

Licence Management Solution Review

Overview



Express Metrix Limited

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Software evaluated: **Express Software Manager Professional Version: 9.0**
(see technical evaluation report for installation requirements and details of evaluation criteria)

Summary

The version of Express Metrix reviewed here is the latest incarnation to date, version 9. The development team have been focusing heavily on the reporting functionality and they have delivered an improved version that allows quite complex filtering rules to be applied. The interface is easy to understand and the Express Today view (the default view on loading the product) is a powerful feature that gives a window to all of the important metrics that are available to the operator.

The interface itself is proprietary but easy to understand and navigate. Simple reporting is available via the console but the web based reporting offers a more powerful and feature rich system for the operator to gather granular detail for both software and hardware across the network.

For some organisations the support for only Microsoft operating systems maybe restricting and this will play a factor when selecting a SAM product that is right for them. For Microsoft shops the product offers a compelling solution with a strong reporting element. It is one of the few products tested to date that offers real-time software license control and locking; displaying a customisable message on the users screen if they have to wait to run an application due to licence limits or otherwise.



Licence Management Solution Review

Overview



Finally, it might be considered easier to implement than others due to its simple and common sense approach to offering good SAM abilities whilst not including purchasing control, leasing and other finance/purchasing group functions that other products bolt on top.

Installation Narration

The Express Metrix evaluation comes in at around 400MB and is available as a free download via the website. The installer will detect if version 3 of .NET is installed and if not will install it. The product also requires Microsoft SQL 2000 or above and if this is not readily available on the network then the installer ships with a bundled version of SQL 2005 Express Edition. This is fine for the evaluation process. The installation is very smooth and did not require a reboot. It completes with the product firing up and the presentation of an installation wizard at the end of the process to hand hold the user through the initial steps of configuration.

Running the Program

Express Metrix Manager uses a proprietary interface loosely based on the Microsoft Management Console (MMC).

Setting up the System

Express Metrix can push the client payload to a range of machines by simply right clicking on the “Not Installed” branch and providing authentication information for the clients and then executing the command. This process would expect a uniform administrator and password policy on site of course. Individual machines can also be added. Once machines have become managed then the ongoing administration can commence. The client payload can also be integrated into login scripts and so on.

Ongoing Administration

The product uses its own lookalike MMC interface and is simple in structure. It has six major elements in the left hand navigation pane comprising Express Today, Licence Units, Files, Machines, Other Assets and Users. From here one can navigate first to machines to deliver the client software and start the inventory process.

Once the system has a machine within its control the properties can be viewed displaying information such as the software installed and the PCs hardware details. The reporting system offers a more verbose and

Licence Management Solution Review



detailed view of this information. From the main console the real-time license management system can be implemented allowing the operator to cap usage in real-time and present customisable messages to the users. In summary the interface is easy to use and takes a common sense approach to providing the tools to bring PCs into the products management domain and start working the SAM features of the product.

The product allows licenses to be revoked in real-time so that administrators can move usable licenses around to machines that have a particular piece of software installed. This is a very interesting feature that allows licenses to be executed for one off purposes and then removed again as and when required allowing for very granular regulation of licence usage and the ability to move a few licenses around more PCs with the software installed.

OS/Device/Software support

The product is limited to Microsoft operating systems. The word “limited” is used in the context that most organisations are using the Microsoft suite of operating systems and Express Metrix 9 covers the base here. For those with other operating systems that need managing then one will need to look elsewhere. In addition, any device other than a PC of sorts will not automatically be covered but can be either manually added or imported into the Express Administrative console via a spreadsheet.

Auditing and Reporting

This is the area that the company has been focusing on with its latest release. The reporting uses a web based browser window allowing access from across the intranet (or with appropriate security the Internet). The reporting product comes with many out of the box templates that cover the normal bases from machine hardware summary to software inventory. They execute quickly and are presented in an easy to view browser window. The reports can be exported to PDF and Excel for further integration and data modelling. Some good stock reports are available, such as the “Am I compliant” report which gives a snapshot of the network, the total number of licenses in place and any unmanaged units showing on the network.

Support and Pricing

- POA

Key Strengths -Technical

- Allows real-time monitoring and licence control
- Easy to understand interface

Licence Management Solution Review

Overview



- New powerful reports with filtering facility
- Neat Express Today view showing a snapshot of important data across the system

Key Weaknesses - Technical

- Manual intervention required for all not 'PC' devices
- Only supports Microsoft OS's on clients

Key Strengths - Commercial

- Pricing - tba
- Easy to use with lower management overhead requirement than some other products

Key Weaknesses - Commercial

- Lack of non MS OS support may be restricting for some
- Cannot track changes to policy in a very granular manner compared to others

