

# 2015 Group Test – SAM Managed Service Providers

A competitive comparison of specialist SAM providers

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by David Foxen & Martin Thompson, The ITAM Review [October 2015] [www.itassetmanagement.net](http://www.itassetmanagement.net)

## DISCLAIMER, SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The information contained in this review is based on sources and information believed to be accurate as of the time it was created. Therefore, the completeness and current accuracy of the information provided cannot be guaranteed. Readers should therefore use the contents of this review as a general guideline and not as the ultimate source of truth. Similarly, this review is not based on rigorous and exhaustive technical study. This is a paid review. That is, suppliers included in this review paid to participate in exchange for all results and analysis being published free of charge.

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## Executive Summary

This group test looks at the capabilities of five SAM Managed Service providers from the UK, Germany and USA.

Service providers were rated based on the expertise, methodology and strength of customer references. General market observations during the study included the SAM and licensing industry skills shortage, the scope of services and the duration of service relationships.

***Softline Solutions were awarded 2015 SAM Managed Service Provider Best in Class for the second time for highest overall score and providing a good mixture of relevant expertise, savvy methodology and strong customer references.***

Overall score summary as follows:

| Ranking | SAM Managed Service Provider | Expertise (33% Weighting) | Company, Infrastructure & Methodology (33% Weighting) | Customer References (33% Weighting) | Aggregate Score |
|---------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1       | Softline                     | 80.00%                    | 91.40%                                                | 92.70%                              | 88.03%          |
| 2       | ITAMS                        | 80.00%                    | 88.60%                                                | 87.33%                              | 85.31%          |
| 3       | SoftwareOne                  | 93.30%                    | 74.30%                                                | 86.00%                              | 84.53%          |
| 4       | SHI                          | 70.00%                    | 82.90%                                                | 94.00%                              | 82.30%          |
| 5       | Aspera                       | 60.00%                    | 82.90%                                                | 84.00%                              | 75.63%          |

## Introduction

This group test looks at the capabilities of five leading SAM Managed Service Providers. There is considerable interest in ITAM managed services, although the market is still very much in it's infancy. The key difference when buying SAM Managed services rather than SAM tools and consulting is that organizations are buying an SLA or a business outcome rather than technology.

This review assesses the expertise, methodologies and customer references of suppliers. We will also look at key market observations noted throughout this study and offer some guidance on selecting a managed service provider.

## Featured Providers

| SAM PARTNER               | HQ LOCATION | WEBSITE                                                              |
|---------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Aspera</b>             | Germany     | <a href="http://www.aspera.com/">www.aspera.com/</a>                 |
| <b>ITAMS</b>              | UK          | <a href="http://www.itamsolutions.com">www.itamsolutions.com</a>     |
| <b>SHI</b>                | USA         | <a href="http://www.shi.com/">www.shi.com/</a>                       |
| <b>Softline Solutions</b> | Germany     | <a href="http://www.softline-group.com/">www.softline-group.com/</a> |
| <b>SoftwareOne</b>        | USA         | <a href="http://www.softwareone.com">www.softwareone.com</a>         |

## Assessment Criteria

We approached this review as though we were spending our own money or working in an IT department and looking to engage a service provider.

Companies were judged based on their people, their approach to SAM and the feedback from customers. Assessments were based on interviews, customer references and written answers provided by suppliers. This was an RFI-like process not an exhaustive technical assessment (We didn't for example, perform licensing and IQ tests on their staff), nor did we investigate the financial credibility and long-term viability of companies. The results are intended as a guide only.

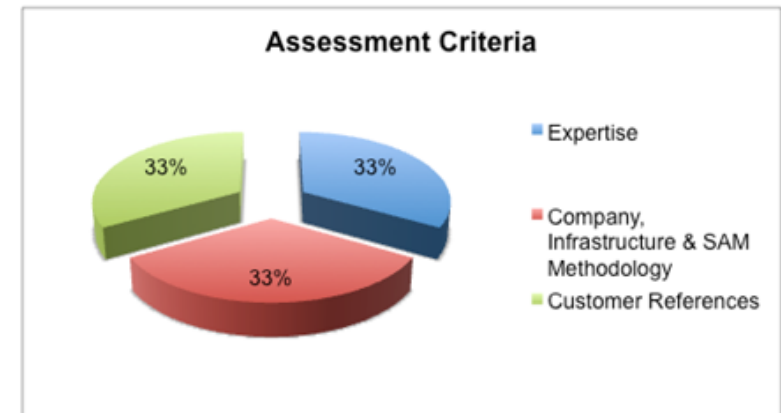
Overall we were looking for companies that go beyond the usual outsource relationship to stand shoulder to shoulder with clients in the face of adversity; in particular audit activity and the every changing landscape of new complex licensing metrics and emerging IT projects. How could companies assist with on-going continual service improvement? What will the service provider do to improve procurement and software management processes?

