

The SAM Spotlight

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Our Website:

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Soft-Aid Managing Consultant David Yashar published in *Redmond Channel Partner Magazine* December 2007 issue. Article: "SAM and Core IO: A Dynamic Duo"

Press Release: Soft-Aid receives competency award from Microsoft

View these articles and others at:
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Industry News

"Fakes: Can You Tell The Difference?", Jill R. Aitoro, *CRN*

"Is my network costing me money I'm not accounting for?", Paul Cronin, *Mass High Tech*

"Standards for IT Governance", Dave Greenfield, *InformationWeek*

View these articles and others at:
<http://www.aid.com/industrynews.htm>

"You know more of a road by having

Greetings from Palm Springs, California

You are receiving this newsletter as someone who has expressed interest in Software Asset Management and/or Soft-Aid in the past.

In this month's newsletter, our Managing Consultant David Yashar, Consultant Paul "Doc" Burnham, and I share information about our presentations at the recent IAITAM conference in Palm Springs, California. My colleague, Adam Fast, follows with an article that discusses the value of genuine software and tips for avoiding counterfeit software.

In addition, we have an article featured in this month's *Redmond Channel Partner Magazine* on SAM and its role in Microsoft Core Infrastructure Optimization projects: "SAM and Core IO: A Dynamic Duo" (see article at: <http://rcpmag.com/columns/article.aspx?editorialid=2398>).

Thank you for reading and please forward this newsletter to others who might be interested in SAM!

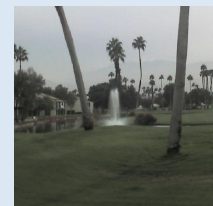
Regards,

Normand Bleau

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Impressions from the IAITAM 2007 Annual Conference and Exhibition



What we took away from this important event for IT Asset Managers

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Normand Bleau

The immediate impression made upon me at the annual IAITAM conference was the number of people in attendance, which surpassed 300 this year. It was exciting to see the number of companies that not only

traveled it than by all the conjectures and descriptions in the world."

-William Hazlitt

Our Favorite Web Links from the Last Month

Wait a few seconds and see what happens to the products on this shopping page:

<http://producten.hema.nl/>

If you live in the U.S., go here and put in your zip code. Great data presentation:

<http://zipskinny.com/>

Pretty cool stuff: a giant suspended LED screen display at a retail development in Beijing:

<http://www.flixxy.com/giant-led-display.htm>

recognize the important role of asset management, but are also willing to invest in the development of their asset managers. The indications are that this trend will continue.

One of the recurring themes that I heard expressed at many of the sessions I attended was the importance of having and following documented processes. While many of the sessions focused on the roles that technology and tools can play in asset management, both presenters and attendees spoke frequently of the need for processes to maximize the investment made in these tools.

I was also struck by a concept articulated during a session conducted by HP's Roger Mallett. To paraphrase, he stated that tracking assets at the time of procurement is the easy part. It's tracking changes to assets throughout the rest of the lifecycle that is challenging. It's not that I found this to be "news" rather than the straightforward, simple way he described a problem that many of our clients face. To meet the challenge, Mr. Mallett discussed the importance of understanding and defining your organization's business requirements, as well as the need for IT and Finance to collaborate. The bulk of the presentation focused on building best practices by properly balancing the three critical success factors: people, processes, and tools. Echoing other sessions, he spent considerable time focused on developing process workflows.

Paul "Doc" Burnham

Since this was the first IAITAM conference I had attended, I was not sure what to expect. I am happy to say, it was a very enlightening experience that I shall seek to repeat. While I learned something from each of the presentations I attended, and from the various attendees I talked with, there were two things that stood out for me.

The first was the presentation by Lisa Wilson, from the Harris County Hospital District, on how they tracked assets. Their implementation of manual processes and paperwork, while low-tech, proved to be very successful. This was refreshing to hear, especially in today's environment where the craze is to implement the latest and greatest gee-wiz tool.

The second was the candid conversations I had with numerous attendees. It was quite evident that while the benefits of SAM may be understood, many practitioners find it difficult to put the theoretical concepts of SAM into practice. I, as well as numerous other SAM practitioners, have had these same concerns and issues: 1) how do I get management support; 2) how can my limited staff (many were a staff of one) be expected to do all this work without a tool (the latest gee-wiz tool of course); 3) which tool is the 'best' tool (the silver-bullet); and finally, 4) where can I learn how to improve my SAM practices?

