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Technology or Service

What's the fastest route to
Software Asset Management success?



Executive Summary

There can be many triggers that force stakeholders to realize that it's time to invest in Software Asset Management: maybe you're being audited (or worried that you might be), maybe you need to support a digital transformation or application migration project, or maybe you've finally decided that technology spending needs to be optimized and better governed.

Whatever the business driver, the fundamental choices for SAM are the same: do you go it alone and onboard the staff and technologies you need, do you outsource the problem to a services partner, or a combination of both?

Of course, in reality the devil is in the detail and setting yourself up for SAM success is much more difficult than the simple choices outlined above.

If you're either embarking on a SAM program for the first time, or looking to achieve higher levels of success than you've managed to date, this guide will help you make the right choice for your organization, your current situation and your program goals.

Why trust Certero's advice?

Certero is in the unique position of being equally as invested in developing SAM technologies as it is in delivering the highest standard of SAM services: some customers use our tools in isolation, the rest use our tools in combination with a service delivered by our highly-skilled managed services team.

And that's just how we like it: our goal is your success, not selling you the most expensive outcome! So, you can trust the advice within to help steer you towards the right decision for your needs, internal resources and expectations.





Technology or Service

What's the fastest route to Software Asset Management success?

Software Asset Management – and the associated challenges of discovering and inventorying devices and software, capturing and calculating entitlements, optimizing your license position for key vendors and rationalizing spend – can be addressed in many ways, there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

However, how you choose to tackle SAM can determine your program's costs, timeline and overall success, so taking the time to fully evaluate the options available to you is well worth it.

This short guide, prepared by SAM and licensing experts at Certero, aims to help you through that decision-making process. It will outline the key options available to you and investigate the pros and cons of each.

By the end of the guide, you should be armed with sufficient insight to start (or perhaps re-start) your SAM journey in the direction that's right for you and your organization.

Four basic options for your SAM program

Although there are many nuances and subtleties that create many additional considerations for your choice of how to manage your SAM program, the basic options can be distilled down to four:

- 1) Buy a SAM tool and run it yourself
- 2) Buy a SAM tool and have a third party provide a full or partial service around it
- 3) Contract SAM managed services from a supplier using third-party technology (i.e. not their own)
- 4) Contract full or partial SAM managed services from a supplier using their own technology

On the coming pages, we'll look at each of these options and what you need to consider when evaluating and comparing them. We'll outline some of the pros and cons of each approach and try to help you identify and avoid some of the potential gotchas that could create unexpected costs, resource demands or time delays.



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1. Buy a SAM tool and run it yourself

Historically, this has been one of the most popular choices for organizations embarking on SAM, especially if the SAM function within the organization has been born out of an existing team such as ITAM, ITSM or procurement.

There's no shortage of choice on the SAM tools market, either, with tools to suit all budgets. There are generalist tools that will claim to do a bit of everything as well as highly specialized tools that are optimized for a particular environment or software publisher's licensing. For more advice on selecting the right SAM tool for your needs, [check out our eBook on that topic](#)

Pros:

- Full choice on the technology that you buy
- Choose a tool to suit your budget and needs
- Skill staff up on selected tool

Cons:

- Tool selection can be difficult (and misleading)
- You need to train staff to run the tool
- Tool is unlikely to automate licensing expertise to required level

Tips for overcoming common gotchas when buying a tool:

- Be very strict in any Proof of Concept process and stress-test the tools across your environments
- Speak to other customers of the tool to understand limitations and overheads*
- Consider cloud-hosted tools if resources to host and run tool on-premises are limited

* Resources like [Gartner Peer Insights](#) can give a real-world look into true customer reviews.



2. Buy a tool and have a third-party deliver a service around it

This option is quite popular when organizations buy a SAM tool (or try to make use of existing technologies like SCCM or an ITSM solution) and then realize they don't have the skills to run it properly (*see Cons in 'Buy a tool'*).

As with tools, there is no shortage of SAM service providers around the globe, so picking the right one for your needs can be difficult. A good one will really lift the weight off your shoulders and provider licensing expertise when you need it. A bad one could land you with even more work than going it alone and leaving you wondering why you're paying so much money for so little value.

