

IT's Tough Out There

Open Forum Discussion on SAM in Economically Challenging Times

In April of this year, I was invited by IAITAM to present a talk on “Software Asset Management in Economically Challenging Times”. Being a SAM tool vendor, I knew that I brought certain perspectives to a very multi-faceted topic. So I invited ‘Doc’ Burnham from Textron, an experienced SAM practitioner, to co-present with me.

I armed myself with an ROI study on Entitlement-centric SAM that Sassafras Software conducted with the participation key customers, and Doc, with his 20 years of SAM experience, brought to the table an extensive list of quick tips to reduce costs in day-to-day SAM practice. Together we presented to an enthusiastic audience in the Northeast Member User Group meeting that month. But not being satisfied that we had covered the topic exhaustively, Doc later invited Jon Naseath from KPMG and I invited Scott Lemm from CIBER, Inc to add their perspectives.

Jon put forward a variety of examples based on the Microsoft Optimization Model, the ISO/IEC 19770-1 SAM Standard, and

a selection of Gartner Group studies, while Scott, with his rich SAM background in both the academic and corporate worlds brought an extensive list of unique tips drawn from years in the trenches.

Software Asset Management in Economic Hard Times.¹

The result of this effort from four experienced SAM professionals has been assembled into an extensive discussion syllabus that will provide the backbone for an Open Forum discussion on “Software Asset Management in Economic Hard Times” at the IAITAM 2009 Annual Conference. You are invited to join us while we collectively explore the many perspectives of these four professionals and dozens of others who join in on the Open Forum. We’re sure to deliver some of the best tips on cost reduction in the SAM industry.

By way of example, here are a few topics that you can expect us to discuss. Doc rightly points out that a great ITAM professional should question everything. Leave no stone unturned when working toward SAM optimization. Ask yourselves; how often do you use support services? What do you get from the support agreements that your organization has paid for? Do you really need to pay for 7x24 support or is 5x8 sufficient? Are you using your ‘development’ support incidents, or letting them go to waste like last month’s rollover minutes in your cell phone plan?

Scott stresses the importance of identifying software vendor “predators” (those vendors that use audits or the threats of audits, as revenue makers) and carefully track inventory/use of their software. Some of the many topics that Jon offers advice on are how to identify vendor compliance audit risk triggers and other activities that reveal potential legal exposure. You’re invited to join the forum discussion with your own suggestions





on the item of true value - software license entitlements. We'll cover that topic with more depth in the session, including examples of how SAM practitioners are leveraging metrics today and with a glance forward to the possibilities that the ISO/IEC 19770-2 and 19770-3 SAM Standards will offer.

Understand your environment, and manage the whole Lifecycle.

When I last spoke with Scott in preparation for the Open Forum, he pointed out that a SAM professional will never be successful if they don't understand how IT is used in their organization. Understanding use requires a practitioner to collect usage metrics as a vital component of the process, but it also compels a good manager to speak with IT staff and end-users alike, to learn about their issues. Scott stressed the importance of understanding how ITAM data can improve day-to-day operations. If you make an IT tech more efficient, you'll have an ITAM champion for life.

Scott points out that too many SAM/ITAM professionals focus on short-term success, or pieces of the SAM/ITAM process, rather than the long-term lifecycle. Says Scott; "You will never see the horizon if you stare at your feet." The value that a practitioner receives from usage management pays great dividends in licensing negotiations, hardware/software deployment and harvesting. Focusing only on contracts, or on harvesting, or tools will fail to bring the true power and cost savings available when you manage the entire process.

For an even more in-depth review of these topics, sit in on Scott's Case Study on Wednesday, September 30, titled; "The Perfect Storm" - No Policies, No Tools, No Funding: Bringing ITAM Stability to the Real World. And then join all of us on Thursday for the Open Forum discussion.

We'll see you at the IAITAM 2009 Annual Conference.

or questions. There is sure to be a room full of experienced professionals who have a lot to offer.

Of course, we'd be remiss without covering the importance of Entitlement-centric SAM - or leveraging the power of usage metrics for SAM optimization. When SAM tools and processes first emerged twenty years ago, for better or worse the industry was almost singularly focused on software license entitlements. Even the rudimentary technologies of the day were concerned primarily with optimization of entitlements with little thought about "assets". Admittedly it was an imperfect world that became even more imperfect in the mid-1990's when external compliance audits were introduced by the BSA, SIIA (then known as the SPA), and software vendors. The world changed for SAM Practitioners who were then redirected to count executable files.

But the simple existence of a file does not translate into value unless it is being used. And since some copies of an executable file do not require licensing, a SAM practitioner's job becomes unreasonably complex. Many believe that the SAM world today is unreasonably focused on something of no significant value - file existence. Today, fortunately, the SAM industry has an opportunity to come to its senses and once again focus

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