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software



Discovery Case Study

NCH ACHIEVES RECORD-BREAKING
FAST ACCREDITATION WITH
CENTENNIAL DISCOVERY®

Overview

NCH USA and **GROUP NCH INTERNATIONAL** manufacture and market an extensive line of maintenance, repair and supply products in over 50 countries worldwide. When the organization decided it was time to get a handle on its software usage and licensing, they realized that the only route to success was to meet the challenge head on.

By combining expert project management with Centennial Discovery's ability to find and audit all software in the organization, NCH broke all records by achieving FAST Gold Accreditation in just ten months.



When Steve Wallis was appointed Director of IT International at NCH three years ago, his business management background meant that his focus was immediately drawn to the cost-effectiveness of the IT function and how it was supporting the wider business.

And with software accounting for a large portion of NCH's operational expenditure each year, Steve Wallis didn't have far to look before he found his first target for improvement: "As a widely dispersed multinational company, we have a lot of software spread across many PCs and territories. With some software being purchased centrally and some locally, it was difficult to know exactly how many applications we had and who was managing the licenses," he explained.

The issue of software license management became even more pertinent when NCH received a call from the Federation Against

Software Theft (FAST), an organization which protects the interests of software copyright holders and helps end users maintain compliance with licensing laws. "FAST were very keen for us to understand the legal and financial risks of not having total control of our software assets," said Steve Wallis. "They introduced us to the FAST Audit Certification scheme, which would help us better manage our software licenses and ensure that we remained on the right side of the law at all times."

And getting support for the project from the senior management at NCH wasn't a problem: "Our board directors quickly realized that the personal and commercial risks of software non-compliance were simply too big to ignore; they got behind the project 100 per cent."

Going for Gold

Having made the decision to enroll in the FAST program, Steve Wallis was left with the daunting prospect of auditing all software across NCH's 24 European offices, and then the same again in the organization's American operation.

The size and scale of NCH's IT infrastructure meant that a physical walk-round audit simply wasn't an option. So instead, Steve Wallis turned to the FAST website to investigate automated IT discovery and inventory solutions. Using the product feature comparisons provided by FAST, NCH quickly narrowed their search to two solutions, which was then further reduced when one vendor attempted to charge \$800 (£500) for an evaluation copy of their software.

"In the end, the decision to go with Centennial Discovery was an easy one," said Steve Wallis. "It was the only solution that met our requirements for scalability, flexibility, functionality and price."

To help design and execute NCH's plan for FAST accreditation, Steve Wallis drafted in software compliance expertise from Asset Management Solutions (AMS), a Centennial partner since 2000.

More than Expected

During the first software audit, Steve Wallis was shocked to learn that Centennial Discovery had identified over 9,000 distinct software program executables in the UK alone. "I think it's fair to say that we hadn't expected anything like that!" he said. "Sorting through the individual .exe files looked like an impossible task, but thankfully AMS had seen it all before and helped us use Centennial Discovery to prioritize the software that was most important to us."

As well as identifying where NCH needed to purchase additional licenses to cover its growing user base, Centennial Discovery also helped the organization reduce software costs by pinpointing applications that could be re-distributed internally or even removed altogether.

As Steve Wallis recalls, Microsoft Project was a case in point: "It's an application that's widely used across NCH; the sort of software that everyone wants but not everyone needs the fully-featured product. Centennial Discovery helped us avoid the cost of buying additional licenses by highlighting instances where the software was installed but not regularly used by employees. In these cases, we simply deleted the unused software and transferred the license to a different user."

Having completed the necessary steps to attain FAST Bronze and Silver accreditation; NCH was then ready to submit its audit reports, prepared with the help of AMS and Centennial Discovery, to FAST for final approval. A few weeks later, following an on-site visit from an auditor, NCH received confirmation that they had achieved FAST's Gold standard for audit certification.

Needless to say, Steve Wallis and his team were pleased with a job well done. But there was also cause for celebration: "We learned from FAST that we had smashed the record for the time taken to achieve full Audit Certification; where many organizations take a year just to get to the Bronze accreditation, we had achieved Gold standard in just ten months!"

Maintaining Watch

Having spent valuable time creating an accurate view of NCH's software inventory, Steve Wallis was adamant that the organization should maintain a high level of vigilance. And Centennial Discovery was

happy to oblige: "We now run a full network audit every day, which enables us to quickly spot unauthorized software and take immediate action where necessary."

"The network traffic generated by Centennial Discovery's auditing agents is typically no more than 1-2Kb per machine, which goes unnoticed by end users and has no ill effects on network performance," said Steve Wallis.

More than Auditing

Steve Wallis and his team have found that the 'what if' planning functionality provided in Centennial Discovery Web Edition has had advantages beyond the scope of software license management. With an ERP implementation on the horizon, Centennial Discovery is proving a useful tool to predict the impact of network changes and to calculate the cost of IT upgrades.

NCH is also keen to find other uses for the information recorded by Centennial Discovery: "We currently use the Magic HelpDesk from Remedy and I'm keen to take advantage of Centennial's easy integration to help populate the help desk with information about the individual machines around the organization," commented Steve Wallis.

Summary

Reflecting on NCH's recording breaking drive to FAST Audit Certification, Steve Wallis had this to say: "It's an accolade that's shared between the NCH staff, AMS' team and Centennial Discovery. Without a solution like Centennial Discovery to automatically audit all our remote IT assets, there's no way we could have completed the project so quickly. In fact, we'd probably still be doing it now!"

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