



Tracking Software Usage

MANAGING THE COST

For many organizations, software is one of their most expensive assets - often costing more than the firm's fleet of company vehicles!

Managing the cost of these assets is vital both to the IT budget and the organization's wider wellbeing. And managing the cost means having complete visibility of software usage across the network.

Clarifying the jargon

When it comes to measuring the use of software, two distinct terms are often interchanged which can lead to no small amount of confusion. "Software metering" and "software usage" have quite different meanings; the former being the tracking of the time spent by concurrent and total users accessing an application which is leased by the minute. "Software usage", on the other hand, relates to giving managers an accurate picture of the general state of individual application usage on each PC across the organization.

Software metering was more common some years ago when the fashion in enterprise computing favored license deals where an organization leased an application with limits on the total time and maximum number of concurrent users. Despite this form of licensing declining in popularity (it is now normally found only in specialist niche products such as advanced CAD applications), the term remains, hence the confusion.

The case for managing software volumes

Complex applications, such as Microsoft Project at around \$700 per license, can cost more than the hardware they sit on - yet many organizations purchase licenses for new employees as a matter of course. By identifying where previously-purchased instances of an application have fallen out of use, managers can quickly spot opportunities to redeploy software rather than purchasing unnecessary additional copies.

What do you really need?

So, with regards to software usage, we can now ask the question: "what is it you really need?". For most IT managers, the answer falls into two parts:

a) *"I want to ensure that I'm not paying for more software than is being used"*

b) *"I want to know if there is unused software in the organization that I can redeploy to other users"*

To do this, you need to have a clear picture of exactly what software is installed on each PC across the enterprise and how often it is used. This doesn't mean counting the minutes each application is accessed so much as keeping a simple record of whether the program is used daily, weekly, monthly or less often.

Software usage - a business distraction?

It's easy to become obsessed with the need for information. But at what cost?

If you know that a user opened an application at 9.00am on Monday and closed it at 5.00pm, what 'intelligence' can you glean from that? It is impossible to determine with any great degree of accuracy how much the application was actually 'used' during the day.

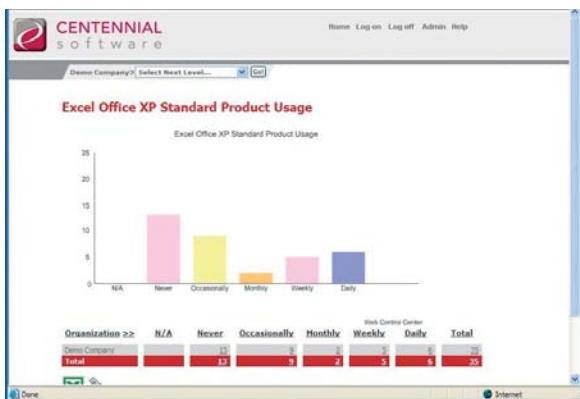
Monitoring application usage by the minute or keystroke can also place a large strain on the network - as it requires significant volumes of data to be collected and transmitted back to the central server. Recording general usage levels, on the other hand, results in very small single-byte reports while still giving you all the information you really need.

Monitoring software usage with Centennial Discovery

Centennial Discovery provides usage information for every identified application on the network. The solution's clear delineation of software usage by 'daily', 'weekly', 'monthly', 'occasionally' and 'never'.

Both the standard control center and the advanced web interface make it easy for administrators and managers to identify applications which are under used or not used at all.

Fig 1.0 Centennial Discovery clearly identifies which copies of a particular application are not being used regularly, making it easy for administrators to see where licenses might be redeployed:



Determining license requirements

Organizations are obliged to purchase a license for every application installed on the network - regardless of whether it is actively used on a regular basis. For organizations that track only the existence of an application, not the usage, this often results in over-purchasing.

By showing usage information against the total number of licenses held, Centennial Discovery makes it easy for organizations to understand where they have a legitimate need to purchase additional licenses and where they can avoid over-spending by removing unused applications.

Fig 2.0 Centennial Discovery highlights that while seven instances of Adobe Acrobat are installed, only five are actively being used. By removing the unused copies of Acrobat, the organization would only need to buy an additional two licenses.



Sharing usage information

In many organizations, the responsibility for software purchasing decisions rests with the individual business unit heads. To help them better understand their true application needs, Centennial Discovery's web interface can be accessed by multiple business managers, enabling them to drill-down to operational unit level.

For more information on how Centennial Discovery can help you get the most out of your existing software investments visit www.centennial-software.com