Soft-Aid

Vol. 2, Issue 4, August 2007

The SAM Spotlight

A Publication of Soft-Aid for the ITAM/SAM Manager Community

In This Issue

Quick Links

Designing Effective Software Management and Compliance Policies

What you need to know about designing software policies that work.

Author: David Yashar, SAM Consultant, Email

There are two types of policies that are relevant to SAM: those that affect all computer users and those that guide specific users or departments in how to act. The most visible SAM policy in the organization is the "Software/Computer/Internet" usage policy, which is an example of the former. This policy is also considered one of the most important, since overall end-user behavior is harder to control than that of a subset of corporate users who have a direct vested stake in particular outcomes. For the remainder of this piece, I will use the Software/Computer/Internet use policy to illustrate particular principles, but keep in mind that this is just one of many policies that need to be developed (a more complete list is below). In either case, the goal is the same: to ensure that the outcomes of SAM processes are consistent, repeatable, measurable and in accordance with corporate strategies.

Software Asset Management-related policies should reflect the principles of how the SAM program is run. They provide "overall guidance" of how SAM responsibilities should be executed. They are, however, more than just a statement of objectives. They must also reflect your corporate vision and be both prescriptive at a high level (in how one performs SAM functions) and descriptive (why and when those steps are taken). The policy document should also outline how one determines whether actual results are in conformance with the policy.

Later, when you begin to deconstruct the actual elements ("what to do"), developing the processes and procedures that support the policy become relevant. Processes and procedures must be maintained in conjunction with the policies they support, and all three should be updated on a periodic and consistent basis (preferably in unison). All SAM-related policies have processes and procedures that complement them.

Typically, before any policies are developed related to managing software assets, a risk assessment should be performed on the areas that will be affected. This is necessary, as the key elements to consider when developing polices include the inherent constraints of the organization and the risks associated with particular user behaviors. In drafting the right policies, one must also consider the following:

- The likelihood, urgency, and rate of achieving the desired outcome

- The potential impact of non-conformance
- The goals of the organization
- The measurement standards that will be used to determine whether the policy objectives are being met

Ultimately, the right policy sets a foundation or framework for the processes and procedures that will support it; this is why policies are the first element that should be developed by the relevant stakeholders. The stakeholders know how a policy will affect productivity and be received within the organization.

As I already mentioned, relevant stakeholders and their representatives should be involved in developing any policy document. In the case of a software use policy, this should include business unit representatives (who presumably may also serve as Software Managers. This is the person who serves as the focal point for end-user related software asset management activities in a particular department). Companies of a certain size can draw on specific committees; others can pull in ad hoc representatives. For those with formal committees, examples of the groups, and policies they would be best suited to oversee would include the following (note: I use the words "owned," "administered," and "maintained," interchangeably but the responsibilities are inclusive of all three things):

- A Software Deployment policy would be owned by the IT Department and IT Asset Management Group.

- A "Change Management" policy (that addresses the addition or removal of software from machines) would be administered by a Change Advisory or Control Board and the IT Asset Management group.
- Procurement and audit/review policies would typically be maintained by the IT Asset Management group (or the subset Sourcing and/or Compliance groups) as well as Legal and Procurement groups.
- A "Software License Compliance" policy would be owned by the IT Asset Management, IT Operations, Enterprise Architecture, and Legal groups.
- "The Introduction of New IT Assets" policy would be owned by the IT Asset Management and Enterprise Architecture groups.

And for those companies that adhere to IT Infrastructure's (ITIL) precepts, formal policies and sub-policies should exist for all service management functions, such as release management, incident/problem management, and configuration management. The SAM elements should be highlighted in them.

The overall IT Asset Management Charter is sometimes referred to as a policy. I won't elaborate on it in this article because (a) we consider it more of a charter and (b) it would require its own article. In any case, it is the "holy grail" of what IT Asset Management means to a particular organization: for example, it defines the purview of the IT Asset Management

group, the roles that are responsible for various SAM functions, and the key sub-policies and processes. The Charter should be actively maintained.

For a software usage policy, one should specifically consider prescriptions around the downloading of software, the use of personal software, the end-user's role in procurement, the responsibilities (by role) for ownership and monitoring of the process, and the use and misuse of IT resources like the Internet or remote access. One must carefully strike a middle ground between limiting software access and enabling users to perform their jobs in an efficient manner. Your goals should be to increase worker productivity, establish norms for software usage, and increase computer/information security. The above is, however, in no way an exhaustive list. Reviewing software use policies for proper inclusiveness is one of the services that Soft-Aid provides.

