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Enabling Home-Use Licensing at Eastern Michigan University

The Goal

Eastern Michigan University (EMU) is a major learning and research institution in the United States. The Division of Information Technology (IT)'s Desktop and Classroom Technology team – a team of just 10 full-time staff members – is responsible for end-user support, device management, and classroom technology, as well as managing, distributing, and supporting all software licensed for the university's 16,000+ students.

Historically, course software was made available to students in campus labs. What software students were permitted to install on their own machines was distributed in person on physical media. The Division of IT wanted to start distributing home-use licenses for more software – specifically SAS® and IBM® SPSS – and moving from in-person to online payments.

Aric Kirkland, the Director of Desktop and Classroom technology, began investigating solutions to make this possible.

The Challenge

EMU needed a way to make SPSS and SAS available on students' personal devices. Their old manual distribution process was inconvenient for students and a burden on IT staff. For certain software, like SPSS, it simply wasn't possible. These products were available only in select school labs with limited hours of operation.

The school experimented with offering virtual access to software, but

16,000
Number of Students

10
Software Support Staff

$7,000+
Costs Recovered in 2020 '(USD)

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that approach came with its own problems. The end-user experience was not the same as having the software installed on students' own device. Access depended on a good internet connection, and the university was determined to provide equitable access.

There was also the issue of cost. "You really had to look at licensing for every person who could potentially use the solution rather than the ones who were actually going to," says Kirkland. "It really didn't work out cost-wise to do it that way."

Kirkland and his team turned to home-use licenses as an alternative to virtualization. But they struggled to find a solution that would not be a burden on the team or create compliance and security risks for the university. "We looked to see if there were any open-source canned packages for online download stores," says Kirkland. "But it would have been another server we'd have to maintain and secure. Being a short-staffed IT department, it didn't make a lot of sense for us to take on something like that."

The Solution

In the end, the university could find only one company that could meet their needs around home-use licenses without creating an unmanageable burden for IT staff. Kivuto Solutions was known to the university as the original deployment method for Microsoft Work from Home licenses and student academic licensing for VMware products. It was to them that EMU ultimately turned for a solution to distribute home-use licenses for SAS and SPSS.

Kivuto's platform enabled the institution to offer home-use licenses through a branded online store. Access is self-serve and distribution is automated, saving IT the work of manual distribution. The platform also supports PCI DSS-compliant e-commerce to enable secure online payments and includes full end-user support, which took even more work off IT's shoulders.
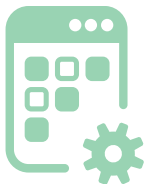
The implementation was effortless for EMU staff. "We didn't have to worry about making installers available to students," Kirkland said in a 2020 webinar with Kivuto. "We didn't have to support them through the installation process or develop a means of delivering authorization codes. All we had to do was create the offering within our store and add codes to the voucher pool. The WebStore did the rest of the work."
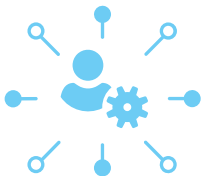
The Results

Almost 10 years later, EMU still uses Kivuto's platform to distribute SAS and SPSS software for home use. This approach has been so successful, the university has since expanded their usage to distribute JMP software and, as of September 2021, to provide home access to Adobe Creative Cloud.

Here are the key benefits EMU has seen from using Kivuto's platform.

Home-Use Distribution

Kivuto's platform enabled EMU to start offering home-use licenses for SAS, SPSS, and other software. This has eliminated the need for IT to manually distribute software or for students to visit a campus lab to access it. It's proven far more convenient for students and cost-effective for the school than virtualization.

End-User and Admin Support

Of their many responsibilities, supporting students is the top priority for Kirkland's team. It was critical that whatever solution they chose for distributing home-use licenses not cause a spike in support tickets. Since Kivuto provides full end-user support around software access and installation, the team's support burden has been reduced. Kivuto also provides account management and administrator support, which Kirkland describes as "phenomenal."

Secure Cost Recovery

Kivuto Cloud's PCI DSS-compliant e-commerce functionality enabled EMU to charge students for software without obligating IT staff to worry about to processing payments or ensuring security. By leveraging this functionality, EMU has recovered over $5,000 USD per year over the past five years and over $7,000 USD in 2020 alone.
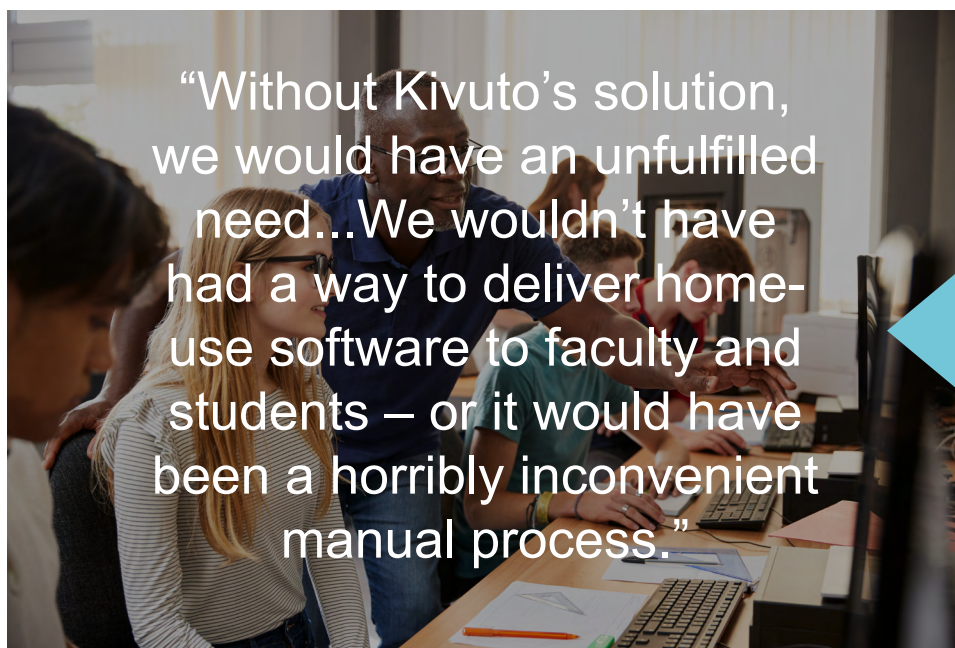
Reduced Reliance on Labs

The ability to offer home-use licenses has decreased the need to support campus computer labs. This has been a huge improvement for both IT staff (by reducing the cost and workload involved in managing those labs) and students (who no longer have to travel to campus within limited hours of operation to access software).

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About Kivuto

Since 1997, Kivuto has been transforming the way schools distribute digital resources to students and faculty. World-class academic institutions like Harvard® and Yale®, software partners like Microsoft® and IBM®, and publishers like Pearson® and McGraw Hill® rely on Kivuto to ensure the secure and successful delivery of software, eBooks, and other digital assets. Our product offerings have evolved to streamline and centralize every aspect of the management and distribution of academic digital resources while ensuring data privacy and security.

Overall, Kirkland rates his satisfaction with Kivuto's solutions and services at 5/5. "Without Kivuto's solution, we would have an unfulfilled need," he says. "We wouldn't have had a way to deliver home-use software to faculty and students – or it would have been a horribly inconvenient manual process."

Find out how Kivuto Cloud can help your institution. To learn more about how we deliver software and e-books to students, staff and faculty, message us at getstarted@kivuto.com or call us at 1-855-526-3005.

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