# Reality check on how do we use software

Many consider software compliance issue a pain, taking up time they would dwell elsewhere in the business. Manoj Kotak tell you how to tackle it

**H**ave you or your colleagues from the print industry received calls from multinational software giants asking for number of computers and number of copies of their software used within your organization? This followed by multiple phone calls and meetings to buy software, legal notices, all to protect these companies' intellectual property rights?

A big chunk of printers belong to the small and medium enterprise, and many either themselves or through their manager, either knowingly or unknowingly let staff to use unauthorised software in order to get the job done. As a result, compliance with software licensing agreements becomes an unending task.

While we acknowledge that compliance with software license agreements is the right thing to do, software license violation can be costly. It's high time that printers are made aware about the seriousness of compliance.

Three things need to be done, if the printers are to avoid legal action by multi-national software giants' proclaimed intellectual property rights – Understand software compliance: Self-audit use within their organisation; Procure license, if they have not; And importantly, learn to make use of options of bring in free software.

### Software compliance: self audit use

When you buy any hardware (computer), you also need to buy an operating system (OS) to run the hardware and subsequently software to run applications. You need to procure same number of operating system/software equal to number of machines you have within your organisation.

When you buy a machine you need to roughly spend approximately Rs 30,000 as cost of software (cost of OS, Office Suite, anti-virus software) plus taxes. In addition you need to procure pre-media software from Adobe and/or Corel for day to day print jobs, wherever it such services are provided. The cost of these software used to be in the range of Rs 45,000 to Rs 50,000 per machine, but with the change in license policies, the cost is now levied at per month per machine basis.

### Procuring license

One must understand that software compliance is nothing but counting number of machines that you have, making list of software you need on each of them and tallying with licensees you have procured. There are conditions when using Client Server, which one has to adhere to. Normal practice is hardware vendor copies all the software required or not on every new machine you buy (un-branded / assem-bled) thereby confusing software compliance.

Most of companies keep all software on all the machines for ease of use. Understand this: whenever you install a software, legal or illegal, you accept an end-user license agreement (EULA), which allows companies of such software used, to make a call or visit your premises (once a year by giving seven days advance notice in writing) and request for proof of purchase and checking on your machines. Any gap will cause you to buy the software, often 'on the spot'.

Self-audit the use restricting its run (legal copies) only on computers that need it. Why? Because if you don't, you could end up paying more.

Let's assume, you have 40 machines and you are actually required to have particular software on only ten machines, but your hardware vendor has copied it on all the machines. As per compliance, you have to have 40 licenses of that particular software and pay for them. Under the circumstance, you have been unknowing overusing under-procured licenses.

It is recommended that you install software which you need on specific computers and paste stickers, giving details like software name, license key number, etc, you have legally purchased on each one of them. Uninstall the rest. This simple technique is more than enough to remain compliant for use of software.
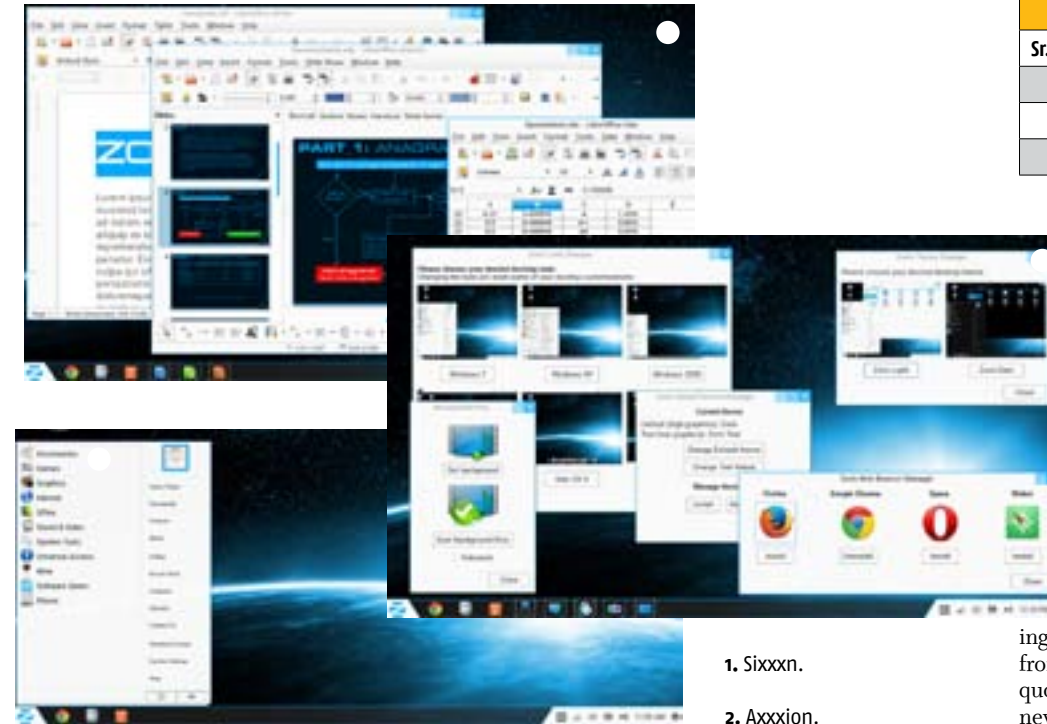
### Is compliance too complex?