All employees should also have a general awareness of SAM and of licensing requirements. This requires ongoing vigilance and training. The ITIL Best Practice Guide for SAM states: "distributing, publicizing, communicating, implementing, and enforcing the software [use] policy through the organization [is important]. It is essential that the policy is universally accepted [by both stakeholders and senior management] and implemented in all areas or the organization as a standard."

When developing SAM policies, one should

consider not only the elements to include, but also the level of adherence. Adherence can be increased through ongoing training, requiring signed acknowledgement, proactive warnings (through login prompts or document postings on company Intranets) and enforcement (where warranted). With the case of software use policies, all four play a particularly important role. To further spur adoption, carefully choose the right body (e.g., committee or executive manager) to issue policies.
In addition, a strong "policing" mechanism is necessary so that groups with inherent self-interests do not dictate all the parameters of their own policies. Senior management and legal counsel can play an essential role in monitoring this.

Soft-Aid ranks the maturity of software-related policies from informal to those that are formally documented in accordance with corporate policies. Higher levels of maturity include ensuring that policies are properly articulated (clearly worded and easily understood by the relevant stakeholders) and inclusive (the necessary elements are covered). In order to achieve higher levels of maturity, the relevant owners of the policy must also have a mechanism for feedback, perform a periodic review to ensure that the desired result continues to be met, and adjust the policy as needed with the right versioning controls.

Though we've only scratched the surface here, I hope that this article will provide you with a solid introduction to developing effective SAM policies. Please do not hesitate to contact me or

a member of the Soft-Aid team if you would like more information.

An Overview of Centennial's Inventory Tool Software

Understanding Centennial's Inventory Tool Software.
Author: John Wescott, SAM Consultant, Email

According to the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL), one of the most important aspects of a successful Software Asset Management program is the appropriate use of tools. Centennial Software, based in Portland, Oregon, offers a suite of products targeted at assisting an organization in the discovery, control, and management of software and licenses.

The software auto-discovery tool in this suite is Centennial Discovery. Discovery recognizes software on a variety of platforms, including Windows, Linux, UNIX, Mac OSX and AIX. Through the use of its LANProbe technology, Discovery detects any device on the network with an IP address, such as PCs, servers, network printers, switches and PDAs. Once devices are detected, an agent can be deployed to dynamically gather information on software installations and usage. Communication takes place over the LAN, WAN or Internet for those devices located remotely.

Discovery features a Software Recognition Engine that combines a database of recognized software with a file's header information to identify installed software applications. Discovery also integrates with over a dozen standard helpdesk applications, enabling greater efficiency.
Other products in the suite provide graphical maps of the network, discover software and hardware security vulnerabilities, and provide a

management dashboard. Dicovery.Visual depicts the entire network and allows drill down to individual devices. Security.Advisor alerts administrators to vulnerabilities, such as IM or file sharing applications, and ranks threats by criticality and volume. This is an excellent aid in prioritization. For each user in the SAM process, Discovery.Dashboard provides a customizable web interface to a menu of 20 reports.

Additional products include the Web-based License Manager that integrates with Discovery, and activeSERVER, which complements Discovery for Terminal Server use. License Manager provides a full audit trail of software license entitlements and cross-references them to physical documents. A reconciliation of licenses to usage can be performed, including the application of downgrade rights, where appropriate. ActiveSERVER records and reports on each application's use and the duration of the usage. Centennial also provides a separate product addressing the lockdown of PC devices. DeviceWall provides the ability to control file transfers to and from USB port and wireless devices.

Products from Centennial can be purchased in combinations designed to suit an organization's needs. Others can be added separately to address specific Software Asset Management requirements. Overall, Centennial offers a group of products that together address the primary requirements of a software asset management tool solution, while providing customers the flexibility to purchase according to their needs.

"It's not what know but what you use of what you know that counts."

-Chinese Fortune Cookie

Industry News

"Microsoft Partners Embracing Server Virtualization" Kevin McLaughlin, *CRN* More

"Survey: Information Management a Priority for CIOs, But Elusive" Katherine Walsh, *CIO* More

"Mozilla Admits Fire Fox is flawed just like IE" Gregg Keizer, *Computerworld* More