



**February 2008**  
**0121 506 9230**

## Are Your Software Licenses in Order?

One of the most common circumstances we encounter when we start working with a client is that they don't have their hardware guarantees or software licenses for the equipment that they are using. That's fine, until that is something goes wrong. If their operating system suddenly fails or they get errors in their office applications the majority of the time the first remedy would be reinstalling the software. But without the license this can't happen.

Many firms accredited by LEXCEL or working to the BS7799 standard for information security will have procedures in place for storing and managing their software and recording licensing details, but for those who don't best practice is to keep all your licenses in one place, preferably under lock and key, with someone responsible for allowing users to access them and monitoring their return.

Unfortunately if you don't have the licenses for any software you are running if the software crashes and needs to be reinstalled you are a little stuck. Loading unlicensed software is not something you should ever do. The only solution often is to buy a new license.

### The Value of Un-wrapping the Bundle

To some extent hardware suppliers make the whole licensing issue more difficult for the uninitiated by bundling up the software (for example for Windows XP or Microsoft Office) with the hardware. In simple terms this means that most PCs bought from high street retailers will only allow you to use the software on one machine. If the machine fails you not only have to shell out for new hardware but also for new software too.

The way around this is to consider Open Licenses. These provide freedom to use the software a given number of times and to load software onto an agreed number of computers.

The unbundling of hardware and software is the way we recommend to clients that they buy. There's an almost hidden added advantage too with Microsoft's Open Licenses. You don't have to take an enforced upgrade of software – so if everyone else in the office is still running Office 2003 and you are getting a new PC you don't have to buy one with Office 2007 and face some of the potential issues of getting used to a new version. (If you are using Office 2007 and having compatibility issues in Word you can [download a simple Bronte Guide here](#)).

If your business has more than 5 or so users then it's likely you could benefit from a multi user or Open License. The advantage here is that if a PC is stolen, damaged or simply stops working you don't have to buy new software, just the hardware and with great deals on hardware you could save hundreds of pounds.

The danger of course is that you only realise that your software licenses are in a mess in a crisis situation – when a PC crashes and you need to reinstall Windows late on a Friday afternoon for example. Bronte Business

### Embarrassment of the Month

Somebody has a red face after a laptop computer holding information about convicted criminals was stolen from Birmingham Magistrates' Court, in January.

### How secure is your laptop?

Every laptop in your business should, at the very least, have a boot-up password to prevent unauthorised users from gaining access to your files. Without such a password if a laptop is stolen all the data on the hard drive is there for the taking.

For added security, there's specialist software that you can buy which limits unauthorised mobile access and locks USB ports to prevent data stored within being copied by unauthorised personnel. This can be especially useful if you are worried about staff copying contact data before leaving for another job. It also adds security for laptops used in shared work space.

### What is a software license?

A software license grants permission to use the software in an agreed way.

Licenses are commonly pre-installed on the software or can be printed and enclosed separately with the software (in the same box, case, etc).

The license confirms copyright arrangements, breaches of which are

Networks realise the inconvenience that this represents and have therefore introduced the Bronte Licensing Audit, a comprehensive review of current licenses and a report which highlights areas of exposure and risk. It's an ideal review for organisations going through a British Standard or professional body audit of systems and procedures and for just £900 plus VAT for the average 20 user firm pays for itself in no time.

Contact [Bronte Business Networks](#) if you have any licensing concerns.

## Unlicensed Software – Is It Worth the Risk?

It is no secret that people use unlicensed software in the workplace. Sometimes in ignorance, on other occasions because they perhaps haven't thought about the consequences, and occasionally because they believe the risk of being caught is small and therefore not worth worrying about.

But business owners cannot shirk their responsibility. As a business owner or director you are personally responsible and for using unlicensed software could face significant fines, or even imprisonment (up to 10 years).

And if you think "people get away with it all the time, I won't get caught", think again. In recent years there have been fines of £39,300 for a London based debt recovery software company and £250,000 for a UK firm in the infrastructure and public services sector. With the Business Software Alliance offering rewards of £20,000 to whistleblowers it can't be worth the risk.

It doesn't matter whether you were aware of the breach or not – it is the managers and directors who are personally responsible. As if fines weren't enough of a deterrent – if caught you will be prohibited from using computers in the work-place, which for pretty much every business I can think of means that you wouldn't be able to operate at all.

The most common reason why software is unlicensed is because it is a 'copy'. When software is copied not only does it not 'copy' the license but using pirated software could also result in increased security problems as copied software can be corrupted causing viruses to be loaded onto your system.

Don't take the risk. Legitimate, original software is easily available and through a company like Bronte Business Networks you can access special deals, Open Licenses and multi-user licenses tailored to your business requirements. [Contact Bronte Business Networks](#) to discuss your requirements.

## About Bronte

Bronte Business Networks offer a full range of outsourced IT services, tailored to your business. Whether you are looking to install a new network, update your software, add to your hardware, need help maintaining an existing system or require an emergency response, you can be sure of a personal, professional and prompt service. To find out more how you can make the most of your IT visit [www.brontebusinessnetworks.co.uk](http://www.brontebusinessnetworks.co.uk).

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### Software licenses for each user

Most software requires licenses for each user. If you require software to be used by a number of users on different PCs or laptops you must make sure you have the correct licenses in place. An open license agreement might be more appropriate in this case.

The average office will need licenses for the following:

- PC operating system
- Server operating system
- Office applications
- Client access licenses for servers

If you are using other specialist software – for example practice management or accounting software – you will need the licenses for that too.

Don't know where your licenses are? Worried you might be using unauthorized software? [Order a Bronte Licensing Audit today.](#)

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**Blythe Valley Innovation Centre, Central Boulevard, Blythe Valley  
Park, Solihull, B90 8AJ**