



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

Customer: Mid America Computer Corporation
Website: www.macnet.com
Customer Size: 800 employees
Country or Region: United States
Industry: IT Services
Partner: SHI International

Customer Profile:
Based in Blair, Nebraska, Mid America Computer Corporation provides billing and software solutions for independent communications providers all over the United States.

Software and Services:
Software Asset Management
-SAM Baseline

Microsoft Volume Licensing
-Microsoft Enterprise Agreement

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“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.”

- Kourt Jensen, Network Supervisor, Mid America Computer Corporation

To get an accurate view of its Microsoft software use before its annual True-up license reconciliation, Mid America Computer Corporation participated in a Microsoft Software Asset Management (SAM) Baseline engagement with SHI International. That 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.

Business Needs

Established in 1975, Mid America Computer Corporation (MACC) is a billing solution company that offers complete billing, data processing, and 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 its 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 the 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. And finally, MACC had recently virtualized its server environment, and Jensen wanted some assistance in understanding the licensing requirements for a virtual environment.





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Solution

MACC had worked with Microsoft partner SHI International 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 Software Asset Management (SAM) Baseline program, which provides proven processes and procedures to quickly and accurately assess software assets.

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," says Jensen. With reassurance from SHI and Microsoft that the SAM Baseline procedures would simplify the inventory process, Jensen decided to go forward.

During the kickoff call, SHI discussed the timeline and assigned project tasks. Jensen then installed a software discovery tool to collect the necessary inventory data. "Installing the tool was really easy," says 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," says 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," says Jensen.

Benefits

Through the Microsoft SAM Baseline engagement with SHI, MACC was able to:

Simplify 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," says 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."

Enhance 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," says Jensen.

Build confidence in licensing accuracy. "By working with SHI and Microsoft, I knew the license assessment was going to be done right," says 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."

Save 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 says. "If I had done it myself, I am sure it would have taken at least a week of juggling numbers."