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# Microsoft license optimization

Where to focus your efforts

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## Microsoft license optimization: where to focus your efforts

As Lifecycle Asset Management experts at CDW, we undertake a lot of software optimization projects for customers across the USA including multi-national engagements. Unsurprisingly, one of the software publishers we're asked on to work on the most is Microsoft.

Despite many organizations having licensed Microsoft software for more than 30 years, it's still an area where we're often able to deliver significant savings for our customers.

But delivering a substantial cost reduction on Microsoft, or avoiding a large unnecessary cost, relies on your software optimization efforts having the right focus. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that many organizations are currently using Microsoft technologies and licensing both on-premises and in the cloud, sometimes using (or not using) licensing for both platforms.

This can bring new levels of complexity and confusion to the Microsoft licensing challenge that we just didn't see previously, and we're seeing both customers that are creating cost and risk by assuming their usage is within the terms of their agreement (when it's not) and customers failing to leverage significant usage rights because they don't even know they have them.

Here are some of the areas we recommend customers focus on to optimize their Microsoft licensing:

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## #1 Navigating the grey areas around on-prem and cloud licensing

Ninety-nine percent of organizations using Microsoft products in the cloud will have previously used at least some Microsoft products on-premises. And depending on the type of licensing agreement that the organization has in place, some of these legacy on-premises licenses can be used to cover cloud consumption – and some cannot.

A Lifecycle Asset Management expert (like us!) can help you optimize your spending by helping you understand when and how you can take advantage of any legacy on-premises licenses in a cloud environment. Likewise, we'll help you avoid potential compliance risks by making it clear when you can't do that and must purchase new subscriptions for cloud usage.

Exchange is a common example where understanding your usage rights as you transition from on-premises license to cloud can offer significant cost savings.

We also see customers regularly failing to take advantage of their licensing rights by continuing to use older software versions when they are fully entitled to use newer/current versions.

## #2 Office 365 licensing

Most of our customers are at least moving towards Office 365 if not already actively adopting it. We've seen quite a lot of confusion as to what's the right approach to managing Office 365 subscriptions and, due to a lack of understanding about real-world usage, we often see customers paying more than they really need to.





### #3 Windows Server Datacenter cores

The move to the core model on Windows Datacenter servers has caused a lot of confusion among Microsoft customers. With the best intentions, many organizations find themselves over-licensed in the datacenter. Working with a Lifecycle Asset Management Specialist at CDW can really help you understand the new licensing requirements and can lead to significant cost savings on Server licensing.

Note: even after the recent end-of-life for Microsoft datacenter products, we're still seeing a lot of it out there. This can present a major security risk to your organization, so for that reason alone, it's worth making sure your software is up to date!