It is nice to know that we are not alone, and with the help of organizations like IAITAM, we can share what we have learned with our peers. In that spirit, I would like to share what I have learned from experience, and from others, over the years: 1) you earn management support by starting small and building on each success - remember, Rome was not built in a day; 2) there is no magical tool that can solve all your SAM issues - no matter what the sales team tells you; 3) the first thing is to build your processes, refine them, then select the tools that can best assist in automating those processes; and finally, 4) short of finding that all elusive step-by-step how-to manual for SAM - similar to the quest for the Holy Grail - we can only learn by continuing to share our

experiences with our peers at forums like the IAITAM conference.

David E. Yashar

This is the second year that I have attended IAITAM's annual conference, which just celebrated its fifth anniversary. This year, over three hundred people were in attendance, many being IT Asset Managers within their respective companies.

There were three kinds of sessions at this conference: 1) presentations from IT Asset Management vendors like Soft-Aid, 2) case studies from IAITAM's member community, and 3) workshops from the IAITAM staff. All three were valuable in their own way, and together helped make this conference unique. Allow me to summarize a few that I attended and found useful.

Workshops:

I attended a workshop on ITAM Policy development. The speaker was Walter Darrough of IAITAM, who teaches their CHAMP classes. His session was refreshing because he made a potentially dry topic easy to understand. His lecture addressed the role of ITAM policies and how to develop mature policies that can be enforced. I was pleased to see the emphasis he placed on getting senior level support when developing ITAM policies. He also prescribed that policy development should have its own set of processes, starting with pre-development work such as identifying issues, assembling a team to develop the policy, and assigning a policy owner. My own article on Designing Effective SAM Policies (see issue at: <http://www.aid.com/enews/index.htm>), which appeared in the August issue of our e-newsletter, complements his presentation.

Presentations:

In my own session, I provided a comparison of the ISO SAM Process Standard (19770-1), ITIL SAM Best Practice Framework, and IAITAM's own SAM Best Practice Library (IBPL). When I asked session attendees to raise their hands if they wished to make greater use of ITAM standards and frameworks in their companies, most of the hands in the room went up, which was encouraging.

The three fall on a continuum of different variables. For example, the ISO SAM Process standard is designed to measure SAM processes and ensure IT governance; it has a "top-down" approach. IAITAM's BPL, on the other hand, has a bottom up/operational approach. It is a working model and methodology (which includes client and project management elements) that is used to develop the correct SAM processes for your specific organization.

I distributed a handout at the session that goes into further detail of the comparisons. Please e-mail me if you would like to receive a copy. My concluding slide states "that ISO 19770-1, ITIL SAM, and IAITAM's BPL are complementary. While each has unique characteristics, deliverables, and objectives, they not only coexist, but also enhance one another. Organizations should actively consider using several models when looking to enhance their SAM/ITAM maturity."

Likewise, the session by Roger Mallett, Senior Solution Architect at HP, on SAM workflows was well attended and very helpful. Roger showed attendees some of the best practice workflows for SAM that HP uses with its clients. When Roger acknowledged what has been the bane of many IT Asset Managers, the room was quiet: "overspill" is all too common. Like water in a bathtub, we are generally good at getting assets into an organization (even if we don't properly receive them however!), but we have a harder time recording assets (or to continue the analogy, removing water from the bathtub) as they move around or out of the organization. His point was that there is a high cost when one does not reclaim asset value (e.g. harvesting of licenses) at the earliest possible time and that the proper workflows and procedures, particularly in asset retirement, can address this.

Case Studies:

Another refreshing presentation was from Anne Hernandez, who serves as the IT Asset Manager for Smith & Nephew, a global medical device firm based in Memphis. Anne broke down the processes she uses for IT Asset Management and enumerated them into simple steps. She provided some quick check lists to ensure that the right tasks are being done. She showed attendees her master folder of license files and media, which made it real. While her solution may not be the most elegant, it works for her and is in keeping with the conference's mission to share "tips and tricks" that IT Asset Managers can take back to their organizations.

Most of the presentations at the conference had real, actionable components - things that you could take back to your business, use immediately, and expect to see quick results from. My overall sense was that the IT Asset Managers in attendance found the conference and the networking opportunities with their peers, in particular, tremendously useful.

