Customer Solution Case Study

Global Software Company Boosts Licensing Flexibility with Integrated Server Solution

"By using the dynamic licensing features of Microsoft SLP Services, we've reduced the number of required builds from 16 to 4... and saved our Quality Assurance team 8 to 14 business days per release."

Anthony Roy, Business Development Manager, Mindjet

International software developer Mindjet® is the creator of the innovative MindManager® and Mindjet Connect technologies. In 2007, Mindjet became an early adopter of the new Microsoft Software Licensing and Protection (SLP) Services Server solution. Mindjet expects that by using Microsoft SLP Services, it will develop more flexible licensing options, expand more easily into global markets, reduce fraud, and enhance customer satisfaction.

Customer: Mindjet

Web Site: www.mindjet.com

Customer Size: Approximately 200 employees

Country or Region: United States, Europe, and Asia

Industry: Manufacturing - Software

Company Profile

San Francisco, California–based Mindjet is the creator of mind-mapping product MindManager and the SaaS offering Mindjet Connect. Individuals and teams use maps to visually organize, communicate and act on their ideas.

Software and Services

● Microsoft Software Licensing and Protection Services

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Business Needs

Mindjet makes software that helps people visualize and use information. Its leading products, MindManager and Mindjet Connect, help people work smarter, think creatively, and save time every day. Users achieve breakthrough insight into their work by visually tying together all of the ideas, information, and people related to any project or plan. Over 1.3 million licenses of MindManager software are being used by large and small businesses, governmental agencies, and educational institutions around the world.

Following an audit in 2007, Mindjet discovered that product keys for MindManager software had been stolen a significant number of times. "The audit confirmed what we already suspected," says Bill Creekbaum, Senior Product Manager, Mindjet. "We built our own algorithm to validate product keys and track activations, but we weren't able to enforce any limits on the number of activations. The audit revealed that product keys were being illegally distributed or, in some cases, there were hacked keys that bypassed our algorithm were available on the Internet."

In addition to fraud protection, Mindjet began looking for a solution that would help reduce the number of separate builds required for each product. "MindManager is available in four different languages," says Anthony Roy, Business Development Manager, Mindjet. "We needed to create 16 separate builds for each of the 30, 60, or 90 day trial versions, which translated into a great deal of time and effort for our developers."

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Solution

Mindjet designed MindManager Pro 7 software to integrate seamlessly with Microsoft® Office Project 2007 and the entire 2007 Microsoft Office system. Mindjet was also one of the first independent software vendors to license and use the Microsoft Office Fluent user interface, which made MindManager Pro 7 even more intuitive and easy to navigate. Mindjet is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and a member of the elite Managed Partner Program.

Following its internal audit in 2007, Mindjet decided it needed a more comprehensive solution to create, manage, and activate licenses, as well as enhance protection against piracy, hacking, and reverse engineering. Because of its strong partnership with Microsoft, Mindjet learned about an opportunity to become an early adopter of Microsoft Software Licensing and Protection (SLP) Services and realized that SLP Services provided exactly what the company needed.

Mindjet began integrating SLP Services in October 2007 and completed the engineering phase in December 2007. "We're introducing SLP Services in the middle of a major release cycle, so most of the development time was spent creating a service pack," says Creekbaum. "We needed to provide a self-service mechanism for existing customers to exchange their current product key for a new SLP Services–based product key. Our Web engineering team built a self-service mechanism that receives the current key, validates it against a newer version of our algorithm that contains a blacklist and hardened algorithm to prevent unauthorized exchange, and delivers a new SLP Services–based key to the customer."

Mindjet began internal testing of SLP Services in late February 2008 and launched an extensive beta test on April 1, 2008. The product containing the SLP Services solution was released June 18, 2008. "As far as our customers are concerned, everything is happening in the background. SLP Services are totally invisible from a user perspective."

Benefits

Mindjet anticipates that by using Microsoft SLP Services it will be able to create more flexible licensing options, reduce fraud, boost revenue, and enhance customer satisfaction.

Integration Supports Greater Flexibility

Mindjet chose the Microsoft SLP Server 2008 solution, rather than the Microsoft SLP Online Service, because "it was a better fit with our long-term strategy," says Creekbaum. "We've integrated SLP Server with our existing infrastructure—our customer resource management system, customer support system, and Web services—which gives us much more flexibility. We can build a more tightly integrated solution for our customers."

Roy adds, "The 'per key' pricing model was also a significant advantage when compared to the pricing model offered by the competition."

Mindjet is using the flexibility of SLP Services to generate different types of product keys. "We have greater control over custom demonstration periods, options for subscription periods for client software, as well as support for our current distribution methods," explains Creekbaum. "We are also exploring more creative licensing models and subscription offerings to meet the changing requirements of our customers as well as our expansion into new markets."

Jon Wong, Vice President of eCommerce and Distribution at Mindjet, adds, "We're looking to SLP Services to help us be more agile in the global market. Prior to integrating SLP Services, a business model change may have meant a large development effort."

Dynamic Licensing Reduces Build Time

Thanks to the dynamic licensing features of SLP Services, Mindjet has been able to reduce the amount of time involved in its release cycle. "Using the dynamic licensing features of Microsoft SLP Services, we've reduced the number of required builds from 16 to 4," says Roy. "Reducing the number of builds not only simplified the release cycle, it also saved our Quality Assurance team 8 to 14 business days per release."

Enhanced Protection Boosts Satisfaction

Mindjet anticipates that using SLP Services will lead to short- and long-term increases in customer satisfaction. "We can protect our product from theft and, more importantly, protect our customers from fraud," Creekbaum says. "We expect that using SLP Services will also help increase our protection against lost revenue."

Creekbaum concludes, "We now have the technology in place to safeguard our intellectual property and keep MindManager secure in the marketplace. Authentic Mindjet licenses ensure quality product and quality support, all of which lead to greater customer satisfaction."

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