Weightings were applied to the prepared assessment criteria as follows: 33% for Expertise, 33% for Company, infrastructure and SAM methodology and 33% for Customer references.

Assessment Questions as follows:

### *Expertise (33%)*

1. Please provide a high level overview of your experience delivering this service and examples of successes delivered as a result of the service
2. How long have you been providing this service?



3. Number of active customers or completed projects?
4. How many full time staff do you have dedicated to this service?
5. For the key software publishers managed as part of your service (e.g. Microsoft, Oracle, IBM, SAP etc.) - provide details of the key individuals responsible and their qualifications and experience in managing specific publishers. Please specify individual team member, publisher expertise, qualifications relevant to that publisher and whether that team member is a contract, full time or shared resource.

#### *Company, Infrastructure & Methodology (33%)*

1. Which department or business unit is this service aligned to within your company?
2. Please provide a high level overview (or example) of the service level agreement provided to customers:
3. What is typically in scope for your service (Environment type, geography, language, license types, environment size)? What is out of scope and how are out of scope issues managed with the client?
4. Provide a high level overview of the 'on boarding' process for new customers.
5. How do you manage the maturity of clients processes and validate the data they provide to support the service?
6. What steps are usually taken to help improve the customer's situation based on the output of reports?
7. Provide a high level overview of the technology that underpins your service
8. Provide a high level overview of the methodologies that underpins your approach to delivering your service:
9. Are you paid to complete projects on behalf of software publishers?
10. Do you sell or profit from the sale of licensing, tools and technology or consulting?
11. Provide an overview of your process for helping customers with formal audit requests from publishers
12. Describe your process for sharing client data

#### *Customer References (33%)*

Customers were asked to score their provider out of 10 for the following capabilities: Reporting & Quality of Information, Customer Service / Responsiveness, Licensing Expertise, Audit Defence Expertise and Overall Quality of Service.

References were also asked about service duration, scope, business integration, complimentary services, attitudes and reasons for outsourcing and general anonymous feedback regarding their supplier. It should be noted that suppliers were asked to supply their own customers, references were not chosen at random.

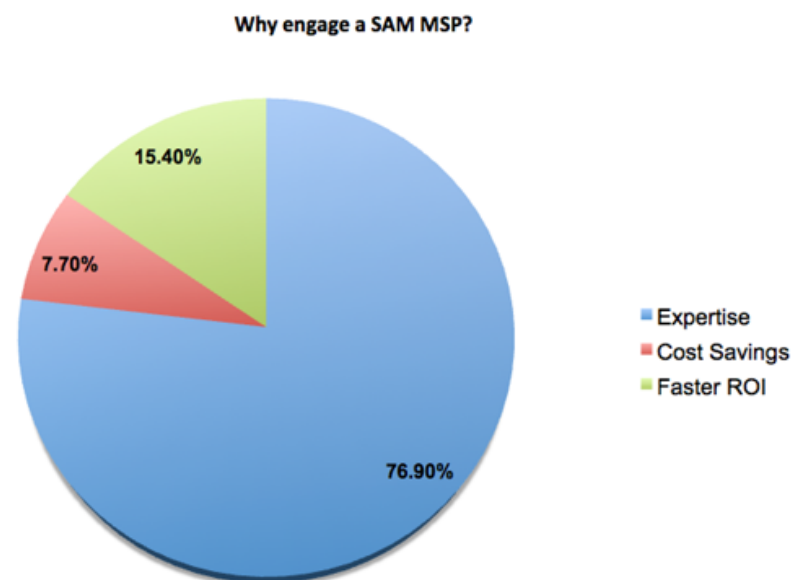
## SAM Managed Services - Market Observations

One of the key observations from the last SAM MSP Group Test conducted about 18 months ago was evidence of a skills shortage in the SAM market.

It is clear that this skills shortage is still the case today, over 18 months on. A number of the SAM MSP's that we spoke to claimed to have the finances and capabilities required to expand their internal teams, but they were struggling to find the right professionals with the right blend of experience and knowledge.

