



Software License Management: Five top tips to radically transform your SAM program

Version 2



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Software license management is about so much more than compliance. By embracing the needs of wider stakeholder groups, you can transform SAM into a driver of enterprise-wide value.

How often have you had SAM tools sold to you and your stakeholders by exploiting your fears? Fears of financial penalties, brand damage and possibly even jail terms for your company directors? Sure, these are all perfectly legitimate risks (and fears), and worth raising, but SAM is about so much more than license compliance.

Taking SAM in its entirety, license compliance is just one aspect. However, equally important are:

- Effective control of the financial cost of software (especially in the cloud and data center) and;
- Adding value to a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

So, with this in mind, I'd like to offer these five top tips to help you transform your SAM program from a 'compliance-only function' into a 'value-adding machine'.

Back

Next



Back

Tip #1 – Understand your gaps

It is a common mistake to think that simply purchasing a SAM tool will sort out all your software license management challenges. However, this is not true. A SAM tool still needs licensing experts to wield it effectively. Having the right people and processes in place is equally as important as the technology. If your team lacks licensing experts, you can plug this gap with professional [SAM managed services](#).

Similarly, ITAM data is important. So, what is it? ITAM is all about your hardware assets and their various configurations, and is critical to ITSM and hardware asset management – as well as SAM. However, a lot of SAM tools discard (or do not collect) ITAM data. The problem is without it you won't be able to gain full visibility of your IT estate and will not be able to effectively deliver value in SAM. What this means is you will never be fully compliant or control and optimize your costs – and you certainly won't be able to deliver value to wider stakeholder audiences. Check your SAM tools to see if they give you ITAM data – if not, find one that does.

In terms of your stakeholder audiences, you also need to understand who they are and what data and insight they need from your SAM program. ITAM and SAM data is critical here! Only when you understand your stakeholder's needs can you truly evaluate ITAM and SAM tools to discover which ones are a best fit for your enterprise.

Without the right technology, data, insight, people and processes, all the risks associated with financial penalties, brand damage and spiraling costs will still exist and you won't be able to drive value for your enterprise.

So, take a step back and look to identify where your gaps are and what you need to do to plug them. Doing this correctly upfront will save you a lot of time, pain and cost further down the line. But never assume this is a one-off exercise – you need to continuously evaluate your SAM program, the value it delivers and how it delivers it.

Next

Tip #2 – Prioritize your risks

When it comes to ITAM and SAM, it's advisable to prioritize what to fix. Alternatively, you risk:

- losing focus,
- spreading your resources and efforts too thinly,
- failing to complete projects and,
- delivering zero value.

Is your biggest risk in the data center, where costs for vendors like [Oracle](#), [IBM](#) and [SAP](#) are highest and your most confidential data is stored? Or is it your desktop estate, where the volumes of users can present compliance issues?

Use your ITAM and SAM tools to analyze your IT estate and identify the areas of greatest risk, then prioritize accordingly.

Tip #3 – Confirm 'proof of entitlement'

When it comes to entitlement (and proof of that entitlement) different software vendors have different approaches, requirements and criteria. There certainly isn't a 'one size fits' all scenario.

Understanding what your vendor needs from you and what they consider to be 'proof of entitlement' is important to successfully prepare for, and navigate, future audits. It is also important to understand when evaluating potential tool sets.

So, when you are purchasing new software, negotiating renewals or battling through an audit, make sure you get formal written confirmation about what your vendor considers 'proof of entitlement'.



Back

Next



Tip #4 – Automate your SAM processes

Automating SAM processes, including the delivery of data and insight to stakeholder audiences, is critical to driving value from your SAM program.

Unfortunately, many enterprises deliver their SAM processes manually outside of their tools, often using spreadsheets, which slows down delivery, increases the risk of human errors and pushes up delivery costs. With so many manual processes, automation is impossible. Why do enterprises do this? Because they are limited by older SAM tools that simply cannot cope with the demands of modern SAM programs.

In contrast, **next generation SAM tools** deliver advanced levels of automation that enable organizations to:

- complete 90-95% of work inside their tools;
- automate manual processes and;
- effectively control the financial cost of software.

So, to drive the greatest value from your SAM program and gain tighter control of your costs (SAM delivery and software), utilize the full power of your tools to automate your processes.

However, if you find you can't automate your processes, or complete the majority of your work inside your SAM tools, you should give serious consideration to switching to a provider that can make you **SAM Happy!** Any costs associated with a change of tool vendor will inevitably be recouped through process efficiency gains, cost reductions and higher value outputs.

Next

Tip #5 – Build stakeholder relationships

Finally, the area so often overlooked is that of wider stakeholder groups. As SAM Managers we are often so focused on license compliance and the manual processes we need to deliver, that we forget about (or don't have the time to cater for) wider stakeholder audiences.

By introducing the tips outlined above, you should be able to develop a highly efficient and automated SAM program where license compliance is far easier and quicker to achieve. By liberating yourself from a plethora of manual processes, you can deliver your outputs faster and free up your time to drive higher value tasks – such as supporting your Finance department in the effective control of software costs.

However, the Finance department isn't the only stakeholder group you can support. With a single view and data source for all your ITAM and SAM (and Cloud) assets, you have the necessary insight to drive enterprise-wide value.

For example, you can help your HR function manage their leavers and new starters processes by re-harvesting licenses and hardware, an area that can easily rack up costs. You can also build closer relationships with IT Security by helping them proactively identify and fix vulnerable assets, including those not owned or managed by your organization but are connected to your network.

Similarly, with your ITAM and SAM (and Cloud) insights, Service Desk teams can have full access to inventory and configuration information that will make it easier and faster for them to resolve IT support calls from across your enterprise.

The list truly does go on and to maximize the value you deliver to your stakeholder audiences you must:

- identify who your stakeholders are
- talk to them about their requirements
- combine those requirements with those of your SAM program
- use your combined view to procure appropriate tools
- use those tools to automate your processes

Once you have automated your SAM processes, and improved the efficiency and effectiveness of your SAM program, you will have freed up enough of your time to focus on delivering against these stakeholder requirements.

By successfully delivering against these requirements, you will move software license management up your organization's strategic agenda – and make yourself, your role and your team more valuable to your enterprise.

[Back](#)[Next](#)

Conclusion

Implementing these five top tips will help you create a fully integrated ITAM and SAM program that delivers tangible value to a wide stakeholder audience, and significantly reduces your IT expenditure whilst improving your compliance position.

To ensure success you will need the right mix of:

- Technology
- Data
- Insight
- people and;
- processes

However, this is not always straight forward. But rest assured, whatever your challenges Certero can help you with:

- advanced ITAM and SAM technologies
- rich data inventories
- powerful analytics and insightful reporting capabilities
- expertise in licensing for [Microsoft](#), [IBM](#), [Oracle](#), [SAP](#) or [cloud](#) vendors
- automating your processes.

Whatever you need, whatever your goals, our team are here to help you achieve them. If you would like to talk to our ITAM and SAM experts about your challenges, you can [contact Certero](#) today and arrange a call back.



Next