The Value of Obtaining and Using Genuine Software



Reasons for buying genuine software and tips for avoiding counterfeit software

Author: Adam Fast, afast@aid.com

The unintentional purchase of counterfeit software poses a significant risk to businesses. According to a study by the Business Software Alliance (BSA) and the analyst firm IDC, the piracy rate in the United States for packaged personal computer software was 21% in 2006. Although this is small in comparison with many other national piracy rates cited (such as 82% in China), it still represents over \$7.2 billion, and demonstrates the wide availability of counterfeit software. Ensuring that your organization always obtains genuine, non-pirated software is critical for a variety of reasons:

Ensure access to technical support

Many publishers require that software be registered before providing

technical support, and counterfeit copies are unlikely to pass registration. McAfee's registration process for single or multi-user box copies, for example, provides a "grant number" which is required when requesting technical support. Similarly, Adobe requires registration for complimentary support on box product.

Obtain access to additional resources

Microsoft in particular is making a determined effort to add additional value to "Genuine Microsoft Software." For example, the company provides add-ins and online resources, such as templates for the Microsoft Office suite applications, that are only available to genuine software.

Ensure access to software updates

A counterfeit installation may not be eligible for software updates or patches. Many of these updates increase the utility of the software. Others, such as security patches and bug fixes, can be critical.

Avoid malicious code

Counterfeit software often contains malicious spyware, malware, or other unwanted software. Unwanted software can range from annoying adware, to applications that degrade system performance, to those that pose serious security risks. Examples of the latter include hidden key-stroke loggers, and Trojans that steal (or even delete) sensitive files on hard drives.

Ensure license compliance

Counterfeit software is not considered valid by software publishers. Such software would be considered improperly licensed in an audit, even if purchased in good faith. The result could be unexpected, unbudgeted software purchases and fines.

Tips for avoiding counterfeit software

Counterfeit software can be difficult to identify, which underlies the need to proactively avoid it. I recently examined several samples of counterfeit software and was impressed by how well they mirrored their genuine counterparts.

No defense is foolproof; however, there are practical steps you can take to avoid an accidental purchase, in spite of the level of sophistication being employed by unscrupulous vendors and third party sources.

Buy software only from reputable sources

Highly sophisticated counterfeit software might not become recognizable until after purchase, so the best first-line defense is to avoid potential purchase outlets. Obtain all software from reputable resellers. Avoid "grey market" sources that are not formally authorized by the publisher, web auctions like eBay, or "web-only" resellers that do not have sales representatives available by phone. The potential savings from these vendors could be wiped out by one security breach. With respect to hardware, only obtain preinstalled (OEM) software from a manufacturer who is an authorized reseller of the software. Avoid buying "naked PCs,"

with no preinstalled operating system.

If you outsource software procurement, evaluate the consultant or firm in relation to these issues. Convey to them the care that you want followed to ensure that only genuine software is procured. You can also guide them with respect to the purchasing documents that you want retained.

Be suspicious of unusually low prices

A good rule of thumb is that if the price seems too good to be true, it probably is. Compare the quote to established prices for such products. If the price is considerably lower, inquire of the vendor and vet the answer. What you may find is that the actual media is genuine, but the vendor has unbundled the accompanying components so that they are reselling the same software twice. In other words, one customer gets the genuine media and counterfeit labels, manuals, etc., and another vice versa. Understanding what constitutes proof of ownership can help you avoid this (see below).

Keep track of all relevant "Proof of License" documentation

What constitutes "Proof of License" varies between publishers. Unless you know what each software publisher accepts as proof, you should retain all physical purchasing records along with media kits, Proof of License labels, and other relevant documentation. Store them in a secure and well-organized repository. Should any counterfeit software make its way into your organization, your ability to track it back to the source will be improved, which may provide some recourse or at least prevent reoccurrences.

Develop effective Software Asset Management (SAM) practices

Effective SAM practices can help with avoiding counterfeit software. For example, centralizing all software purchases, with the proper enforcement, allows you to follow the above practices more closely. Likewise, working with a small group of resellers with whom you have an established relationship will also mitigate the above risks. Finally, centralizing software deployment can help ensure that the correct genuine media is used.

Sources

Fourth Annual BSA and IDC Global Software Piracy Study, BSA, 2007

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