It is also clear that the SAM and licensing skills shortage is a key driver for end user organisations seeking to engage a SAM managed services provider – see table below:

| Q. Why did you engage with a SAM Managed Service Provider? | Expertise | Cost Savings | Faster ROI |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| 2013                                                       | 72.7%     | 13.6%        | 13.6%      |
| 2015                                                       | 76.9%     | 7.7%         | 15.4%      |



Following access to expertise were the ability to deliver cost savings using a SAM Managed Service Provider and the ability to deliver faster ROI. Many organisations consider using an MSP a safer, lower risk option than trying to stand up a SAM tool and implement a SAM practice alone.

## What are SAM MSPs helping with?

Similar to our previous SAM MSP review, the vast majority (72%) of customers surveyed are utilising their SAM MSP to help with their entire SAM estate, 28% are harnessing managed services from between 1 and 10 vendors.

| Q. What is the scope of your SAM Managed Service | Between 1 and 10 top software suppliers | All of our software suppliers |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2013                                             | 30%                                     | 70%                           |
| 2015                                             | 28%                                     | 72%                           |

## Longevity of Service

Using a SAM MSP is a good way to lower the risk of a SAM implementation, by using the managed service providers skills and experience to speed up the delivery of ROI. However, it seems that customers are also using their SAM MSP as a long-term partner. Many of the customers providing references for their MSP provider had been working with them for many years.

Many customers are utilising a SAM MSP not just because they don't have the skills in house, but also because they don't want to do the data crunching work involved in SAM but would rather make progress with the strategic goals of SAM. Using a SAM MSP provide an opportunity for the Software Asset Manager to lift his or her head above the parapet and focus on long term goals.

| Average longevity of service (years) |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| 2013                                 | 2.81 |
| 2015                                 | 3.60 |

## Buyers guide to selecting a SAM MSP – General Advice

When deciding which software publishers you need help with:

1. Consider the complexities of each software publisher
2. Consider the complexities of the data required to support that software publisher
3. Consider the risks associated with each publisher; does the SAM MSP have the skills and experience to address those risks?

Don't outsource problems. If you are having issues doing SAM properly your outsourcer will face the same problems. You want to outsource to tap into others expertise and because you recognize that the expertise required is not your core competence. You want to select a partner that doesn't just satisfy a SLA, but goes on a journey with you.

Ask prospective partners to prove themselves:

- Via a proof of concept (perhaps demonstrating competence with one supplier or a subset of data)
- Via customer reference calls and visits

Be very clear on obligations and what is included in the price, which party is doing what and when. A basic RACI will help with this.

Consider what is required for getting up to speed and the on boarding process – is the provider doing this? Who will do what? Are your data sources required to feed the service ready, accurate and relevant? Who will your provider need to liaise with on an on-going basis within your company? Will they do this onsite or remotely? Will they work with software publishers or liaise with them on your behalf? How will your partner interface with the major sources of change in your organization (Usually service request process, service desk, change process, new projects, starters, movers, leavers etc.)

How will you measure the success of your managed service partner? Consider quality of data, risk reduction, efficiency in spend, proactive vendor management and contracts management. Reduced spend. Happier users. Happier stakeholders, quicker approval processes, quicker deployment, SAM as enabler.

### **Time to value / How quickly do SAM MSP's Work?**

It is worth noting that a SAM Managed Service Provider can only work as quickly as the data they have available.

For example, a provider may promise to deliver a Microsoft license position in seven days, and this may well be perfectly achievable – but it can be only be delivered if the client organisation has all the information readily available at their finger tips to satisfy the license position. Organisations need to be conscious of this when setting expectations and planning projects. Even if SAM is entirely outsourced, the client organisation will need internal resource to help collate information and data feeds.

### **Commercial Independence & Conflicts of Interest**

Commercial independence and sources of potential conflict of interest are an important consideration for organizations considering SAM Services. From our experience speaking with reference customers for this review or the industry as a whole – organizations are increasingly wary of providers claiming to be an independent provider when actually working commercially for a software publisher. However participants were not scored based on these criteria, as circumstances will vary with each organization.

### **Profiting from Software Licensing Sales**

This is the main bone of contention for many organizations when it comes to conflicts of interest. There are many pros and cons to working with a SAM provider who also supplies software licensing but the whole argument pivots on the issue of licensing expertise:

*Working with a SAM partner who also supplies software licensing:*

| For                                                                                                                                                        | Against                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Those selling and working with license programs directly with software publishers generally have the best knowledge in the industry about licensing.       | Software resellers don't make money from licensing. They make money from the rebate supplied from software publishers. Rebates are awarded based on performance and meeting specified criteria dictated by the software publisher. |
| Those selling and working with license programs directly with software publishers generally have the best knowledge about how the vendor works internally. | No matter how excellent your account manager might be and independent they may act – ultimately the profitability of the whole company is riding on the rebate – which is based on publisher interests not customer interests.     |

