CUBES
Software License Manager

In-House Solutions vs. Enterprise Software for License Management

A Decision Maker's Guide

tangent

Table of Contents

tangent
CUBES
Software License Manager

Definitions

IT Infrastructure Library: ITIL, defined best practices for IT activities such as IT service management and IT asset management that focus on aligning IT services with the needs of business.

License Term: Conditions of the license. Often include license duration, number of users, individual machine installs and other details.

Onramp Process: Series of procedures for managing highly complex software integrations. Often requires dedicated IT assets.

Software as a Service: a subscription-based licensing model for centrally hosted software.

Software Asset Management: A series of administrative processes, policies and procedures enacted to maintain compliance with the procurement, deployment, use, maintenance and depreciation of software applications.

Introduction

Businesses over the last decade have had to navigate a monumental shift in how software is licensed. Gone are the days of buying software and paying, at most, a yearly service fee. Subscriptions, Software as a service (SaaS) and short-term software licensing is the new normal. Managing a few licenses can be done with simple calendar alerts or spreadsheets, but there comes a point where businesses need more.

In this, though, there are a dizzying array of choices. Researching for a simple license management tool soon leads you into the world of software asset management (SAM), Enterprise asset management, and IT infrastructure library (ITIL). Tools at this level are megalithic- feature rich, multi-use one stop shopping for every use case you can imagine.

But what if you don't need all that?

What if you just want an easy way to manage your licenses?

What if you can't tie up your IT department for weeks while they manage set up?

This paper highlights the need for a Goldilocks solution—something in the middle that is just right, and introduces the Cubes License Manager from Tangent.

tangent
CUBES
Software License Manager

Decisions, Decisions

All it takes is one day of having a domain expire to teach you how important license management is. What happens when critical projects are delayed because Photoshop has expired and the designers can't get into their work? That SaaS you signed up for but keep meaning to cancel before it auto renews? The question is not IF you need a system. The question is which one.
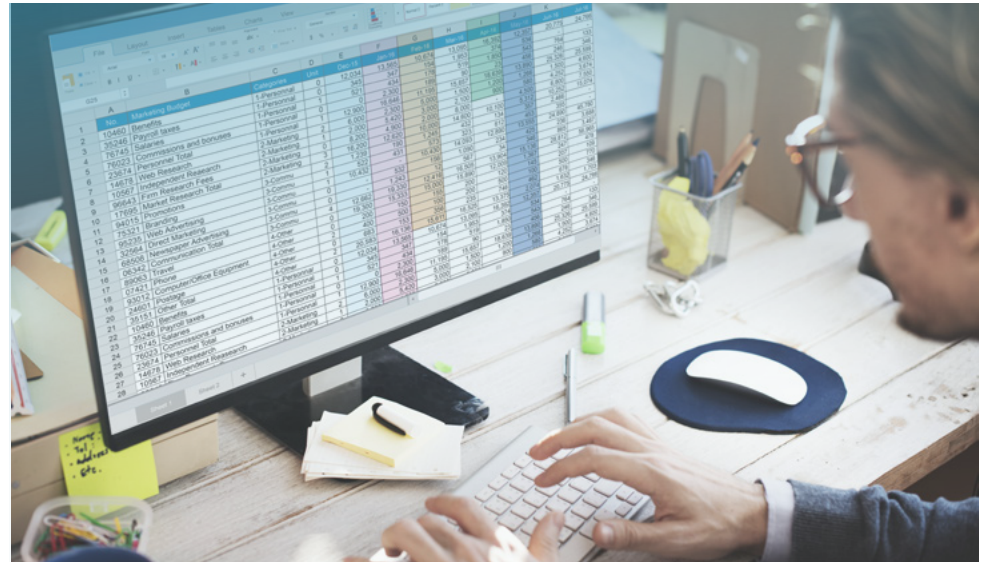
In-house

Simple spreadsheets are very good tools for rudimentary license management. Small business can save lots of money by setting up an in-house system. It's a familiar tool that many of us use every day, and have years of experience with. A spreadsheet can easily manage renewal dates, keep track of costs and itemize license term details. Paired with a system of calendar alerts, this can serve a company very well through the initial growth period.

