Evaluating TapeTrack

Introduction

The evaluation phase is a critical part of any software procurement process as it allows the user to test the software in their own environment to ensure that the product is the right fit. Evaluation allows you to:

1. See what is involved in installing, configuring and supporting the product.
2. Ensure the product features meet all of your requirements.
3. Ensure that the product is adequately maintained and supported.
4. Ensure that the product is stable and scalable.
5. Ensure that the product integrates with other software products you use.
6. See that your staff are able to understand and use the product.

The TapeTrack Suite

Prerequisites

Before you commence your TapeTrack evaluation it is important that you understand what pieces you need to first have in place to get the most out of the product. Budget and price considerations It is important that you have some idea of your budget for software and services and that you have a quotation for the software that indicates the following:

1. Licensing costs.
2. The cost of technical support.
3. The cost of software maintenance.
4. The cost of any required professional services required for implementation.
5. The cost of any hardware, such as barcode scanners.

There is little point in spending time and resources on evaluating a product that you cannot afford, or that does not meet your price expectations.

Feature Demonstration.

Although it is not a requirement, it is advised that you first participate in an online demonstration of the product. This allows us to show you the features of TapeTrack and to answer any questions that you might have about how the product can help you meet your objectives.

Legal considerations

Software is licensed, not sold like traditional products. This means that for you to install and use the product, even for evaluation purposes, you should have an evaluation license in place.

The TapeTrack Evaluation License simply states that we will allow you to use the product for 90 days, with full technical support at no cost.

Hardware requirements

TapeTrack is a Client-Server architecture software product, and has a Server component (The TapeTrack Framework Server) and a number of Client components, which include command line and Windows programs. The TapeTrack Framework Server is available for Windows, Linux and Solaris. The TapeTrack Windows software is only available for Microsoft Windows and will run on Windows XP and above. The TapeTrack Command Line programs are available for Windows, Linux, HP-UX, Solaris, AIX, z/OS and IBMi. For evaluation purposes, a modest server or Virtual Machine be provisioned with the following configuration of above:

1. 4+ CPU cores.
2. 4+ GB of RAM.
3. 10 GB of additional hard disk.

Staff availability

There are usually three types of employees who have some involvement in a TapeTrack evaluation, in some instances these people may be the one person, in others, they may be discrete teams of people:

1. Server Administrators: These people install the TapeTrack Server software on a server, install TapeTrack Windows software on evaluation desktops.
2. Backup Administrators: These people maintain the backup environment and may be needed to assist in defining tape management criteria and with integrating TapeTrack with the backup software.
3. Operational Staff: These people will usually have the most day to day interaction with TapeTrack and must be trained to perform functions such as scanning tapes in and out of the software.

Evaluation Criteria

When it comes to evaluation TapeTrack, the evaluation criteria will vary from one enterprise to the next, but in general, the high level criteria will always be:

1. That the software is easy to install, maintain and support.
2. That the product is easy to use.
3. That the product is stable, performs as expected and can be scaled to meet future workloads.
4. That the product has the features required to achieve the required tape management objectives.

Tape Management Objectives

There are usually five high level objectives when evaluating the features of TapeTrack, these are:

1. Asset Management: that the software provides an enterprise wide, single database of every tape
2. Chain-Of-Custody: that the product accurately captures information relating to the movement of each tape as it passes through its usage lifecycle (from purchase to destruction).
3. Library Management: that the product allows you assign storage locations, such as storage cases and racking locations to each tape when necessary, and that it alerts you when a tape is detected as not being in the expected location.
4. Disaster Recovery: that the product is aware of which tapes are required for disaster recovery, and that it is able to issue alerts when critical tapes are not offsite.
5. Quality Control: that the product has features that ensure users do not make tape handling mistakes, and in the event that they do, alerts administrators so that they can take action to remedy the situation.

Sample Evaluation Checklist

To assist in the evaluation process, the following checklist can be used as a template. This template may contain items that you are not relevant to your own specific requirements, and in rare instances may not include requirements that are unique to your own expectations. The list does however serve as a starting point for you to create your own evaluation checklist.

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