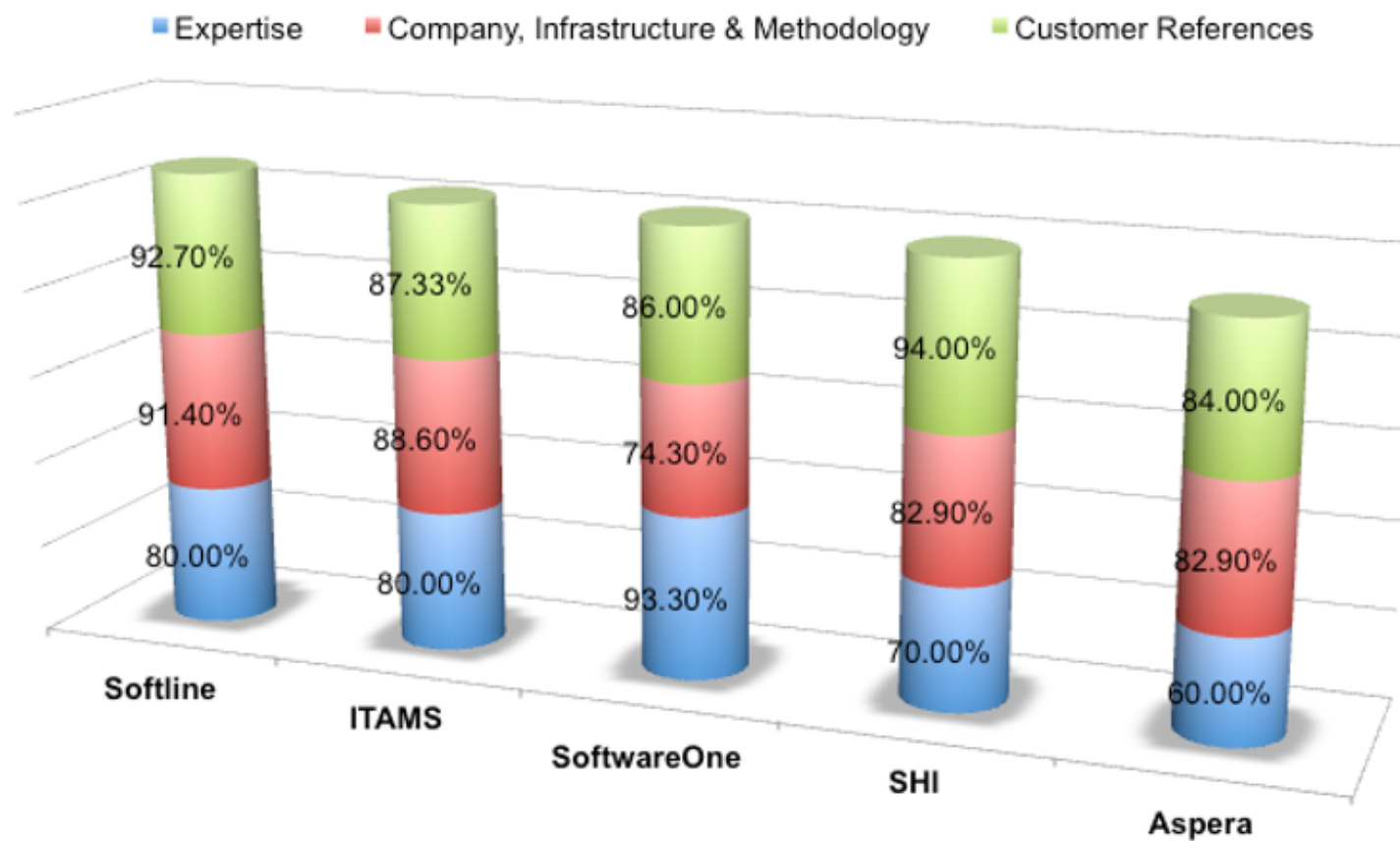
## The Results – 2015 SAM Managed Service Provider Best in Class

| Ranking | SAM Managed Service Provider | Expertise (33% Weighting) | Company, Infrastructure & Methodology (33% Weighting) | Customer References (33% Weighting) | Aggregate Score |
|---------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1       | Softline                     | 80.00%                    | 91.40%                                                | 92.70%                              | 88.03%          |
| 2       | ITAMS                        | 80.00%                    | 88.60%                                                | 87.33%                              | 85.31%          |
| 3       | SoftwareOne                  | 93.30%                    | 74.30%                                                | 86.00%                              | 84.53%          |
| 4       | SHI                          | 70.00%                    | 82.90%                                                | 94.00%                              | 82.30%          |
| 6       | Aspera                       | 60.00%                    | 82.90%                                                | 84.00%                              | 75.63%          |

### *Overall Best in Class – Softline Solutions*

We are delighted to announce that for the second MSP Review running, Softline Solutions have been given the award for ‘Best In Class’. We found that Softline continue to lead the way with the service that they provided, even if they do not have a huge amount of resources at their disposal. We were very impressed with the overall approach and service that they provide to customers, and therefore are a worthy winner.

