



Overview

Country: United States
Industry: Manufacturing

Customer Profile

Based in Tavares, Florida, Five Star Airport Alliance is a privately held provider of airport baggage-handling systems and terminal services. It comprises five subsidiaries with more than 800 employees.

Business Situation

After experiencing rapid growth through acquisition, Five Star Airport Alliance became concerned about managing its software licensing assets to remain current and compliant.

Solution

The manufacturing company underwent a Software Asset Management (SAM) consultation, which included a software inventory and subsequent license review, as well as a software policy review.

Benefits

- Saved more than 300 employee hours annually
- Gained knowledge, which led to confident licensing decisions
- Saved U.S.\$52,000 on licensing
- Reduced risk by documenting policies
- Justified an investment in a long-term inventory solution

Mergers Prompt Manufacturer to Seek Licensing Education Through SAM Program

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Orin Owen, Director of IT, Five Star Airport Alliance

Since its incorporation in 1987, Five Star Airport Alliance has delivered more than 400 turnkey projects for airport baggage-handling. Based in Tavares, Florida, the company also has eight regional offices. After a number of recent acquisitions, Five Star had grown to more than 800 employees in nine offices across the United States. Given such growth, Five Star had concerns about software-licensing compliance and choosing the most beneficial licensing plan. Five Star had taken steps toward compiling a current inventory of software assets when it was contacted by Microsoft about implementing a Software Asset Management (SAM) program. Universal Management Solutions, a Microsoft® Certified Partner for Licensing Solutions, guided the company through the SAM engagement and helped develop an improved inventory process, update SAM policies, and select an optimal licensing program.

Situation

Headquartered in Tavares, Florida, Five Star Airport Alliance is a group of companies that design, manufacture, install, and service baggage-handling systems in airports, as well as service airport passenger-boarding bridges and ground support equipment. Five Star consists of G&T Conveyor Company, The Horsley Company, Elite Line Services, Ameribridge, and Star Systems. The company is the largest privately held provider of turnkey airport baggage-handling systems and terminal services in the United States. After a period of acquisition and significant growth, the company had grown to include nine offices spread across the United States, which housed more than 800 employees, 470 personal computers, and 60 server computers. Furthermore, the company estimated that it would reach 1,000 employees by the end of 2007. That rapid expansion raised compliance concerns within the Five Star IT department, which recognized that the company needed to gather accurate inventory data and gain control of software assets.

As Five Star began the process of a manual inventory, the need for a more efficient method became apparent. To help in the inventory process, the company had been using a shareware program that required each user logging on to the system to start the program before it would create a unique data log for that user. Five Star IT personnel then manually compiled all of the data logs into a larger database for use in the inventory. This labor-intensive process required a great number of employee hours to complete. Additionally, because it was a manual process, the possibility of human error was a concern. The IT department wanted to purchase an automated inventory tool to alleviate these issues but had yet to justify the purchase to upper management.

Also, Five Star did not have any documentation that defined company policies specifically for software assets. Employees were not informed about the issues that could result from

downloading unlicensed versions of programs to their workstations. And because software policies were conveyed informally, the company had no records of employee awareness and agreement to company guidelines.

When Five Star was contacted by Microsoft regarding a Software Asset Management (SAM) engagement, the manufacturer responded positively. It was eager to develop a better understanding of its software assets, client usage, and licensing options.

Solution

Microsoft recommended that Universal Management Solutions (UMS), a Microsoft® Certified Partner for Licensing Solutions, guide Five Star through the SAM process, which helped the company gain valuable insight into its licensing program.

One of the first tasks that UMS undertook was a software inventory. UMS deployed licenseITall, a Web-enabled inventory tool that gathers data from all desktop and server computers in a company. After deploying licenseITall, UMS worked with Five Star to compare the automated inventory tool's findings with those of the previously completed, manual inventory and to reconcile licensing data. After accurately determining the manufacturer's licensing position, UMS provided Five Star with a comprehensive education on the licensing programs and opportunities that were most suitable for the company. This education was extremely helpful to Five Star; acting on the information, the company made some strategic licensing choices to bring it into compliance and also to prepare it for the future.

Lastly, UMS reviewed SAM policies and procedures, making some suggestions for improvements to current company policies that would strengthen network security and help ensure employee support for the new SAM program.

