



Industry

Technology + Events

ITSM Challenges

The legacy asset management system (in this case, a spreadsheet) presented multiple limitations:

- No obvious chain of command for thousands of pieces of equipment
- No easy way to quickly scale as equipment needs changed from a large event back to day-to-day activity
- No efficient method for tracking each moving part, from IT assets to volunteers to vendors



Outcome

The Samanage asset management solution gave SXSW's IT team what they needed most, the ability to tag, monitor, and manage thousands of assets in a large, fast-paced environment.

Samanager Changes SXSW's Tune on IT Asset Management

Background

For 10 months out of the year South by Southwest (SXSW) is a typical technology company that puts on smaller conferences. For the other two months out of the year, SXSW is preparing and executing the SXSW Music, Film and Interactive Festival. SXSW began in 1987 in Austin, Texas as a music event for local artists. In 1994, SXSW added a film and interactive component to the festival attracting approximately 32,000 registrants every March. Whether it is music, film or interactive technologies, their goal of bringing people together from around the world to collaborate continues.

Challenges

The SXSW IT and technical production team was tracking all of their internal assets and the thousands of assets that got in to the festival through a spreadsheet. Josh Hunt, assistant IT manager at SXSW, saw that there wasn't an obvious chain of custody. Whether they were moving equipment at the office or at a large convention space it was complicated to track gear and it wasn't clear where the assets were moving and who was responsible for them.

Sage Fly, technical production manager, found that their system using a spreadsheet did not provide the scalability they needed as they ranged from a small internal company to a city-wide event. "We would go from just the assets we normally manage in our office to a hoard of equipment from different vendors for SXSW," said Fly. "During those two weeks of the festival, we needed to track where equipment is all over the city of Austin."

As the event grew, so did the overall operations and staff. The IT team and technical production team started changing and putting steps in place for a new registration system and knew they needed to take those changes further on the back end. They decided to give everything the same level of attention that they gave the registration process, as they disperse assets all over the city they knew they needed a bread crumb trail.

"We're almost like a shipping company, we have to keep track of each asset, know when and where it's moving, and then make sure that its operating and allocated to the right location," said Fly. With all of the moving parts, from assets to volunteers to vendors, the SXSW IT team had to gain more control and insight over their assets.

Solution

The SXSW IT team created some asset tracking options in-house, but realized it would take too many resources from the team to support them. They began their search on Google for an IT asset management solution and shopped around for a little bit.

As they searched for a new asset management solution, their criteria included:

- Something compatible with both Mac and PC. Internally they used Mac, but many vendors came to the event with assets across the board.
- The ability to attach an asset tag to each piece of equipment and assign it to a specific location.
- The ability for IT to monitor machines and get a snapshot preview of what is running on the machine and if it was operational.
- A way to filter all of the data.





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Sage Fly

Technical Production Manager
SXSU

They found Samanage and saw that it did what they needed it to do. "We ran with it because SXSU it such a unique operation in how it runs from an IT perspective," said Hunt. "Samanage offered modularity with its features and flexibility. We didn't want to evaluate anything else once we realized Samanage worked for us."

To begin the integration process, they started with a small pool of assets. Once they got all of their meta data fields and back end stuff set up, they found their new Samanage solution to be pretty hands off.

Benefits

Gerald McDonald, technical production and IT support with SXSU, found that the Samanage team was willing to go above and beyond even after their purchase was made. "When we were first integrating, we had to reach out directly to support at Samanage and we would get answers right away," said McDonald. "Support was crucial in getting a couple of things going. It was really helpful to getting us up to speed quickly."

The Samanage support team also worked with the SXSU team by walking them through different scenarios for the festival production and how Samanage could scale up and scale down for the event. "There is no plan B anymore. The Samanage team helped us create that environment that we can cater the solution to our needs, set up for the event and run with it," said Fly.

The SXSU technical and IT team has been able to use Samanage as a check in/check out system in a high pressure environment with very little wiggle room for error.

During the festival, if someone asks them for five laptops, they're now able to apply a venue to a specific asset or group of assets and track who has them, where they're going, and check on the assets from the remote site.

As with any large event, changes can happen the week before, or even the day before the event begins, and now the SXSU technical production team can create custom fields and assign assets to certain locations as plans change. "Our event takes over the entire area of downtown Austin. Before when we were tracking manually, it just became overwhelming. Each year is a little different than the last, the flexibility of Samanage allows us to insert venues as they change," said Fly.

"Once the client was installed on the computers, we were receiving updates on the inventory list, so we no longer have to do any manual updates," said McDonald. They now have a list that's ready to use on the fly. The SXSU IT team has found that with Samanage the client checks in

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Gerald McDonald

Technical Production & IT Support
SXSU

daily and they immediately have an up to date snapshot where they can see what upgrades need to be made. "The client software really makes our job a lot easier," said McDonald. "We don't have to update or maintain things daily or weekly, it's something that's always there and ready for us."

The biggest value SXSU has found with Samanage, in terms of ROI, is that Samanage allows them to trace the movement of all of the gear. "It has really minimized the lost gear during our event," said Hunt. "We now know if an asset has gone off the grid. Internally nothing has been lost since we started using Samanage."



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