## Score by Criteria



## CONTACT AND QUESTIONS

If you have any questions regarding this review or need help in choosing a SAM provider or SAM technology please contact us using the details below.

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## Appendix – Individual Assessments

### Aspera

Aspera provide results-oriented SAM managed services using their market leading SAM platform, SmartTrack.

#### Scores

- Expertise Score: 60.00%
- Company, Infrastructure & Methodology: 74.30%
- Average Customer Reference Score: 72.76%

| STRENGTHS                                                                                   | WEAKNESSES                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vast SAM experience</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAM Tool vendor, lack of independence</li> </ul>               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong technology platform</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require partners for help on some licensing metrics</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customisable, outcomes focussed service</li> </ul> |                                                                                                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory tool agnostic</li> </ul>                 |                                                                                                         |

Aspera have vast experience in helping customers with their SAM challenges. We believe Aspera can have the skills and resource help large complex organisations increase their SAM maturity based on an industry leading SAM platform and wealth of hands-on experience.

Aspera are one of the leading SAM technology providers in the market today, so having the support of sophisticated technology can only prove to ensure that they provide complete visibility and complete data-sets to their customers for them to analyse. However, it is important to remember that this may mean that they do not advise you to use another SAM tool that may be better for their environment.

Aspera impressed us with their customisable service that is completely unique to customers. Aspera will look at each customer and assess their SAM requirements before building a service around their needs and budget. The ITAM Review believes that Aspera offering a customisable service is a strong positive, as some of their competitors do not offer as much flexibility with their services.

The key benefits of the Aspera License Management as a service (LaaS) offering include:

- **Faster Adoption and ROI** – Tap into Aspera’s expertise to fast track ROI on SAM initiatives.

- **Solid, High Quality Data** - Without complete and accurate data the results of license management efforts are meaningless.
- **The Security of SLAs** - Fixed expectations and deliverables mean customer's goals will be achieved on time and within budget

We were impressed with Aspera's results oriented approach. Aspera mentioned the fact that they constantly communicate with the customers about the end goals for their organisation and the service that Aspera are providing. This ensures that both parties know exactly where they stand and what directions the SAM project is going in.

The ITAM Review believes that this method of service delivery is very customer friendly and helps the customer to keep a track of progress and know what the future holds. This also allows the customer to identify what actions need to be executed to ensure they reach their end goal.

Aspera provide licensing and SAM training for their customers. The ITAM Review believes that all MSP's should provide some sort of training, and Aspera providing training to their customers is a big positive element of their service. Their customers may not be aware of the complex nature of some licensing models, so by providing training MSP's help their customers understand licenses that they have within their estate.

Finally, Aspera admitted that they call in the services of partners if they do not have the internal resources to manage a certain vendor's license metrics. We consider this a negative for Aspera and sign of immaturity in their service compared to competitors in this review. Other providers have their own internal resources and are able to deal with all licensing and SAM issues internally without needing to call in outside help.

## CUSTOMER REFERENCES

- "Aspera supports us with consulting for special cases like Desktop Virtualization or MSDN"
- "In general we can recommend Aspera to other customers"
- "Our advice would be to check first internally on capabilities and license management experience. Based on this information the organization could decide on the internal advantage of the usage of managed services. The services should close internal gaps such as personnel or technical restriction"

## ITAMS

An independent SAM services veteran, IT Asset Management Solutions (ITAMS) is one of the industry's longest serving ITAM and SAM organizations. Established in 2002, they focus on large enterprises and all aspects of both SAM and software licensing.

### Scores

- Expertise Score: 80.00%
- Company, Infrastructure & Methodology: 88.6%
- Average Customer Reference Score: 87.33%

| STRENGTHS                                                                                                                       | WEAKNESSES                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vast experience of SAM and SAM services</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller team / set of resources compared to other competitors in this review</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-house expertise (Microsoft, IBM and Oracle experts)</li> </ul>                      |                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bespoke service, tailored around the customers needs, wants and environment</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proof of Entitlement Timeline</li> </ul>                                               |                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Training Services</li> </ul>                                               |                                                                                                                                  |

ITAMS is a UK based provider of independent SAM Services. ITAMS believe most clients today are not ready to buy a commodity managed service and have built their service offerings accordingly.