Benefits

Five Star realized that the Software Asset Management engagement was an opportunity to implement new inventory processes, reassess software policy issues, and receive a strategic education on software licensing.

Justified Investment in an Inventory Tool

For some time, Five Star's IT department had hoped to purchase a robust inventory solution but was unable to justify the expense to upper management. After experiencing the SAM process and seeing the benefits of the licensing tool deployed by UMS, the department was able to demonstrate that such an inventory tool could deliver significant, long-term benefits. After the SAM engagement, Five Star purchased a long-term inventory solution called KBOX, which provides metering functionality and customized reporting in addition to automated inventory tools.

Improved Efficiency in the Inventory Process

The company had completed an inventory prior to UMS's involvement in the SAM engagement. That inventory used a labor-intensive shareware program. Comparatively, the licenseTall program used by UMS was easily deployed throughout the system, and individual users did not have to do anything other than log on to the system as usual. "The licenseTall inventory tool allowed us to gather all of our inventory data approximately 50 percent faster than with our previous solution," says Orin Owen, Director of IT for Five Star Airport Alliance. "And the data that it produced was definitely more accurate." Owen estimates that Five Star is saving more than 300 IT employee hours annually, thanks to the improved inventory process and reduction in manual tracking efforts.

KBOX, the inventory tool that Five Star chose after the engagement, is building upon the licenseTall efficiencies. A feature of the new KBOX tool that Five Star finds useful is the ability to meter

software usage. The IT department can monitor how often individual employees use specific programs to determine whether the license is fully utilized. Also, the inventory tool provides user-friendly reporting and customization of the data gathered. Now that it has made a long-term investment in an inventory tool, Five Star will continue to conduct quarterly audits using the new KBOX tool.

Gained Knowledge, for More Confident Licensing Decisions

A better understanding of licensing has been an important benefit for the airport systems manufacturer. Prior to the SAM engagement, Five Star believed that the company was out of compliance with operating system licenses because the existing licenses did not provide downgrade rights. In fact, UMS helped to clarify the confusion and showed Five Star that the company did have downgrade rights with the existing software and therefore was in compliance. "The SAM process helped us gain a better overall understanding of licensing, including OEM operating systems, Microsoft SQL Server™, and clients for SQL Server databases," says Owen.

UMS also helped to clarify a point of confusion regarding Five Star's SQL Server Client Access Licenses. Five Star had assumed that each of the company's 800 users of a particular self-service Human Resources (HR) application would require licenses. That would have been a large expense, so the company was extremely happy to learn that it could purchase processor licenses for the servers running SQL Server, rather than a license for each user accessing the application. "We were aware that we did not have enough client licenses to support the new HR application and anticipated a large expense to stay compliant. After learning about the processor-licensing option from UMS, we needed to purchase only two processor licenses, saving us approximately \$52,000," says Owen. The Human Resources tool

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Orin Owen
Director of IT
Five Star Airport Alliance

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has now launched, and Five Star can confidently make it available to all employees.

Finally, through the inventory and SAM analysis, Five Star learned that the company's existing licensing program, the Microsoft Select Agreement, was optimal for its needs and remains confident in that choice of licensing program. Five Star can also plan more strategically for future software investments because of the licensing education it received from UMS.

Improved Software Use Policies

UMS helped Five Star understand some of the dangers that the company was susceptible to because it did not have documented or enforced software asset management policies. For example, the manufacturer wasn't aware that if an employee downloaded an unlicensed program on company-owned assets, the company was then responsible for that illegal copy. UMS advised the company to develop stricter policies for personal downloads and also to instigate some processes for employee awareness and adherence to software asset management guidelines.

Now, each new employee receives a new user package, which contains a clearly defined user policy statement that must be read, signed, and placed in the employee's personnel file. By signing the policy statement, the employee agrees to seek manager approval for any additional programs installed on his or her computer, allow only IT personnel to install programs, and participate in quarterly audits to maintain an updated inventory. The IT team is in the process of implementing the same program with the company's current employees, as well.

Software Asset Management

Software Asset Management is a best practice and process that can help save money, control risk, manage unique and standard deployments of software, provide greater security and reliability, and achieve regulatory compliance. The combination of Microsoft tools and partner services provides a solution to help you understand and implement processes to optimize your software investments, adhere to established business processes and regulatory controls, and build flexible and adaptable capabilities for the future.

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

Services

- Software Asset Management

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