USU

US School System Improves ROI with SAM Health Check

At a glance

Company
USA County School System

Industry
Education K-12, Public Sector

Key figures
110,000 student endpoints
14,000 teacher endpoints
1,700 servers
IBM, Microsoft, Adobe

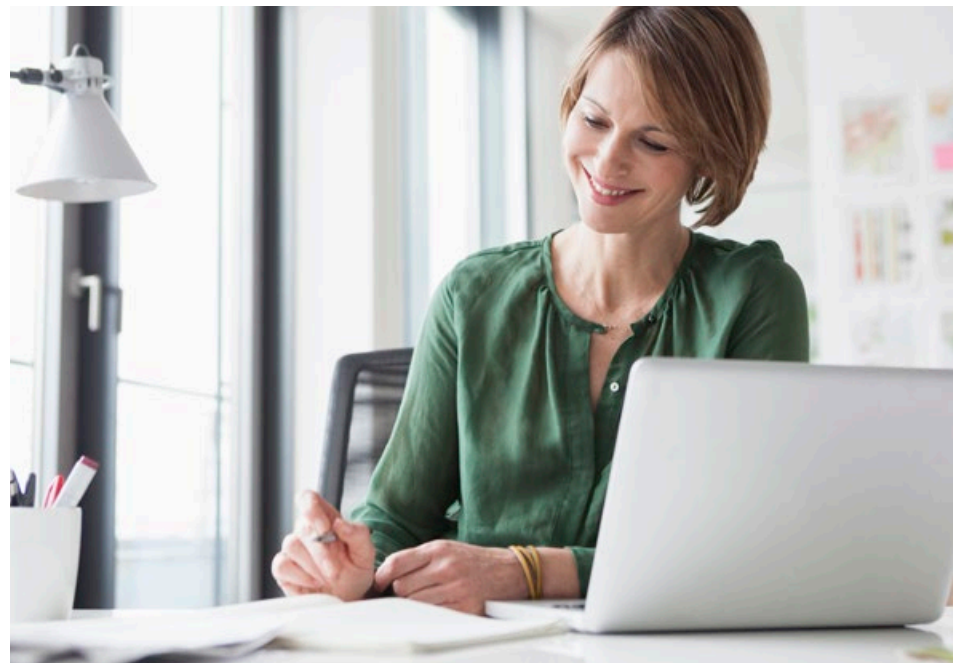**USU solution**
Software Asset Management

Challenge
Changing their focus from user-facing devices to the data center led to an upgrade of their SAM platform, system health check for their data feeds, evaluating the IBM backbone of their server environment, and looking at options for cloud transition.

Solution
The USU Service Delivery team went onsite for a connector review, product catalog review, validation of the data feeds, and help with integration and compliance for main vendors IBM, Microsoft and Adobe.

Results
Working together resulted in better automation that eliminated manual maintenance work, reconciliation of IBM servers to determine financial vulnerability, and putting Office 365 and Creative Cloud in place for cloud-based contract evaluation.

Challenge: Refocus on data center

The Customer is the largest K-12 school system in this USA state, ranking nationally in the top 10. Their Software Asset Management (SAM) team runs student labs with 110,000 endpoints as well as the devices for a faculty of 14,000.

Recently, The Customer's SAM team changed their focus to managing their data center of 1,700 servers. A few years previous, vendor audits had revealed their biggest vulnerability was in the data center, not the teacher and student endpoints. There were no audits pending, however, those experiences had set a goal of being proactive.

Another goal was getting a license position for their IBM products. The Customer had over 100 different SKUs held in a large agreement, under a product profile that was extensive and handling license metrics that weren't straightforward. The team wanted to focus on the products running on servers, while staying confident about their compliance in the student labs.

A final goal was gathering information about moving vendors to the cloud. Most of the Customer's estate was still on-premises but the team was evaluating cost options such as going to a subscription model versus buying a Microsoft SQL license outright.