Their approach allows a customer to understand where they are today, what needs to change and to then define the future service they want in terms of outcomes and ownership boundaries. From here, advisory also determines the roadmap to get there.

ITAMS typically provide SAM services at three levels:

- Time & Materials - The most basic engagement with resources provided, driven by timesheets and checked by periodic service reviews and customer satisfaction calls.
- ELP Reporting Service- Periodic reporting for a specified number of vendors, accompanied by a risk and remediation statement document.
- Software as a Service - Agreement covers availability, function, number of logins, related support and patching, hosting specification etc.

ITAMS uses and supports a number of discovery, asset and SAM technologies. However, when the service requires ITAMS to define and/or operate infrastructure (especially when a hosted service is required, and/or the client is particularly large) ITAMS use their in-house ELM360 engine, which is powered by Aspera SmartTrack catalogue technology. ITAMS do not make money from the sale of software licensing.

ITAMS have a vast experience of offering SAM services. It is clear that ITAMS have 'been there, done it and got the t-shirt' with many SAM challenges, and have clearly shown that they are capable of helping a wide range of customers with their SAM needs and requirements. We believe that with ITAMS vast experience, and personnel feel to proceedings, that they would be able to assist an organisation with any challenge that their SAM team faces.

We were also impressed with the attitude towards offering a 'bespoke' service that is completely tailored around the customer. ITAMS state that there is no such thing as an 'off the shelf' service for customers. Instead, they base their services around their tried and tested core building blocks, and then build a service off the back of their Advisory Service. ITAMS provide a proof of ownership timeline for clients that ITAMS claims can help customers build a timeline of historical software licensing data, helping organisations understand their licensing position.

ITAMS offer a number of training courses, and are an IAITAM Certified SAM training center within the UK. We believe that any MSP providing in-house training and education services stand out above competitors. ITAMS also provide training courses on complex license programs such as Oracle and Microsoft.

## CUSTOMER REFERENCES

- "ITAMS are a strong Partner. Complimenting our SAM Team by providing sound, reliable, and useful Industry knowledge and support. ITAMS are Professional, Proactive, Intuitive Service Provider who aim to support us and drive out Business Benefit, The People within ITAMS are Available, Supportive, Efficient, Knowledgeable and Easy to Work with which contributes to excellent service delivery"
- "ITAMS solutions - our experience has been that in every engagement, ITAMS solutions has always put our interest first, rather than their own commercial benefit (which has been a pleasant surprise). In a nutshell - Trustworthy."
- "ITAMS have been an excellent partner for us, providing the changing levels of support we require & growing with us on our journey. They are always willing to take feedback to help improve the service for us & other organizations & have often adapted the products & process they offer following our feedback. I do believe they are growing to become a solid player in the SAM Services industry."

## SHI

SHI is a powerhouse in the software-licensing world with huge international resources for supporting customers. They offer a solid SAM Managed service offering and market-leading platform to deliver value to customers. However SHI are yet to gain significant traction with their SAM Managed Services compared to competitors in this review.

### Scores

- Expertise Score: 76.70%
- Company, Infrastructure & Methodology: 82.90%
- Average Customer Reference Score: 94.00%

| STRENGTHS                                                                                                                                     | WEAKNESSES                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal software market approach</li> </ul>                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts of interest. Makes money from licenses and technologies</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• License desk</li> </ul>                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service not as customisable as competitors</li> </ul>                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and education</li> </ul>                                                                    |                                                                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SHI work with what the customer has (technology) and do not demand that they make changes</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                       |

From software and hardware procurement to deployment planning, configuration, data centre optimization, IT asset management and cloud computing, SHI a number of SAM and software licensing related services available via twenty-eight regional offices including operations in USA, Canada, UK, France, Germany and Hong Kong. SHI are currently privately owned and are Microsoft's largest worldwide partner.

Through experience and SAM frameworks, SHI have developed their IT and Software Asset Management service. SHI states their services stretch from the cradle to the grave for both hardware and software ensuring that SHI provides services for the full lifecycle of an asset.

The SAM Managed Services aim is to provide industry-recognized license and compliance expertise across all key software vendors and product lines. The ITAM Review believes that SHI have the internal resources and expertise to help customers manage their key software vendors, and believe SHI to be more than capable of assisting any customers with challenging licensing issues.

