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New software audit and management tool makes “keeping IT legal” a more affordable option for smaller organisations

~ ICS Software Licences enables SMBs to deal simply and cost effectively with the critical tasks of software asset management and licence compliance ~

LONDON, May 1, 2003 — Unlicensed software is a continuing headache for small- to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) and other organisations that don't enjoy ready access to expensive technical resources. Today, it is all too easy for employees to obtain illicit copies of shrink-wrapped software over the Internet. Peer-to-peer networks, newsgroups, FTP and auction sites, and friends using email or CD/DVD are all common sources of illegal software. At the same time, anti-piracy organisations such as the Federation Against Software Theft (FAST) and the Business Software Alliance (BSA) are becoming increasingly aggressive in their pursuit of unlicensed software users. These groups offer big cash rewards to staff who blow the whistle on organisations that habitually use illegal copies of business applications and operating systems.

Unfortunately, while most larger organisations can budget for expensive enterprise security solutions that monitor and control the use of unauthorised software, SMBs don't usually have that luxury. Now, however, UK business solutions company Integrated Communications Software (ICS) has introduced a new, low cost management tool, *ICS Software Licences*, that enables smaller organisations to stay on the right side of the law without breaking the bank. Retailing in the UK for £49.99 plus VAT, *ICS Software Licences* enables SMBs and other organisations to build and maintain a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate audit of their licence holding. No matter how large the organisation or how widely distributed its hardware, *ICS Software Licences* ensures that managers always know exactly what's installed where, simplifying the task of keeping IT provision legal.

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“When it comes to software licensing issues, SMBs are often caught between the devil and the deep blue sea,” says ICS project manager Richard Palmer. “On the one hand, ensuring compliance has traditionally been extremely complex and expensive, so there’s been an understandable tendency not to bother. On the other, if they don’t make an effort to stay on top of licensing, smaller organisations run a number of major risks.

“For example, all a sacked or disgruntled employee has to do is contact an ‘anti piracy hotline’ and the BSA will be on the case. Whistleblowers don’t even have to be connected with the organisation — they might be malicious pranksters who’ve installed the unlicensed software themselves, or even people working for a competitor. Besides having to make big compensation payments to the likes of the BSA if they’re caught, the owners of firms using illegal software may be subject to criminal action leading to stiff fines, even a spell behind bars. Then there’s the loss of reputation arising from the BSA’s ‘name and shame’ tactics. And there’s always the strong likelihood that at least some of the unauthorised software installed on their systems is infected with malicious code. On balance, the fifty pounds or so it costs to buy a copy of *ICS Software Licences* could save SMBs a hell of a lot more.”

About ICS Software Licences

ICS Software Licences from Integrated Communications Software enables managers simply and quickly to build a database of all the software their organisation uses. Suited primarily to networks of between five and 100 users, *ICS Software Licences* lets managers see at a glance from a single, central location what software the organisation owns and what software it doesn’t. They can use it to list all the illegal and unlicensed software in their organisation and either remove it or obtain the necessary licences.

Easy to maintain, *ICS Software Licences* fits comfortably into everyday office housekeeping tasks. A simple drag-and-drop system allows the rapid transfer of software or licences from one location or employee to another. Armed with the knowledge provided by *ICS Software Licences* of exactly what’s installed throughout the network, users can handle every task associated with the management of the organisation’s software assets.

Unlike simple audit software, *ICS Software Licences* offers a number of time-saving management features:

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- ***Enables faster deployment of company standard applications*** – Since *ICS Software Licences* users know what's installed on every PC in every department, the task of identifying the software needed by new members of staff is greatly simplified. Similarly, in the event that a machine is put out of action by a security breach, hard disk failure or accidental damage, the knowledge stored in the *ICS Software Licences* database enables restoration of all the appropriate applications with minimal fuss and delay. Other chores such as reallocating software and licences between locations and different employees, and ensuring interoperability are also made much easier.
- ***Identifies installed applications that are no longer in use*** – Using *ICS Software Licences* to enable the removal of redundant software can result in significant cost savings. Likewise, the audit process enables organisations to identify outdated or duplicated applications, and time-bombed demos.
- ***Provides simple network management functionality*** – *ICS Software Licences* helps network administrators maintain an accurate tree structure of all the computers — including laptops and off-site or loan machines — located on the network. Unlimited locations, user IDs, categories and products can be stored in the *ICS Software Licences* database.
- ***Saves time for helpdesk and other support staff*** – *ICS Software Licences* lets remote helpdesk and support staff quickly establish which versions of software an employee is using, saving hours of time that might otherwise be spent journeying to the affected machine to see what's on it.
- ***Supports security policy*** – By using *ICS Software Licences* to conduct regular audits, managers can more easily establish which employees habitually contravene the organisation's security policy by installing unauthorised software.
- ***Comprehensive, flexible management reporting*** – *ICS Software Licences'* reports deliver useful business information, allowing organisations to effectively address *all* the issues associated with IT asset management — not only those related to software licence compliance, but issues such as operating system migration, disaster recovery planning, budgeting for across-the-board or targeted software upgrades, and control of total cost of ownership (TCO) too. The ability to take an accurate snapshot of the value of the organisation's software assets, for example, provides the knowledge needed to obtain bulk purchase licence discounts.

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System requirements

ICS Software Licences runs under Windows XP, 2000, NT, ME, 98 and 95. It requires an Intel Pentium 90MHz processor or higher with 20MB hard disk space for program installation and additional space for the database; 16MB RAM or more; 256 colour display (800 x 600) or better; and Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0 or later.

Pricing and availability

ICS Software Licences is available for download now from www.softwarelicences.co.uk at a price of £49.99 plus VAT.

About Integrated Communications Software (ICS)

Integrated Communications Software (ICS) is the software development arm of Integrated Communications Group (ICG), a UK-based company providing consultancy, design, project management and installation services for business data communications and telecommunications systems. Founded in 2000, ICG acts as a single, integrated resource for organisations needing Web hosting and design; e-commerce solutions (B2C); e-business solutions (B2B); intranets and extranets; systems integration; design and deployment of CRM and ERP solutions; and installation of networking infrastructure. The company has established links with a number of leading IT and telecommunications vendors while maintaining full independence, enabling it to offer solutions tailored to customers' exact needs without tying them into proprietary hardware and software. To find out more about ICG, visit the company's Web site at www.icguk.biz

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Note to editors

While the UK leads Europe in the legitimate use of software, recent research from analyst IDC and the Business Software Alliance (BSA) shows that still around a quarter of the business applications used in the UK are counterfeit. Despite efforts to educate businesses about asset management, the number of software piracy cases brought against businesses that were settled with the Business Software Alliance (BSA) in 2002 increased by 17 per cent over the previous year. Since the BSA increased rewards for whistleblowers to up to £10,000 in November 2000, the number of tip-offs it has fielded has steadily increased. In 2001-2, the group received 1,960 leads, with the largest payout coming to £6,500. Early this year, the BSA said only around 9,000 out of the 43,000 companies it had contacted had responded to requests to complete an online anti-piracy software audit.

Further information sources:

Federation Against Software Theft (FAST): www.fast.org.uk
Business Software Alliance (BSA): www.bsa.org/uk