

CASE STUDY

Weyerhaeuser: A Microsoft Software Assurance Case Study

Sponsored by: Microsoft

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COMPANY BACKGROUND

Weyerhaeuser is an international forest products company that generated net sales of \$22.7 billion in 2004. The company was founded in 1900 and currently employs about 54,000 people in 19 countries. It has ranked in the Fortune 200 since 1956.

The company's diverse business touches nearly every aspect of the forest products industry, from growing and harvesting trees to producing pulp, paper, packaging, and building products.

Microsoft Products and Solutions

Bret Rupe, chief architect at Weyerhaeuser, leads a team responsible for the architecture of the company's core IT infrastructure, which includes the management of approximately 27,000 desktops and 3,000 servers across 700 locations worldwide.

Specific Microsoft products utilized include:

- Windows Server 2003/AD
- SQL Server 2000
- BizTalk Server 2004
- Exchange 2003
- SharePoint Portal Server
- Visio
- ISA Server
- MOM
- Terminal Server
- Microsoft Commerce Server
- Live Communications Server 2005
- Microsoft .NET

- ☒ Microsoft Office
- ☒ Microsoft Project
- ☒ SMS

All products were purchased via an Enterprise Agreement and include Microsoft Software Assurance (SA).

Microsoft Software Assurance Purchase and Benefits

Weyerhaeuser's decision to purchase SA was primarily driven by lessons learned during a large project Rupe's team completed to bring consistency to companywide software and hardware deployments. During the implementation of the common operating environment (COE), Rupe and his team found that establishing uniformity was hard but maintaining it was even more difficult.

For one thing, the project was complicated due to the company's hundreds of locations. In addition, Rupe said that although technology is highly regarded at Weyerhaeuser, it was difficult initially to prove the value of staying current. However, Rupe and his team have found that productivity gains can result when everyone is using the same version of the same application.

"At first, people look at their work circle, and as long as everyone within it has a consistent and common application, that is fine," said Rupe. "This works okay until they need to collaborate with someone outside the circle, and then they experience incompatibility challenges."

In addition to improved collaboration, Rupe said that staying current via SA has reduced the "thrash factor" associated with upgrading. With SA, "instead of making 26,000 decisions once a year for four years, you just make one decision once," he said. Rupe and his team don't have to force people through conversions or to keep making decisions on what version of the software they should be running. "When we know we have already paid for the upgrade, it makes the process much simpler because it takes the cost question out of it," added Rupe.

Although the primary reason for purchasing SA was to realize the benefits of staying current, Weyerhaeuser is seeing other benefits. For example, SA helps to increase the predictability of the company's software costs. "Since we've already paid for the upgrades, we know exactly what our spending is going to look like in the next three to four years," said Rupe.

Another benefit is the training certificates that the company receives through SA. "We get the benefit of the training, and at the same time our people see benefit out of the relationship with Microsoft," said Rupe. Weyerhaeuser has also started to take advantage of home use licenses this year, and although it is too early to cite specific cost savings, people are enjoying the benefits.

CONCLUSION

Weyerhaeuser chose to purchase SA primarily to help the company stay current and reduce the "thrash" associated with doing so. "You're going to end up current at some point anyway," said Rupe. "If you try to stay behind, you cannot because there's going to be another vendor somewhere in your environment that is relying on the current version of the OS." In addition, Rupe has found that leapfrogging versions costs more money than staying current and upgrading in sequential order.

Weyerhaeuser has realized benefits from using SA, but Rupe says that Microsoft could do more work to simplify the SA decision-making process for customers. For example, with upgrades being a key benefit of SA, it is not always easy to determine whether there will be an upgrade within the customer's contract window. One suggestion Rupe has is that Microsoft change the duration of the SA contract from being time-specific to upgrade-specific.

All in all, Rupe reports that his experience with SA has improved over time as Microsoft has improved its ability to understand customer needs and differentiate the value of SA.

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