SHI is a powerhouse in the software-licensing world with huge international resources for supporting customers. We believe they offer a solid SAM Managed service offering and market-leading platform to deliver value to customers. However SHI are yet to gain significant traction with their SAM Managed Services compared to competitors in this review. SHI have clearly invested in this area of the business – but now need to convert that investment to market share.

SHI state that their SAM Managed Service is contained within the ITAM specialist team within SHI. The service has been named under the brand name Polaris, which is said to be key to SHI's current and future business plan.

SHI use a variety of technology including commercial applications and in-house deployed applications. Their in-house platform has been built from the partnership with eTelligent Solutions – an SHI sister company.

SHI also states that their SAM service is completely tool agnostic and they work with data from pretty much any Inventory tools the customer has deployed. SHI has developed long-term relationships with a number of specialist tool set providers with emphasis on complimenting the investments already made by customers.

As part of SHI's SAM Managed Services, SHI states the Polaris team provides the customer with on-going support for the named publishers contained within the service. If a vendor declares its intent to audit the customer, SHI will provide support through the audit process. In that process, SHI provides the customer with advice, information, and guidance based on prior experiences and license expertise for the most effective and efficient completion of the audit.

We particularly liked the SHI internal software marketing approach. This framework helps customers ensure they avoid spending money on software licenses that they don't need, or already have in stock. This helps SHI's customers to clearly identify where their software licensing risks are, and also where they could save money on unused software. The SHI offering includes a self-service software request portal that uses SHI's licensing experts to ensure customers are kept up-to-date with licensing changes.

We also liked the License Desk element of the SAM MSP offering, and also the fact that SHI provide training and education for SAM and software licensing. We believe that providing customers with the option to contact SHI with any form of software license question is a fantastic benefit to choosing SHI, and also means that customers do not have to contact the software vendor directly. Furthermore, we were impressed with SHI's stance on training and education for their customers. They offer internal training and education for customers, and will also help users become accredited if they so wish.

SHI make money from software and tools. This may represent a conflict of interest for some customers and not be an issue for others. Finally, the ITAM Review believes that SHI's offering is not as customisable as their competitors. Some of SHI's competitors were more flexible to adapting to customer needs and requirements.

## CUSTOMER REFERENCES

- “SHI Polaris is a intuitive and comprehensive service supported by a professional team of skilled individuals each with unique contributions, the result of their work are accessible via a state of the art web portal with power drill down capability for detail research and review. Well worth the investment”

- “As a software reseller a partnership with SHI for SAM could have had the potential that some information uncovered could become a sales opportunity. SHI offered to have in our contract a privacy clause so that their sales team could not access the information, which gave us even greater comfort.”
- “In addition to the Managed Service we also take advantage of advice offered when we are looking at new initiatives, to ensure we have the correct and most efficient licensing model. Whilst running their discovery tools information is also picked up for vendors that are not part of our Manage Service agreement we are able to use this information to look after the smaller, less complex vendors ourselves.”

## Softline Solutions

Softline Solutions is an independent SAM Managed Services provider with a strong offering for European customers.

### Scores

- Expertise Score: 80.00%
- Company, Infrastructure & Methodology: 91.40%
- Average Customer Reference Score: 88.03%

| STRENGTHS                                                     | WEAKNESSES                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Complete SAM service. Can be the SAM department for customers | Small team / resources compared to competitors |
| Full SAM Lifecycle management                                 |                                                |
| Focus on people, processes and technology                     |                                                |
| Promotes SAM education and communication within customers     |                                                |
| Customisable service with lots of support offerings           |                                                |
| Scenario modelling (what if? And license optimization)        |                                                |

Softline Solutions offer an impressive SAM service with the resources and expertise to act as the entire SAM department for the customer. We found the team to be passionate about SAM, software licensing and their ability to make a difference with customers.

Softline Solutions recognise the importance of managing software licensing throughout its lifecycle. We believe this is a differentiator compared to other providers in this review as they can help support an organisation from the point of request, right through to the retirement of a software licenses. Softline Solutions will also help their customers manage the license effectively and ensure it is being used correctly throughout the lifecycle.

On top of the managed technology layer, Softline Solutions provide a license desk, called SAMdesk that gives remote support for license registration and support to customers for impact analysis and license questions. The ITAM Review believes that this method of support is fantastic, and is a common element of a strong MSP offering.

Their approach to SAM education and communications was refreshing. SAM Education is based on practice and experience, and is designed to help customers to understand what to do and what not to do when it comes to SAM within their organisation.

Softline Solutions' services are extremely customisable and bespoke, with lots of different support options. Compared to competitors, we found that Softline Solutions allow their customers to either pick and choose from their existing services, or have a completely unique and bespoke experience.