### #4 SQL

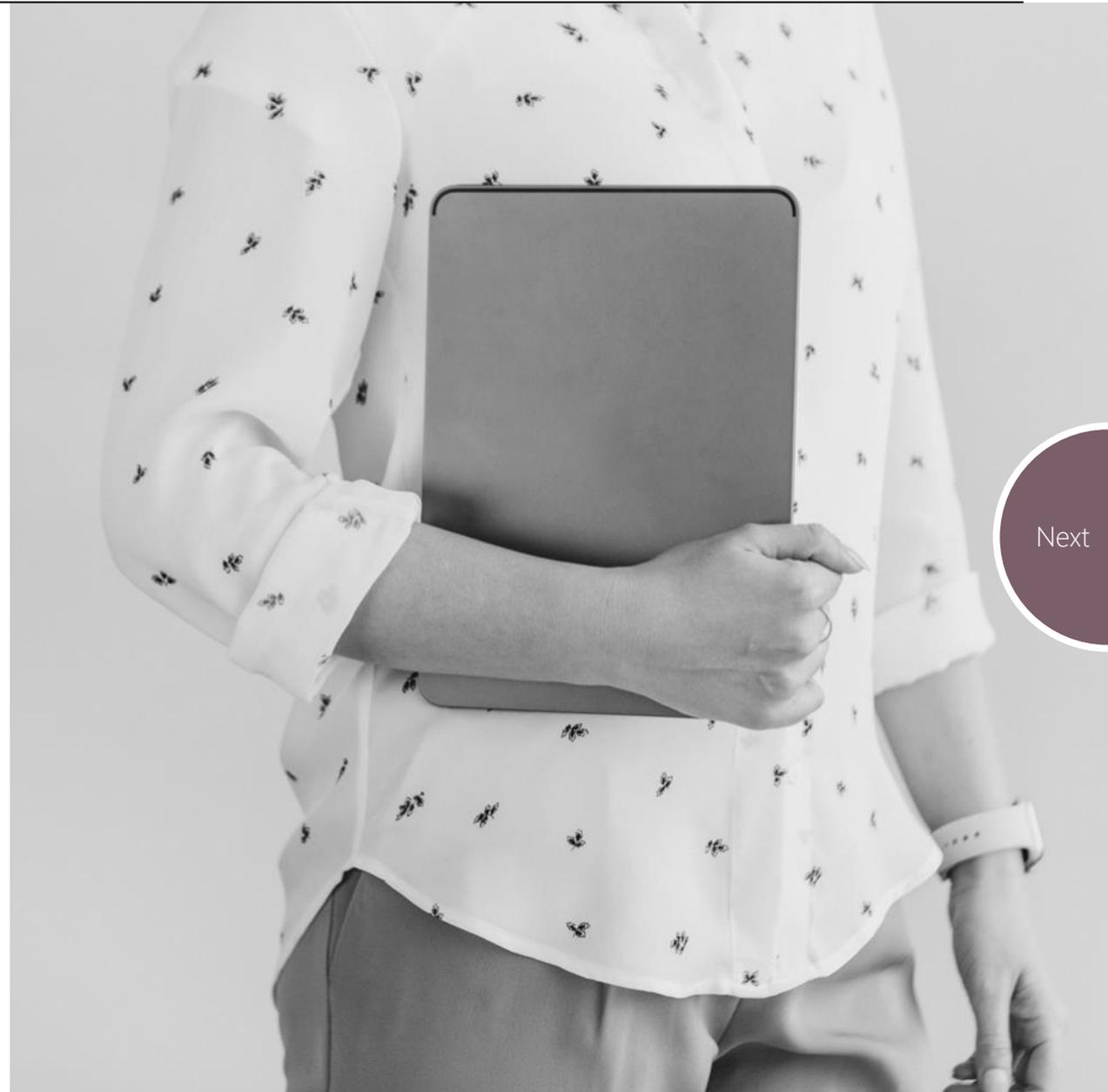
In a similar vein, we also see organizations struggling with SQL licensing. There are a number of reasons for this, not least internal teams struggling with sub-standard inventory solutions that can't distinguish between different versions and editions of SQL databases.

This inability to see the actual types of SQL deployed means that organizations can both find themselves over-licensed for standard editions and dangerously under-licensed on their professional editions. Neither is a good outcome. Clustering is also another common cause of confusion and potential non-compliance.

Thankfully, at CDW we use Certero, which gives us advanced discovery and inventory capabilities to accurately identify the different flavors of SQL that are deployed and we're able to help customers not only license them accurately but also ensure that the right type of SQL is being deployed according to the use case (spoiler alert: it often isn't!).

## #5 Misunderstanding your Enterprise Agreement

This is an old scenario, but one we still see all the time: customers with Enterprise Agreements treating them like ‘all you can eat buffets’ and giving staff access to the wrong types of products. A classic example is when an Enterprise Agreement covers the use of Microsoft Visio, but the IT team fulfils software requests with a Pro version of Visio which is not covered under the EA. The moment you do that, you’re in a position of non-compliance that could lead to a very expensive true-up!



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## CDW's choice for license optimization: Certero

After years of providing project-based engagements to customers, CDW shifted to using Certero for our engagements in 2019. We saw an immediate difference in how we were able to interact with customers once we moved to the Certero platform. Previously, like most organizations in the industry, we used a technology to harness a customer's discovery information, and then an expert worked through that information to produce results in a spreadsheet to a customer. This caused a disconnect, as we were asking our customers to stop relying on spreadsheets when they managed their assets, but we then turned around and used spreadsheets when giving results to our customers.

Shifting to the Certero platform allowed us to take a different approach. We now have the results of our engagements displayed right in the technology and we don't rely on spreadsheets that are prone to manual error. With Certero, our customers not only get answers to questions much more quickly, they can also access the full power of the Certero platform themselves, through the dashboards and reports that are available to them 24/7.

We are now so confident in the capabilities of the Certero platform – and so assured that it will provide the fastest route to the right results – that we insist on it being used in the vast majority of our software optimization projects. Every engagement we do with Certero is designed so that the customer can convert to using the platform, with the results gained from the engagement being preloaded as a starting point.

Faster project set-up and execution times, combined with less time spent by licensing consultants having to manually interrogate data means faster and more cost-effective programs for customers. It's a win-win situation.

For more information on the CDW Lifecycle Asset Management team and how we use the Certero platform to drive value in software optimization projects, contact us at [lifecycle@cdw.com](mailto:lifecycle@cdw.com).