The spreadsheet/calendar combo will have issues scaling. Imagine trying to manage 20 licenses that need to be updated in one program, then have alerts managed in another—it gets cumbersome quickly. Additionally, as neither of these tools is built for this purpose data entry and upkeep is not very efficient. As a company grows, owners want efficient answers with more features.

tangent
CUBES
Software License Manager

Professional Grade

There should be more solutions here, but there just aren't. Smaller and mid-size companies are faced with a dearth of options—tools seem either too big or too small. Growing enterprises should have the option of getting their needs met without overinvesting. Solutions in this market should offer features growing businesses need without all the complex overhead of the enterprise level tools.

Cubes license management is one such tool.

Enterprise Level

The need for robust feature sets in a pivotal point in enterprise level license management tools. Frequently, at this level, license management is a feature of a much larger and more complex piece of software. If you are monitoring software licenses, it follows that you will need to know how often that software is accessed, so you can tell if you need to keep that agreement active. And while you are doing all that, why not do some version control?

It all logically builds on its self until you have a megalithic tool, with scores of features, massive IT integration, multi-level administration, coverage for every use case... and a price tag to match. (When you can get a price, at least) Rolling out this software often requires a dedicated IT team for weeks on end, and one or two assets to remain dedicated to maintaining the product. Solutions like this are not even in the cards for all but the largest companies.

tangent
CUBES
Software License Manager

Criteria for decision

A myriad of factors that play into the decision to stay with an in-house solution or upgrade. The 80/20 rule (Pareto Principal) plays into this-- the rule states that 80% of effects come from 20% of causes. With software, this means 80% of users will only use 20% of the features. Cost, onramp process and learning curve… it all has a role to play in deciding if and when to move on from in-house solutions.

When in-house is best

It's easy to get rudimentary license control using Excel, Google Sheets, or some other spreadsheet program. Cubes makes our Excel template freely available - it's a great starting point for keeping track of software licenses, SaaS subscriptions, and even warranties. When you have 4-12 items to track, and don't care that you are not keeping historical costs, this can work great. Using pivot tables and report builders will allow you to isolate data and make some rudimentary charts and graphs. Paired with a solid system of calendar-based reminders, you can keep it going while you concentrate on growing your business.
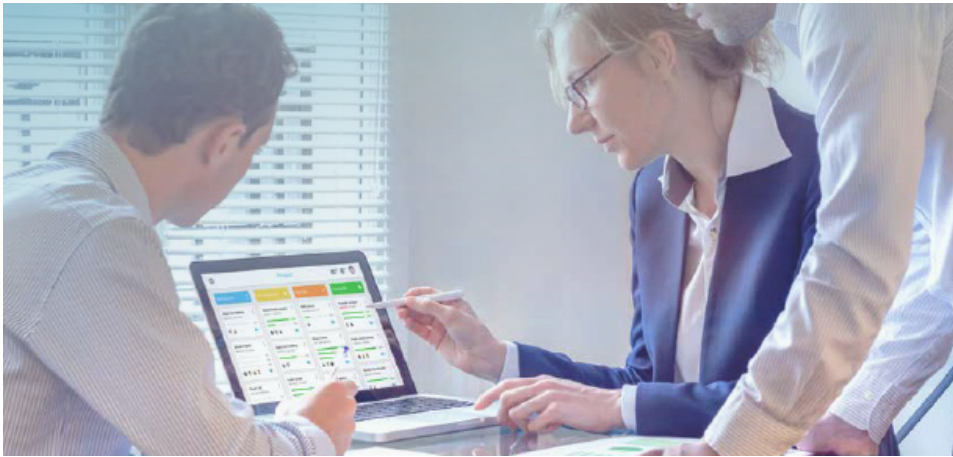
Eventually you'll need to look at efficiency tradeoffs. What only takes a few minutes for 10 licenses may become inconvenient at 20, and evolves into a slog as more license term details are tracked. The quantity and richness of data you are tracking will eventually outstrip the capabilities of what you can do with a spreadsheet and calendar reminders.

tangent
CUBES
Software License Manager

When Professional is best

There comes a point when you want more. You want to track more, see more, look into past costs and get better insights. You want automated alerts without opening a separate app. You have departments now, and they are each doing their own data entry. It's getting messy.

