

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE CASE STUDY



International House overcomes software licensing challenges to demonstrate compliance

By focusing on protecting copyright, the network of language schools has put IT policies in place to mitigate risk and safeguard its reputation.

The International House network of language schools has been a customer of the FAST Programme since August 2005.

It very quickly achieved the Bronze stage of the FAST Standard for Software Compliance (FSSC-1:2007) and recently achieved Gold Award without going through separate stages. Strong executive support has helped IT Manager Maurice Reed gain and retain control of the organisation's software estate.

The International House network of language schools was founded in Cordoba in Spain in 1953 with the aim of offering an innovative approach to language teaching. Since then, its network has expanded to over 140 schools in more than 40 countries, and it has remained at the forefront of development in the field of language teaching and in the training of language teachers.

The organisation is based in London and over the years has had various sites for its London language school and for the centre of its International House World Organisation operation which co-ordinates the network of International House schools worldwide. International House is continually developing new academic courses and teacher training programmes to enhance the service that it offers its learners and teachers.

Case study highlights

- International House has achieved registration to the FAST Standard
- The organisation took steps to get on top of its software estate and corrective action mitigated its risk
- International House has benefited from FAST advice - and executive support - through all stages of working towards the FAST Standard
- Language students have access to PC facilities, but effective policies and procedures ensure the systems are locked down

Understanding the problem

Maurice Reed has been IT Manager at International House for 7 years, and has been instrumental in ensuring that the school had a clear understanding of its software asset management and licensing position.

"As a result of the way they had been set up, the computer systems were in a bit of a mess, with some of the software licences missing.

I cleaned it up a bit, and brought some more control to the licensing regime by buying upgrade licences to XP and later to Windows Server 2003."

It was then that Reed took advantage of his initial contact with FAST which resulted from a call out of the blue.

"FAST explained what they did and that fitted with the direction in which we wanted the organisation to go. This is something we needed to do because we are one of the premier language schools and it would not do us any good if we were found to be running unlicensed software.

"We joined FAST in August 2005 and by early 2006, we had achieved Bronze stage of the FAST Standard for Software Compliance. Moving buildings then held us up going onto the Silver and Gold stages, but at the same time, it helped us to get rid of old antiquated PCs and servers."

“It was quite a steep learning curve, getting to grips with software licensing. But it was an imperative for the organisation that we became and remain compliant.”

“By working with FAST, we’ve been able to put policies and procedures in place which have mitigated our risk.”

Moving towards FAST Gold

Achieving registration to the FAST Standard been more challenging for Reed, largely because of the preponderance of OEM software resident on machines that all has to be logged as part of the Gold audit and reconciliation process.

“To reach Gold, we have to track the OEM software that all gets stuffed on machines. Some of it may be from Dell-badged software - for example, for a digital camera - or from other companies, such as Nero, Logitech and Creative Labs. We’ve been using the Visionsoft package which helps identify programs, as well as the odd executable in the system,” says Reed.

Staying ahead of the game - and mitigating its risk

Reed admits that it can be a constant challenge to update International House’s records on the programs it is using. For example, the organisation is currently changing its antivirus software, moving from McAfee to Kaspersky.

Nevertheless, Reed believes his organisation is in better shape than many other language schools.

“We have under 200 PCs and laptops and 7 network servers across two networks: an administration and a student network. We have a computer in every classroom and though we encourage students to go and use the PCs, everything is locked down solidly. Students have Net access and they can download material, such as picture files and PDFs. They can also use USB drives, but they’re limited in what they can do by Microsoft policies. There is no access to printer settings, no control panel, and the C drive is hidden.”

Reed believes International House’s decision to join FAST - alongside the strong executive support he has received - has played a big part in mitigating the organisation’s risk.

“By working with FAST, we’ve been able to put policies and procedures in place which have mitigated our risk. We were never dramatically under or over-licensed, so it’s not been a question of cost savings, but about having an approach that understands and protects copyright, even down to what’s contained in the language books our students use, and what they’re allowed to photocopy.”

Taking advantage of all FAST’s services

FAST Customer Account Manager Liz Penning says International House has made the most of the FAST Programme by taking advantage of all the services the organisation offers.

“International House set itself a high challenge in aiming to get to Gold Award level in one go, rather than in stages. Gold is a demanding standard to achieve because it requires you to audit and reconcile all installed software to gain registration to the FAST Standard for Software Compliance,” says Penning.

“Maurice is very proactive and asks a lot of questions to help his organisation avail itself of all the benefits of being a FAST customer.”

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