People are used to working a certain way so it's important to revisit over time if that is still the right way. Is your data the same, has your technical environment changed, are your system connectors working correctly, do you need to revise your product database? Your priorities and processes may have shifted.

Did you know? SAM health matters

USU recommends an annual Master Data Health Check for your SAM program. A Health Check ensures that your data has a firm foundation, there are no gaps in the data, and your SAM solution has up-to-date rules and metrics. This is similar to seeing your doctor each year for a physical exam to get an overview of your medical health.

Solution: Data feeds and integration

As a core part of their program, The Customer has used the USU Software Asset Management solution (formerly Aspera SmartTrack) for over 10 years. So they engaged with our Service Delivery team to assist with an overdue upgrade of their SAM platform, a Health Check for its data feeds, and help with compliance and integration for their biggest vendors: IBM, Microsoft and Adobe.

The USU Service team came onsite for the Health Check, which included a connector review, product catalog review, and validation of their data feeds.

- **USU solution upgrade** – Moved to newest version of the solution platform.
  Benefit: Supported their current technical environment and enabled increased automation of product recognition and metric calcuations.

- **Master Data health check** – Analyzed the overall quality of data and data feeds into the USU platform.
  Benefit: Established a reliable data source of network classification for their production vs non-prod environments, which impacts the license cost for software usage on each device.

- **Product catalog cleanup** – Moved to a newer database with more robust licensing rules, then cleaned and remapped their products and product suites.
  Benefit: Reliability that compliance reporting is based on current licensing rules, and more automation for recognizing products.

Like a doctor giving you referrals to specialists after a physical exam, a SAM health check often leads to recommendations for the better health of your license management. The Customer saw the value of additional activities and engaged the USU Services team to review their connectors and compliance to ensure the SAM data and processes were working effectively.

- **Office 365 integration** – Office 365 was connected and running, leaving the production environment ready for User Acceptance Testing (UAT).

Benefit: Ready to Ready to explore opportunities for optimization on the server side since they have different contract agreements.

- **Adobe Creative Cloud integration** – Ensured Adobe suite was fully integrated and running across the student computer labs.
  Benefit: Gave visibility so The Customer could evaluate if they were paying for the right subscription level, and how to optimize such as dropping unused products.

- **IBM compliance** – Set up all data feeds to capture discovery data, procurement data and contract data, across both background servers and student labs.
  Benefit: The ability to reliably track their IBM bundled products and evaluate those metrics during the reconciliation process.

> 🔵 **The top 15% of our custom SKUs are researched by the USU team. And if there's benefit, they add those to the master catalog, which helps in the product identification. If they're not in the catalog, they get those into future versions as a collaboration among all of USU's customer base.**
>
> Director of IT Business & Resource Management

Get in touch for further information.

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The Results: Stay healthy to stay ahead

This Services engagement started with a Master Data Health Check, which is a great gateway to seeing ROI from vendor onboarding. Having our USU account manager onsite delivered added value, as working side by side with the The Customer let the puzzle pieces fall into place, and more pieces were uncovered by talking in person.

SAM automation: A big reveal from the Health Check was that The Customer had been maintaining their product database by manually entering a lot of SKUs, which was a lot of extra work. By updating the product catalog, they got time-saving automation as products they had maintained manually would now get an automatic push.

IBM compliance: It was key to have good discovery data feeds and a solid compliance position with visibility into what and where IBM products were installed in their data center and student lab environments. This enabled The Customer to determine if they had any financial risk in their servers, with an eye to preparing for future audits.

Cloud transition: With Creative Cloud and Office 365 in place, as contract renewals come up, The Customer could take a hard look at the utilization of their licenses, if they had the right number, and whether they could optimize the subscription level for Creative Cloud.

Like a doctor's medical exam, your SAM Health Check shows if your foundation is solid. You can see the foundational data, review your compliance reporting, and analyze how you might feed back those insights into better results. Similar to referrals from your doctor about seeing a specialist, you can then decide which insights to follow up on, such as optimization of the software licenses that you're using and paying for.