Now is the time to start thinking of the 80/20 rule. What features will your teams actually use? How often? It's time to look at not only what you can afford, but what level of complexity you are ready for. If you need more feature rich options, but don't have the IT manpower to dedicate to onboarding and maintaining enterprise software, consider a product like Cubes. With Cubes, you will get text as well as email alerts for expiration dates. You can upload and make use of your data the same day, with no IT department involvement. Run reports, view analytics and maintain alerts all from an application that was designed around the needs of small to mid-size businesses.

See you term durations laid out and defined. Get the 'more' you've been looking for, without all the pain and bloat of the enterprise systems.

When to migrate to Enterprise

It's time to get very serious. Your needs have outgrown license management, and you need something MORE. Now is when you need to have ITIL processes in place, software utilization information, compliance tracking and procurement management. Now is when you need them all in one place. The IT department is robust and can handle the complexities of the onramp processes.

There are some great products in the enterprise space. Talk to your IT managers, ask them what tools they need to manage the licensing, audit, compliance and utilization needs. Sit down with Procurement and see what they have to add. Figure out your companies needs and bottlenecks. With all your requirements in hand, you are ready to go talk to sales reps for companies like Snow, Flexera, and ServiceNow.

tangent
CUBES
Software License Manager

Decision Checklist

Each organization is unique. There is no magic formula that will match you with the perfect solution, but seeing where your answers are can be helpful in sorting it out. You may have 19 employees but manage such complex licensing environments Enterprise Solutions are your best bet. You could have 6,000 employees but your IT department is already stretched thin, so you need a professional grade solution.

Criteria	In-house	Professional Grade	Enterprise Solution
Number of licenses managed	5-15	15+	It's complicated. Really, really complicated.
Need to monitor software usage	No	No	Yes
Size of company - how many employees	Under 20	Under 5,000	Over 5,000
Do you want professional reports?	No	Yes	Yes
Do you want at-a-glance information	No	Yes	Yes
Can you dedicate a team to handle onboarding?	No	No	Yes
Will you have a dedicated person for managing the software	No	No	Yes

tangent
CUBES
Software License Manager

Alerts & Notifications

Receive an alert 30, 60, or 90 days before a license expires. Never worry about needing to check on every expiration date again.
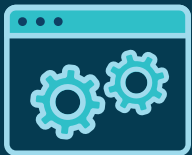
Visual Dashboard

Get a snapshot of where your licenses stand – from licenses that need to go out to bid to the amount due within 30 days.

Cost Optimization

Cubes helps you identify underutilized licenses, allowing you to optimize software usage and reduce costs.

About Cubes License Managenent

Cubes License Manager the just-the-right-size solution for license management. This service takes the headache out of managing your licenses, warranties, domain certifications and other time sensitive artifacts. We do this by providing an application that was built to do one thing, and do it well.

Subscribers enjoy:

• Quick to learn software...no in-depth training required.

• A user-friendly interface that makes it easy to input all of your data.

• Visual representations of term length which allow you to quickly see where your licenses stand.

• Interactive dashboards that give you the opportunity to visualize your license spend and provide executive reports with ease.

• Custom alerts-- so you never miss another renewal again or let an unwanted SaaS auto-renew slip through.

• Just the necessary tools to get the job done.

Built on Microsoft's Azure and delivered with security in mind, Cubes eradicates license redundancy and allows you to keep costs down.

tangent
CUBES
Software License Manager

Resources

Chong Yu Chong Yu Software Development Leader | Product Development | Startups | Healthcare | Business Intelligence. "80:20 Rule For Software Development." LinkedIn, July 2016, www.linkedin.com/pulse/8020-rulesoftware-development-chong-yu.

Kepes, Ben. "What Does Enterprise Grade Really Mean?" Forbes, Forbes Magazine, 18 Dec. 2013, www.forbes.com/sites/benkepes/2013/12/18/whatdoes-enterprise-grade-really-mean/?sh=11c2acd35914.

Stefani, Ryan. "Magic Quadrant for Software Asset Management Tools" Gartner, Gartner Reports, 20th July, 2020.

Wendy, staff author. "What Is the Enterprise Level Software: Blog." Whatagraph, 20 June 2020, whatagraph.com/blog/articles/enterprise-level-software.