and products that can support companies during the execution and follow-up associated with these changes. This white paper will discuss how tools such as Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003 and Active Directory® service can aid in the ongoing management of your company's software assets.

Software Asset Management Engagement Statement

After implementing a SAM plan, significant needs for improved auditing and tracking of software assets for your business may be identified. This can involve developing new processes for purchasing, installing, and maintaining software and licenses. New policies may also need to be established or updated for the company and communicated in an effective way. Michael Aidinovich, Managing Consultant for Project Leadership Associates, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner in Licensing Competency, recommends utilizing technology as a tool to enforce a company's SAM policies and procedures.

Benefits

By utilizing the native functionality of Microsoft Windows® 2000 Server and Microsoft Windows Server® 2003 operating systems, your business can prevent the unauthorized download and installation of software. In addition, you can effectively and efficiently communicate new policies to your employees.

Communicate More Effectively to Continually Manage Assets

Once new policies are created, companies can benefit from a secure and streamlined process for disseminating information. Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003 is a collaborative portal solution that connects people, teams, and information. It builds on the Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services platform to enable organizations to integrate SAM processes and applications. "Our customers find that creating an internal portal for communicating SAM policies and procedures is highly effective. It's proficient because [Windows] SharePoint Services also provide electronic acknowledgment and tracking of when and who has read and accepted any new policy changes," says Aidinovich. "Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server is an effective way to keep employees informed."

A company can utilize a SharePoint site as a single place for employees to locate information about new software procurement policies and procedures. The core functionality for SharePoint sites, including lists, document libraries, calendars, and contact integration, can be set up to track when individual users log on and read new SAM policies, thus enabling more efficient monitoring. It can be easily updated when policies change, and alerts can be set up to notify employees when such changes occur. An alert message can be delivered in an e-mail message notifying end users of a change in SAM policy that must be reviewed.

SharePoint Portal Server 2003 builds on Windows SharePoint Services to provide a scalable collaborative portal experience. SharePoint Portal Server 2003 provides a robust, efficient, and collaborative way to effectively communicate and monitor new SAM policy changes.

Help Prevent Unauthorized Downloading and Installation of Software

A common SAM breakdown occurs in strategic procurement and management of assets. By creating a set of standard policies to control software acquisition and installation, your business can more effectively control assets. This helps to reduce costs and helps secure the company's infrastructure from unauthorized software installation.

Typically, a company will require that software purchases be made by the IT department to ensure efficient management and tracking of assets. Also, the IT department can help ensure that software licenses are valid and that employees are not exposing the company network to unauthorized software or conflicts among software programs. Unauthorized software can potentially contain viruses that may damage both individual computers and entire networks. Using only genuine authorized software will help your company address patch management, get access to security updates, and keep track of which computers need which security enhancements. According to *Network World*, businesses worldwide lose U.S.\$12.5 million annually due to viruses and worms.

Microsoft provides a technology within Active Directory called Group Policies that enables network administrators to control downloading and installing software at the desktop. Group Policy settings define various components of the user's desktop environment to allow the system administrator to manage, for example, download and installation authorization. The Group Policy settings are contained in a Group Policy Object (GPO), which in turn is associated with selected Active Directory system container objects—sites, domains, and organizational units.

To help ensure that employees are adhering to new company policies regarding unauthorized downloading or installation of software, a system administrator can set GPOs to block such attempts. This can provide a simple yet effective tool for network administrators and software asset managers.

Summary

To provide peace of mind and greater security for your technology, it is important to institute the right policies from the beginning to acquire, install, use, and retire your company's software assets throughout their life cycle. Implementation of features in technology that you may already own can provide the tools needed to continually manage and monitor your company's software assets. Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server and Windows Server 2003 can help to improve efficiencies, streamline software acquisition, save money, and enhance security.

Sources

Network World, August 30, 2004

Microsoft Software Asset Management

SAM is a process designed to help your company optimize its technology investments. The benefits of SAM are real and widespread. Knowing what you have, acquiring only what you need, and using your software assets effectively at every stage of their life cycle are strategic business practices that businesses of all sizes should employ to realize benefits including cost savings, enhanced security, and enhanced employee productivity and satisfaction. For additional information, including free tools and resources, visit www.microsoft.com/sam.

Partner Information

Project Leadership Associates is a technology consulting firm, headquartered in Chicago, specializing in network integration, software development, business intelligence, management consulting, electronic data discovery and data forensics, information security, network support, and small business services. Project Leadership Associates has extensive experience developing and implementing small- to large-scale business and IT solutions for the legal, healthcare, educational, and financial sectors. For additional information, visit www.projectleadership.net.

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