Photo: Voith GmbH

SmartTrack Success Story

Software Asset Management @ Voith

Voith is a globally active engineering company. The operative business is pooled in four group divisions: Voith Hydro, Voith Industrial Services, Voith Paper, and Voith Turbo. With over 43,000 employees worldwide, Voith offers a broad portfolio of services for plants, products and industrial services. Since 2012 Voith has been using Aspera's expertise and technology for the implementation of group-wide, tool-supported Software License Management.

KEY FACTS

Organization
Voith GmbH

Industry
Plant construction and mechanical engineering

Employees
Approx. 43,000

Annual Sales
5.7 billion Euros

Website
www.voith.com

> "On-demand clarity about our license portfolio and how the licenses are being used in the company is of vital importance for two reasons: Compliance with the licensing and the optimization of overhead and software costs. Using the SAM expertise and technology offered by Aspera, we could actively implement our ideas for a centralized license management system; we redesigned our processes and achieved our objectives."

Michael Bonk, Head of Commodity Competence Center IT & Corporate License Management, J.M. Voith GmbH

Challenges

> Developing and establishing basic processes for group-wide, standardized and centralized Software License Management
> Implementing a Software Asset Management (SAM) system to support license management in the client/server area
> Group-wide transparency of licensing agreements and software usage
> Improving the quality of software license data
> Realizing significant cost benefits in IT procurement during periodic negotiations about the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement
> Setting up an optimized process for work council-compliant software metering
> Establishing and ensuring license compliance

Why Aspera?

> SmartTrack technology best covers Voith's functional requirements. Key factors were the ability to map out a complex organizational structure and extensive data quality assurance
> SmartTrack was chosen after market evaluation and bidding process
> Trust in the level of expertise and flexibility demonstrated by Aspera consultants
> Integration capability and interfaces ensure high data quality
> Extensive experience introducing license management in complex environments
> Excellent references – successful realization in similar enterprise projects

Project Milestones

> Defining, developing, and documenting the processes and roles for a centralized Software License Management System
> Implementing SmartTrack for clients, SAM Tool customization based on Voith processes, development of interfaces and standard connectors to all relevant source systems
> Implementing specific requirements, including a transfer database for SCCM data and data protection compliant software-metering
> Realizing Server License Management for Microsoft products in early 2014
> Connecting additional servers (IBM, Oracle) as well as plans to optimize the IT infrastructure

Benefits

> Establish group-wide, centralized Software License Management with documented, standardized procedures
> Minimize overhead costs through global standardization and automatically determining license needs and requirements
> Optimization of contract and purchasing processes and transparency regarding license demand, available licenses, and savings based on bundling high volumes of licenses
> Ensure software license compliance
> Internal customer satisfaction, trust in data quality
> Faster decisions based on up-to-date data and automatically generated reports

Decentralized Structure, Centralized Software Asset Management

Voith is at home everywhere with its four group divisions. With over 360 legal entities worldwide and locations in over 50 countries, Voith is successful in regional markets--providing products and services for energy, oil and gas, paper, and raw materials as well as in the transportation and automotive industries. The decentralized structure and the different legal and cultural parameters presented Voith with specific challenges in the implementation of a standardized Software Asset Management System. Over the years, the identification and consolidation of license-relevant software data proved to be very resource-intensive and error-prone due to the manual tasks performed by approximately 160 managers in the subsidiaries.

At the end of 2011, the project was initiated for a group-wide, centralized Software Asset Management System. The objective of the project was not only to install a license management tool to track license compliance, but also to establish required procedural, technical and organizational foundations. In addition to the cost avoidance supported by compliance, transparency regarding the procurement status and availability of Microsoft licenses was above all a critical factor. In addition to other benefits, cost reductions--as a result of trimming the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement to reflect actual software usage--took effect in the beginning of 2013.

Defining, developing, and documenting the required processes in conjunction with all division process managers at Voith, took place over the course of several months, ending in February 2012. The resulting handbook created from this effort became the foundation for a suitable Software License Management Tool. In May 2012, management at Voith decided on Aspera SmartTrack due to the technical expertise of Aspera's consultants as well as the integration capability of the system.

Time, Budget, & Scope

The project implementation at Voith took place in several phases. The objective of the first implementation phase was to go-live with SmartTrack for the license management of all clients including standard Microsoft products. After the kickoff in May 2012, the required customizations progressed quickly, and the most important data sources could be connected flexibly. A special requirement was the integration of the so-called transfer databases.

The application System Center Configuration Manager from Microsoft (SCCM) contains the most important data. This system supports the centralized administration of hardware and software at Voith, as well as (amongst other things) the inventory and software distribution. To avoid a direct connection to the production database and thereby remaining independent of live operations, the required data, the delivery format as well as the refresh period were defined and made compliant with a transfer database for the exchange of data. This model for success provided the basis for additional data source transfers, including Microsoft Lync.

A second significant requirement concerned software metering. It was important to create a method in which inventory data delivered from SCCM could be processed in such a way that on the one hand it was meaningful enough for license management, but on the other took data privacy and the Works Council agreements into consideration. SmartTrack enriches this data with the "Last Usage Check Date" and automatically sends an anonymous email to users that have not used certain software in more than 90 days, including MS Visio, MS Project, Acrobat, and MindManager. The request to uninstall software that is no longer used helps to avoid unnecessary repurchasing of licenses.

Extreme Discipline: Server License Management

After a consolidation phase in the first half of 2013, the second phase of the project started in August. The focus was on Server License Management for Microsoft. Due to the wide range of licensing models and metrics, as well as custom installations, Server License Management developed into an "extreme discipline." It was important to raise the questions: Which user from which client accessed which terminal server? What was installed there? What could the user have used and is the client accessing these applications licensed?

During the project, it was at first difficult to obtain relevant server data. It was not until 2013 that a new database containing the most important information about the Voith server world was built. This database also contained business data such as cost centers. A direct interface to SmartTrack ensured that this server data for license management could be processed.

Another challenge, however, was the quality of the data. Some systems were manually created and maintained, and therefore error-prone. Nevertheless, the project team also overcame this hurdle and in January 2014, was able to go-live with SAM for the Microsoft Server Platform as planned. Additional server systems (including IBM, Oracle) are scheduled for implementation during 2014.

Additional Benefits from SAM

Michael Bonk, Head of Commodity Competence Center IT and Corporate License Management at Voith, proudly acknowledges the work completed in the past 24 months. "The project initiated a change in the level of awareness within the organization – also a key success factor," emphasized Bonk. "License management is a high priority and the confidence in the quality and validity of the license data is paramount."

"With the support of SmartTrack, license compliance is guaranteed. By centralizing license management with standardized, automated processes, overhead costs were significantly reduced. Furthermore, the transparent overview of license demand allows us to negotiate significantly better with Microsoft. The ability to make quick decisions based on up-to-date data and automatically created reports is also a benefit of SAM@Voith."