Best practices for keeping compliant

Ensuring an organization doesn’t have illegal or simply too much of the same software requires IT to take a series of steps.

Tim Clark, partner with the research and consulting firm FactPoint Group, outlines his view on these steps in the white paper “License Compliance: Five Best Practices for Small Organizations.”

Number one on his list is to set policy governing which software is approved and supported, including which versions and the platforms on which they run. He advises to include categories for software that:

- Can be purchased by license type
- Will be supported by IT and on which specific devices
- Will not be supported by IT but is not prohibited
- Is prohibited from being installed on any company property

Next up is to take inventory of all of your software, including usage statistics. The idea is to identify never- or seldom-used licenses and make them available to others who need them rather than buying more licenses.

Another key is to retire old applications and get rid of those that have become redundant or just aren’t used anymore. Conducting such application house cleaning on a regular basis reduces IT complexity and support costs, Clark argues. He also advises companies to collect records of all software licenses and retain them in a central repository. This gets to the idea of IT asset management, making it simpler to manage purchases, costs, depreciation, warranty and support information.

Rather than having multiple versions of the same software on hand, Clark advises organizations to enforce their software policy and ensure users run only the latest, approved software versions.

Dell™ “KACE™ in action

The City of Menlo Park installed the Dell KACE M300 in hopes of getting in line with many of these best practices.

“The idea was to get a baseline count of the applications on the network,” Daniels says. “We found dozens of applications per PC, everything from the applications that came preloaded to those that users installed and that IT installed. It was alarming.”

Investigating further, in some instances the city found many different versions of the same software installed on different machines. “For Adobe® Acrobat®, for example, we had versions all over the spectrum, from version six to 10,” Daniels says. Some of the licenses were abandoned, long since replaced by versions on newer machines.

The Dell KACE M300 made it easy to identify all these anomalies.

“The M300 gives us a central portal where we can make meaningful business decisions based on the data we have,” he says, noting that the M300 groups holdings in a logical manner. “We found plenty of surplus licenses that we could reallocate as well as applications that people had downloaded over the years that really shouldn’t be on the network.”

What’s more, the M300 did all that quickly.

“Installation was probably the best part. You unpack the box, connect it to your network and in 10 minutes it’s up and running,” Daniels says. Inside of 24 hours, the M300 had given the city a complete inventory of the 50 servers and 150 workstations that were part of its pilot project.

“We connected it, came back the next day and it had found all the target workstations and started compiling a database.”

An appliance for every need

As the City of Menlo Park discovered, Dell KACE Appliances are effective tools in the quest for software compliance. In addition to helping with device discovery and software inventory, the M300 Appliance also collects and organizes records for all software licenses, helping customers reconcile licenses against installed software packages and identify unauthorized software. The M300 Appliance even provides real-time alerts if software usage nears predefined thresholds, and reporting to track payments to software manufacturers and help identify unused licenses.

The Dell KACE K1000 Management Appliance supports all the same features as the M300 Appliance plus additional capabilities tailored toward larger organizations. They include centrally managed software configuration management, distribution and control, inventory and service desk, enabling IT to centrally manage the entire process of distributing new software, upgrades and patches.

The K1000 also offers software metering, enabling organizations to see what software is being used by which users and how often. This helps organizations trim costs by reassigning or retiring unused licenses. The appliance also supports Mac and Linux machines in addition to Windows®.

To learn more about how Dell KACE can help you stay compliant with software licensing and save money in the process, visit dell.com/kace.

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