

Billing Solution Firm Gains Expertise on Virtualization Licensing, Prepares for True-Up

Summary

To get an accurate view of its Microsoft software use before its annual true-up license reconciliation, Mid America Computer Corporation (MACC) participated in a Microsoft Software Asset Management (SAM) Baseline engagement with SHI. The engagement simplified the true-up process, enhanced the firm's understanding of licensing in the virtual environment, built confidence in its license tracking accuracy and saved inventory time.

The Challenge

Based in Blair, Nebraska and established in 1975, MACC is a billing solution company that offers complete billing, data processing, training services and front-office software to telephone, cable television, Internet and wireless service providers. In addition to running the Windows 7 operating system and Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2010 on 220 PCs, MACC also uses Windows Server 2008 R2 Standard, Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Standard and Enterprise and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 Enterprise Edition in a virtualized environment.

In 2011, MACC was approaching their first annual true-up license reconciliation for the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement that the company had renewed in 2010. Kourt Jensen, Network Supervisor at MACC, wanted to make sure the company's Microsoft software license inventory was in compliance with its contract.

However, Jensen faced a few challenges. First, he did not have time to do a complete inventory himself. In addition, he did not have confidence in the software inventory tools that the company had in place to provide the up-to-date licensing information necessary for an accurate true-up. Finally, MACC had recently virtualized its server environment, and Jensen wanted some assistance in understanding the licensing requirements for a virtual environment.

The Solution

MACC had worked with SHI on its Microsoft Enterprise Agreement renewal and had acquired its Microsoft licenses through the partner ever since. Aware that MACC was due for its annual true-up license reconciliation in September 2011, the SHI representative contacted Jensen a few months ahead of the due date. SHI offered Jensen the opportunity to participate in the Microsoft SAM Baseline program, which provides proven processes and procedures to quickly and accurately assess software assets.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

MACC provides billing and software solutions for independent communications providers all over the US.

CHALLENGE

Perform complete inventory. Provide up-to-date licensing information necessary for an accurate true-up. Understand the licensing requirements for a virtual environment.

SHI SOLUTION

Create a Statement of Work to start an SAM Baseline project funded by Microsoft. Provide MACC with a software discovery tool to collect the necessary inventory resulting in capturing 98 percent complete and accurate data. Provide a GapAnalysis report allowing the renewal cycle to complete.

BENEFITS/RESULTS

- ▶ Addressed current state issues and risks
- ▶ Enhanced the understanding of a virtual licensing environment
- ▶ Built confidence in license accuracy for compliance
- ▶ Saved time for the customer while working as a team with SHI

Jensen was hesitant at first because of an unsatisfactory software inventory engagement with a local vendor a few years earlier. “My first thought was that it was going to be complicated like the last time with the other vendor,” said Jensen. With reassurance from SHI and Microsoft that the SAM Baseline procedures would simplify the inventory process, Jensen decided to move forward.

During the kickoff call, SHI discussed the timeline and assigned project tasks. Jensen installed a software discovery tool to collect the necessary inventory data. “Installing the tool was really easy,” said Jensen. “I ran into a few issues when I started plugging our environment into it because a few computers didn’t have file and printer sharing turned on, but once I addressed that, the inventory went really quickly.”

Jensen sent the collected software inventory data to SHI to be compared with the Microsoft License Statement. “I was concerned that it had to be 100 percent accurate and there was absolutely no margin of error. I had a couple of laptops that were out of the office and I was afraid that would cause a problem,” said Jensen. In the end, all but six of those laptops were included in the inventory, resulting in 98 percent complete and accurate data.

In the end, the inventory results showed a few discrepancies but no big surprises. “As long as we were able to explain all of the discrepancies and, where necessary, make them right, everything was fine,” said Jensen.

The Results

Simplified the True-up process. Jensen estimates that the SAM Baseline engagement took only about six hours of his time over a two week period. “Basically, all I had to do was send SHI the collected information and relax,” said Jensen. “A lot of the stuff that I thought was going to be complicated and take a long time — like having to install an agent on all systems — turned out to be pretty easy.”

Enhanced understanding of virtual environment licensing. Jensen saw the SAM Baseline as a good opportunity to learn more about how to handle licensing in a virtual environment. “Virtualization is still a relatively new concept to us, so it was nice to have assistance in understanding how licensing in the virtual environment works for the operating system, Microsoft SQL Server and things like that,” said Jensen.

Built confidence in licensing accuracy. “By working with SHI and Microsoft, I knew the license assessment was going to be done right,” said Jensen. “We had the same goal. They wanted us to be licensed correctly and we wanted to be licensed correctly. The SAM Baseline program was simple, organized and quick, and I feel very confident with the results.”

Saved time. Jensen estimates that the SAM Baseline engagement saved a considerable amount of his time. “It was such an easy process and it saved time and money because I didn’t have to figure out how many licenses we had and compare that manually to what the inventory tool was showing me,” Jensen said. “If I had done it myself, I am sure it would have taken at least a week of juggling numbers.” ■

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