Pros:

- Should be an easy and fast way to access specialist licensing skills
- Remove the drudgery of data manipulation and entitlement upload
- Usually cheaper than hiring equivalent skills in-house

Cons:

- SAM service providers usually not good at running or supporting tools
- Strict contracts limit ability to react to changing SAM needs
- Could result in duplicated work (and cost) as service provider does more work outside SAM tool than in it

Tips for avoiding common gotchas with third-party service providers:

- Understand in advance that the service provider will need YOU to do a lot of the work
 - Be clear on what the service provider will do and what the tools provider is responsible for (this is often a cause of frustration for customers looking to resolve issues in service delivery)
 - Check that the service is delivering more than you could do with a little SAM tool product training
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3. Contract a SAM service provider using a third-party tool

While some SAM service providers try to overlay their services on top of whatever incumbent tool you have (*as above*), others will have their preferred (licensed) technologies they use to base their services around. This potentially avoids some of the cons associated with previous option, but does still need careful selection criteria to avoid serious pitfalls.

Often, third party SAM services providers using their own preferred technologies will sell you a SAM tool you don't really need, as most of the legwork is done by a team of 'spreadsheet warriors' behind the scenes and outside whatever SAM tool you've been forced to buy. These service providers can sometimes be very heavy on low-paid unskilled staff and very light on experienced consultants that know how to help you optimize your license position or defend and audit.

Pros:

- SAM service providers are more likely to be able to use and support the SAM tool
- Services can potentially be more cost-effective if the provider uses good technology
- If the tool is cloud-hosted, onboarding /time-to-value is accelerated

Cons:

- You are limited to service provider's chosen tools
- Service providers will likely not provide support for the tools used, so check the vendor's reputation
- You may have very limited access to the technology, reducing value to programs outside SAM

Tips for avoiding common gotchas with SAM service providers using third-party technology:

- Scrutinize the tool/technology as much as the service, will it do what you want?
- Ensure your own staff have full access to the technology, not just dashboards
- Check the service provider's consultants are adding value, not just data crunching*

* Some SAM service providers will outsource licensing expertise for 'difficult' vendors like IBM, SAP and Oracle to contractors or third-party service providers.

4. Contract a SAM service from a provider using their own technology

While most SAM service providers will claim to base their service on 'owned IP' of some kind or another, finding a SAM service provider that can base a complete service on their own technology is still a rarity.

The benefit of this kind of arrangement is that there can be no confusion as to who is responsible for supporting both the service and the product, since both are coming from the same source! Beware, however, services built around homegrown 'solutions' that are not fit for commercial use. Your chosen supplier's technology must be robust enough for them to deliver a strong and effective service around.

Pros:

- No confusion over accountability for service levels and product quality
- Service provider staff should be able to maximize use of the tool 's features
- Can often be delivered cost-effectively and with quick time-to-value from the cloud

Cons:

- Tools built for the service provider's staff might not meet the needs of customer users
- Tools might not meet the requirements of wider use cases such as lifecycle management and ITSM
- Services and tools might be suitable only for very limited use cases

Tips for avoiding common gotchas with SAM service providers using their own technology:

- Scrutinize the tool as well as the service, especially if you want to use the tool for other use cases outside SAM
- Compare and contrast different service providers to identify the one that offers the greatest blend of technology, expertise and customer service - [download our guide to support your selection process](#).
- Arrange a formal Proof of Concept to validate the quality of both the tools and the services the provider can deliver



Other considerations for SAM technologies and partners

For help in selecting the right SAM technologies, download our free eBook: [“Six selection criteria to help you choose the right SAM tools”](#).

Other considerations when looking at potential SAM service providers might include:

- *“Is this their main line of business?”* – do they really have expert consultants you can trust to deliver and to understand your business goals?
- *“Are there any conflicts of interest?”* – if the SAM service provider also sells licenses for a vendor they are ‘optimizing’, can you fully trust the advice you are receiving?
- *“Can I see it with my own eyes?”* – if you’re relying on the service provider to also host the tool, do you get full access to the data or just the polished management reports?
- *“What else can I get from this?”* – again, if the tool isn’t yours, can you access the data it produces and use it to support other use cases such as hardware asset management (ITAM) and IT service management (ITSM)?

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About Certero

Hybrid technology and services solutions for Software Asset Management.

"With Certero, it's just a better experience"

Certero deliver [as-a-service] IT Hardware, Software, SaaS and Cloud Asset Management solutions and services, to help enable organizations to digitally transform their IT. We do this by challenging the traditional, outdated delivery method of disappointing point solutions, and instead deliver true unification across all platforms, from mobile to mainframe to cloud, delivered as SaaS in days, not months or years. Combined with our self-service solutions we support organizations to drive digital transformation agendas through increased efficiency and automation. With businesses in the UK, USA and Australia, Certero is a customer first company with a passion for customer success, earning the trust of some of the leading global brands across the finance, manufacturing, health, retail and technology sectors. That's why Certero is viewed number one, year on year for customer service as well as having the highest scores for product capabilities, making Certero a safe, trusted partner to help with your digitally transformation.



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