Decoding ILMT: Optimizing IBM's License Metric Tool

The IBM License Metric Tool (known colloquially as "ILMT") is one of the most widely-used and often misunderstood discovery tools in the distributed software space. While IBM has required customers to use it for sub-capacity reporting purposes for years, there are still many misunderstandings about the nature and use of the tool. Unfortunately, this confusion has resulted in the incorrect (or complete absence of) implementation of the tool, which has resulted in tens of millions of dollars in audit collections by IBM.

While proper management of the tool can be time-consuming, it is not generally difficult. With a good collective understanding of its implications and a commitment to regular manual interrogation and maintenance of the tool's license definitions, the ILMT tool can be used correctly and effectively, helping to shorten audits and other reporting exercises and vastly improve the results of contractual events.

ILMT Should Be The Single Source of Truth

The most important thing to remember in a compliance situation with IBM is that the ILMT will be considered the single source of truth. This continues to be poorly understood by many IBM customers, despite its presence in Passport Advantage contracts for the better part of a decade.

To utilize the Subcapacity licensing rules (i.e., licensing at the virtual machine level), IBM customers must install the agents ILMT, BigFix, or one of the other small handful of IBM-approved discovery tools on those servers where IBM PVU, RVU, or VPC-licensed software is installed. The absence of an approved license metric agent on such a server will result in that server being adjudged at full capacity – that is, the customer will have to license each physical processor core on the device.

Many customers falsely assume that intricate internal tracking documents of license consumption will suffice to appease IBM and their auditors, but time and again, we have seen IBM hold fast to their contractual language and impose a full-capacity judgment for those who do not follow it.

It's important to recognize that IBM sales representatives should not be relied upon for actionable compliance advice or support. Sales representatives are not charged with ensuring compliance, nor are they trained as specialists in IBM licensing rules.

ILMT Is an Incomplete Source of Truth

While ILMT serves as the designated source of truth for compliance, it is important to recognize its limitations; it is not a self-supporting tool by any stretch. This is a common misunderstanding amongst system administrators and management.

While ILMT comes with many of IBM's license rules pre-installed, IBM's historical software portfolio has become so large that it has been difficult for them (and with BigFix, now for HCL) to maintain and update the licensing definitions at the speed of the changing business climate.

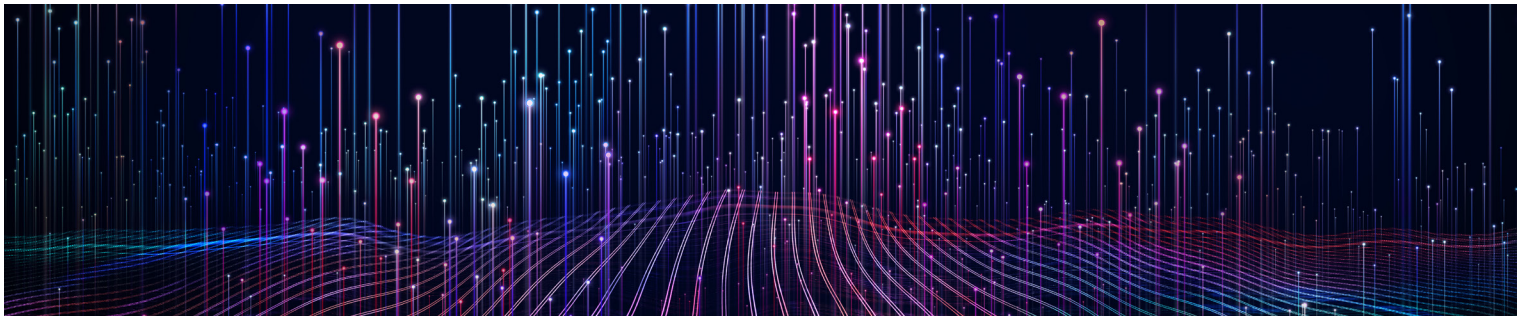
In addition, ILMT does not natively detect many bundling rules and licensing exceptions, especially those that are architecturally oriented (active-passive cluster licensing for DB2, for example). This means that the customer must do a significant portion of the care and feeding of the ILMT definition database, ensuring that bundling definitions are considered and that licensing exceptions are properly annotated. Failure to do this will result in inaccurate counts that may not hold up in a compliance examination.

Any difficulties or confusion should be addressed as soon as possible with IBM or HCL via a documented channel (an email chain at minimum, or an open support ticket). This allows the customer to demonstrate good faith attempts to alleviate a license discovery issue.

Retaining ILMT Reports for Contractual Requirements

Another fact that many IBM customers overlook is the contractual requirement to retain at least two (2) years of ILMT reports in arrears. In many cases, customers are required to provide these reports quarterly as part of their enterprise single sign-on (ESSO) draw-down. However, we have observed that IBM account representatives do not uniformly enforce this, so many customers falsely assume that they are not required to maintain a backlog of reports.

Failure to provide the full two years of reporting in an audit event may result in IBM denying the customer's ability to report software at subcapacity, resulting in audit judgments more than 20x the subcapacity judgment. Whether customers are required by their account representatives to provide a quarterly ILMT report or not, a process and procedure for running a report for archival purposes every 90 days should be implemented by the administrator of the ILMT tool. This can also be done as part of an ongoing governance process to maintain the tool's definitions and exceptions.



Applying Environmental Rules

As previously mentioned, ILMT does not natively account for the disposition of software instances, whether they are deployed in production or non-production environments, or whether the software is operating in a specialized high-availability environment (active-passive, active-active) or in a disaster recovery location. It's important to understand the specific license rules for each IBM product in regard to these types of environments. Some IBM products are sold under separate production and non-production licenses, and customers must often manually identify which licenses should be attributed to an instance. Likewise, products like the DB2 family have specific rules around licensing on the passive nodes of high-availability clusters. Again, these rules must be applied manually by the customer. In terms of disaster recovery environments, IBM allows customers to have a copy of software in a disaster recovery site, provided the site is idle. Yet again, these DR instances must be manually excluded.

This activity requires significant work if it has never been undertaken before, and depends on the size and complexity of a customer's IBM software environment. Depending on the complexity and turnover of an environment, regular care and feeding may also take a significant effort to ensure the tool is reporting correctly. Responsible and accountable parties should be identified, and regular cadences should be established to ensure that the definitions and exceptions are being updated and self-audited continuously, and not simply at contractual events (true-ups, renewals, audits, et al).

Once the proper management of the ILMT is understood, companies can benefit from short audit times and improved results at contractual events. If you're looking to learn more about managing your software assets, reach out to the expert team at ISAM Group.

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