It really depends on how many computers you are using, the number of commercial software you need per computer.

If you have multiple computers in your organisation used as peer to peer (computers are just connected with each other using cables for sharing files) or you are using client server, wherein you have server installed and each machine is connected to server for centrally storing and accessing data, you would assume that you buy a server version and operating system and connect your computers to the server. Not really. You need to additionally buy connection licenses for each computer or devise which will be connected to windows server. So for Microsoft Server Network you need to procure a server license, a desktop OS license and a CAL (connecting license).

To control on piracy and administration of selling paper licenses all over world, software companies are now leaving you with no option but to use their software from cloud. They are calling off their perpetual / paper license systems. For this you have to register each user / machine on cloud to download and activate software and pay per machine per year. This may increase your cost of ownership, when compared to the cost you paid when procuring perpetual/paper license, which you could use the same version for multiple years. By switching to cloud version, you are bound to pay every month or every year, based on your usage of the software.

Unfortunately, cloud was originated as platform (using



| A | B | C | D | E | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sr. Number** | **Name** | **Windows** | **MS Office** | **Corel** | **Adobe** |
| 1 | ABC | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| 2 | DEF | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| 3 | GHI | Yes | No | No | No |

1. Sixxxn.

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common infrastructure) for reducing cost, however, it's being used for controlling piracy at the cost of inconvenience to genuine users.

### Do we really have better option?

We try to find an alternate option only when we start facing difficulties sustaining options we already have. If you feel cost of software is worth the task of automating within your organisation you might never look for an option. Though when you see compliance for using commercial software becoming too complex and costly you must need to start learning about available alternate options.

The established software giants have built customised software development eco-system in such a way that to use software you still need server and / or operating system from particular software company. For Example to run CorelDarw and Adobe software, you need Windows or Macintosh Machine; You cannot run it on a free OS system like Linux.

But if you research little more and do this small exercise suggested in the table below you will be able to save considerable amount of cost for IT infrastructure.

Make an Excel sheet along with a list / numbers of computers and name of person in first two columns. Keep filling up each column for each software you use within your organization; tick yes or no against each person and each software; At the end of this simple exercise you will realise the fact that not all the software are used by all the people in your organisation; but they are still there on their machine (unused).

Let's take this case study of multi store digital shop, where their focus is walk-in and on-counter sales, Most of the time clients walk in with pen-drives, CD or email their source file to print in CDR. Adobe Illustrator or in a PDF format. Most of the time clients expect minor changes; and before print the digital print shop will also check for items like alignment, spelling, colours, resolution etc and make correction on the spot. In these cases they cannot avoid OS license and software like CorelDraw and/or Adobe to work on design files to be printed.

But these digital shops may also have people working in their marketing and administration to bring in orders from SME and corporate houses. These personnel work on quotes using emails with PDFs as portfolio. And they may never require printing related software. All they need is a computer with an OS, software to open and edit text files, software to send receive mails and browser to access internet. As discussed, the cost of above basic paid software for each machine is about Rs 30,000.

**What if you have all these basic software including OS absolutely free or at nominal cost? Is this really possible?**
Yes. http://www.zorin-os.com/ is the answer. It's an all-in-one free to download, takes 10 minutes to install and start. It has an operating system (built on Linus/Ubantu distribution), has Libre Office (Open Office), a Thunder Bird Mail client, Chrome and other browsers. It also has an inbuilt video and basic image editor. You can also use software like Skype, etc. Most important it's very robust, runs very fast and no known virus so far for Linux, so there's no need to buy Anti-virus software. All this simply for free.

If we take this case study of saving cost of software on 20 machines at cost of Rs 30,000 each, you save cost of Rs 6-lakh plus taxes (at 22.5%), and yes no compliance call whatsoever.

To conclude, it's more of evaluating need and finding out on option. Initially you might find it difficult to work on free software (which still support and open most files created by commercial software) but when you consider the savings and the administrative task of adhering to software compliance, it would be worth the while considering a switch to partially paid, if not completely free software.

*(Manoj Kotak is director at Image Online)*