



Customer: Interline Brands
Web Site: www.interlinebrands.com
Customer Size: 3,000 employees
Country or Region: United States
Industry: Wholesale and distribution
Partner: Soft-Aid

Customer Profile

Jacksonville, Florida-based Interline Brands markets and distributes maintenance, repair, and operations products to customers including healthcare facilities, contractors, and hardware stores.

Software and Services

- Services
 - Software Asset Management
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office 2007
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager

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Marketer Optimizes Its Licensing Program and Streamlines Its True-Up Process

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Dan Oakes, Director of IS Infrastructure, Interline Brands

Interline Brands, a direct marketer and distributor of maintenance, repair, and operations products, needed to gain control of its software assets and optimize its licensing program. The company worked with Soft-Aid, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, to participate in a Software Asset Management (SAM) engagement. The SAM engagement helped the company to simplify IT support and infrastructure and provided Interline Brands with an accurate baseline inventory, which helped it choose the most appropriate licensing plan.

Business Needs

Interline Brands serves various markets including multifamily housing, educational facilities, and professional contractors in the United States and abroad. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida, the company recently went through a period of rapid expansion, both natural and through acquisitions. Interline maintains 120 computer servers, and 2,000 of its 3,000 employees are regular computer users.

The company lacked an automated asset management or inventory tool to accurately track its software assets. Dan Oakes, Director of IS Infrastructure for Interline Brands, estimates that his team spent 16 hours each month manually tracking and recording licensing information in a spreadsheet. The IT team found it especially challenging to maintain up-to-date records for mobile workers because those employees did not connect to the network regularly.

License management was further complicated by recent corporate acquisitions, in which Interline Brands assumed ownership of incompletely tracked software assets and multiple licensing arrangements as a part of the purchase. "We didn't always know which licensing agreement was responsible for various assets. In some cases, we weren't sure if certain licenses were available or if they had been deployed and not documented," recalls Oakes. "We knew that trying to reconcile licensing using our manual process was out of the question—it would have taken ages. We needed to find a better way to get things under control and keep them that way," says Oakes.

Oakes says that the environment created other challenges for his team as well. "We had computers running different versions of multiple software programs. Our help-desk staff had to be able to troubleshoot various versions, which is tough. Also, we heard a lot from users about file incompatibility causing problems for teammates trying to collaborate." Oakes knew that he wanted to standardize on a single version of the Microsoft® Office suites, but without reliable inventory data, he was unsure how many licenses he would need to purchase and what the cost would be to Interline.

Solution

As the need for standardization and compliance concerns grew more pressing, Oakes discussed his concerns with Interline's large account reseller (LAR). The LAR suggested that Oakes should contact Microsoft to discuss whether Interline Brands would qualify for a Microsoft Software Asset Management (SAM) Assist engagement. After learning that Interline had qualified, Oakes selected Soft-Aid as the company's partner in the SAM engagement.

Interline and Soft-Aid held an introductory meeting to discuss the strategy and timeline for the SAM engagement. The two companies worked together to set expectations and discuss the results that Interline hoped to achieve.

Soft-Aid then deployed a temporary inventory tool throughout the Interline IT network for a 60-day free trial. The inventory tool gathered data, including product and version information, on all software products installed throughout the network.

Next, Soft-Aid reviewed the current state of Interline's software asset management program, including the marketer's processes and procedures for purchasing, deploying, and installing software.

At the end of the SAM Assist engagement, Soft-Aid presented its inventory data findings along with its recommendations for how to apply industry best practices for managing software assets to Interline's processes and procedures.

Benefits

According to Oakes, "The results from the SAM engagement not only were immediate, but also had a ripple effect throughout the year, and we continue to see benefits."

Improved IT Infrastructure. Interline recently migrated all its users to Microsoft® Office Enterprise 2007, an effort that Oakes says was made far easier due to the SAM engagement. "With the inventory data in hand, we knew exactly who had which version of the software and were able to acquire licenses accordingly," says Oakes. This change eliminated version incompatibility problems and helped increase collaboration within the company.

Simplified IT Support Efforts. "Now, our help-desk employees can focus on building their expertise on one Microsoft Office release, rather than trying to support multiple releases of the software," says Oakes. Following a recommendation from Soft-Aid, Interline has invested in Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager, an asset management tool that identifies the quantities and versions of all deployed software. "Automating the effort to manage software assets lets my staff spend time on more strategic efforts," Oakes notes.

Optimized Licensing Program. "After looking at all of the options and crunching the numbers, we chose the Enterprise Agreement. It was great to be 100 percent confident that we were making the best choice, rather than simply guessing," says Oakes. With the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement in place, Oakes notes that ongoing licensing management is now easier: "We no longer have multiple licensing agreements to manage. I can access my account online and see all of our licensing data in one spot."

Streamlined Annual True-Up Process.

Interline recently finished its annual reconciliation of the number of software products in use with the licenses for those products. This was its first True-Up since the SAM Assist engagement. "We finished the True-Up in less than a quarter of the time it would normally have taken us to reconcile our licensing. That difference is directly attributable to the changes we implemented through the SAM engagement," says Oakes.