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AppleShare: Product to Limit Concurrent Launches

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TOPIC -----

I have a question about shared applications on an AppleShare server. I want the ability to restrict the number of concurrent launches of an application to the number licensed from the application's vendor. We know that AppleShare doesn't do this now, and the Macintosh OS doesn't necessarily support this function either.

OS/2 LAN Manager has this capability, and people are using this function to save money and reduce support costs by having only one copy of the application to update for all of its DOS users on the network.

Do you know of any third-party utilities that will restrict the number of concurrent launches to an application on a server? Granted, application vendors don't normally license their software this way. However, I could still purchase x number of copies of an application and then impose the limit of x concurrent launches of the application and still save money on the support costs and the reduce the total number of copies that would be needed.

DISCUSSION -----

You are correct that AppleShare doesn't now limit the concurrent number of times an application is launched.

AppleShare Product Management brought to our attention a product described in the following article (by Eric J. Adams) from the March 13, 1990, issue of MacWEEK:

"Hanover, N.H.--A Dartmouth College math professor has developed a network-based software-management program that solves several problems associated with distribution and piracy prevention.

"The program, called KeyServer, is now in use at Dartmouth, and its developer, Dr. Denis Devlin, hopes to begin commercial marketing later this year.

"KeyServer's installation program lets administrators modify popular applications, based on the provisions of their site license, so they will run only after receiving a "launch enable" message over the network. To launch copies of modified programs from a local hard disk, each user must have a "network pass," which is installed as a Startup document (INIT) in the user's system folder.

"If the maximum number of users allowed by the site license is using the program simultaneously, KeyServer will not give access to a prospective user. Instead, it passes a message that "All licensed copies are currently in use." When the program is freed, KeyServer returns a pop-up message to the prospective user, indicating that a launch is possible.

"KeyServer also allows network administrators to monitor current software access and generates a usage log, which can be used to negotiate or renegotiate site licenses with vendors, Devlin said. Several large vendors have expressed interest in the program, he added.

"It allows us to make a wide variety of software available without having to put a lot of money down for a site license on a bet that the program will be used," said Larry Levine, director of user services for the more than 5,000 Macintoshes on-line at Dartmouth. "We can freely distribute copies of programs without giving away control of their use."

"KeyServer differs from other Macintosh software management programs because "Only the command to launch comes over the network," Devlin said. "The programs reside on the user's hard disk, cutting down on network traffic tremendously."

"KeyServer also allows the administrator to turn access to a program on or off for any length of time or to shut off access to old versions of software. The program does not require a dedicated server.

"Devlin is currently beta testing KeyServer at industry sites and negotiating licensing agreements with vendors. Through his company, Sassafras, Devlin hopes to have shrink-wrapped versions ready by summer. Though pricing has not been set, Devlin said it will be tied to the number of nodes per network."

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