Softline Solutions help customers with their scenario modelling, creating 'what if' scenario's for various vendors, risks and software budgets. We were impressed with Softline Solutions' approach to scenario modelling and helping their customers plan for the future, both from a software compliance and financial perspective.

Softline Solutions service uses Flexera FlexNet Manager Suite. Softline Solutions states that Flexera software's detection functionality and a library for stock keeping units, FlexNet supports a large variety of complex license models, automates the identification of software products, versions and editions and aligns software inventory and purchases.

Softline Solutions states they currently have an international SAM team that consists of more than 40 employees who focus on the topic of SAM. About 30% of these are located in their German office in Leipzig, whereas about 60% is located in the Netherlands, 5% in Belgium and 5% in Paris, France. Softline Solutions profit from consulting and managed services, they do not sell software licensing.

### Customer References

- *"We are very satisfied with the consulting services of Softline Solutions, helping us to get a compliance overview, to develop processes and to fulfil software compliance audits. Besides the licensing support (maintaining license purchases) and the technical support (tool maintenance and development), we are also using the SAMdesk of Softline Solutions, which helps us to clarify small licensing questions within a short period of time"*
- *"Let Softline Solutions help you to create and maintain the SAM processes in your organisation!"*

## SoftwareOne

A software licensing and SAM specialist with huge worldwide resources to support clients.

### Scores

- Expertise Score: 93.30%
- Company, Infrastructure & Methodology: 74.30%
- Average Customer Reference Score: 84.54%

| STRENGTHS                                                                                                                                           | WEAKNESSES                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large number of experts and in-house resources</li> </ul>                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer options can be rigid, not as bespoke as competitors in this review</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expert support for all major SAM solutions</li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes money on software licensing – potential conflict of interest</li> </ul>          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery management reports allow the customer to see how progress is going with the engagement</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers Q&amp;A's with experts (based on package)</li> </ul>                                                |                                                                                                                                 |

SoftwareOne started to offer SAM Managed Services in 2008 in response to a small group of customers that identified the fact that a 1-time project was no longer enough substance for software license management and software asset management.

The first strength of SoftwareOne's MSP is the fact that they have a huge number of in-house experts and resources. SoftwareONE boasts over 300 consultants that are based all around the world. The ITAM Review believes that this result in a huge SAM knowledge base, with all of the different elements of SAM covered.

SoftwareONE states that they provide expert support for all major SAM solutions. The ITAM Review believes that this is a massive positive and puts SoftwareONE ahead of some of its competitors. SoftwareONE state that they have a number of in-house experts for all major SAM tools which will add significant value to the customer, and will help cut out the need to speak to the SAM Tool vendor directly, which can be frustrating and time consuming.

We were impressed with the Delivery Management Reports; a project management / governance solution offered to customers. This is a really useful way for the customer to see the progress that is being made by SoftwareOne.

Furthermore, we were also impressed with the way in which SoftwareOne make their experts available to customers for a Q&A session, whereby customers can ask experts anything they want about SAM. The ITAM Review found the customer options for building a service to be more rigid than competitors in this review.

SoftwareOne state they have over 300 dedicated SAM Consultants. The role, which is specifically for the Managed Service, is the role of the SAM Analyst. Currently, SoftwareONE state they have 79 SAM Analysts globally, across 30 countries.

SoftwareOne claim their SAM services are part of a larger software portfolio management organization that provides compliance and governance services, along with technology road mapping and procurement services.

SoftwareOne offer clients a Strategic SAM Framework Assessment and Maturity Program or a SAM Process Assessment to identify the maturity of a client's SAM processes. Both of these services include onsite interviews with key SAM stakeholders.

SoftwareONE state they provide the client with two options to increase their maturity:

- Provide a Best Practice Recommendations document. The purpose of this document is to outline the key areas that allow a client to successfully manage the software lifecycle, and to provide a policy around software provision and software use.
- The creation of customized SAM process that is based on ITIL but also take into consideration the current process of the client.

Using the client's preferred SAM tool, SoftwareONE states they create a breakdown report to show the client's current asset information. SoftwareONE claim they try and achieve a coverage rate of 95% or more on all machines, including client machines and servers.

SoftwareOne services are designed to leverage technologies that the customer may have already invested in, but also introduce new technologies which may be beneficial to the customers Software Asset Management program.

Finally, SoftwareOne make money from software licenses and selling tools. This may represent a conflict of interest for some customers and not be an issue for others.

## **CUSTOMER REFERENCES**

- "We are very happy with the responsiveness of our SAM Managed Service Provider. The quality of service provided is also now at a very good level."
- "I recommend SoftwareOne"