

Sample Company Software Policy for a Small Business

PART 1: GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Policy of [company] is to manage its software assets to derive maximum benefit to [company] and its employees and, especially, to ensure that [company] and its employees:

- Acquire, reproduce, distribute, transmit, and use computer software in compliance with U.S. copyright laws; and
- Maintain only legal software on [company's] computers and computer networks.

All software is protected under U.S. copyright laws from the time of its creation. [Company] has licensed copies of computer software from a variety of publishers to help fulfill its mission. Unless otherwise provided in the software license, duplication of software, except for backup and archival purposes, is a violation of copyright law and this Policy.

You may not knowingly use software for which [company] lacks the appropriate license. If you become aware of the use or distribution of unauthorized software in this company, notify your supervisor or the Office of the Chief information Officer (CIO).

You may not loan or give to anyone any software licensed to this company.

The licenses for some of this company's software permit employees of the company to make a copy of the software for home use. The CIO may approve such use by employees that can demonstrate a need to conduct the company's business from their homes. Under no circumstances, however, may an employee use the company's software for purposes other than the business of this company.

No employee may use or distribute personally owned software on the company's computers or networks. Such software threatens the integrity and security of the company's computers and networks.

A variety of software is available on the Internet. Some of this software, called "freeware" or "shareware," is available free of charge for limited use and may be downloaded to your computer with the prior written approval of your supervisor. Other software available on the Internet and from other electronic sources, however, requires the user to obtain a license for its use, sometimes for a fee. No employee shall download such software to his or her computer without the prior written approval of the CIO.

PART 2: SOFTWARE PROCUREMENT AND INSTALLATION PROCEDURES

All requests for software and software upgrades shall be submitted to the Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO), where possible.

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Any software and software upgrades not acquired by the CIO shall be documented and identified to the CIO, who will then verify that the company has an appropriate license for the use of such software.

All acquisitions of hardware that include bundled software shall be documented and identified to the CIO, who will verify that the Agency has an appropriate license for the use of such bundled software.

The CIO shall store in a secure, central location all original software licenses, disks, CD-ROMs, and documentation upon receipt of all new software, including copies of completed registration cards.

The CIO shall designate those employees authorized to install software on the company's computers.

No employee shall install or distribute software for which this company lacks the appropriate license.

No employee shall install any software upgrade on a computer that does not already have resident on it the original version of the software. The CIO or designated employee shall destroy the original version's backup copy of the upgraded software in its place.

The CIO or designated employees shall destroy all copies of software that is obsolete or for which the company lacks the appropriate license. Alternatively, the CIO may obtain the license(s) necessary to maintain unauthorized software on company computers.

The company's department with procurement responsibility must establish and maintain a recordkeeping system for software licenses, hardware, original CD-ROMs and diskettes, user information, and review information. Maintain this information in a secure, central location. Consider the use of software management computer programs to automate such recordkeeping.

PART 3: THE SOFTWARE ASSET MANAGEMENT PROCESS

[Company] is committed to managing its software assets for maximum benefit to the company and its employees. The process consists of three areas of focus: (1) Creating an environment in which the process will succeed, (2) Reviewing the software assets residing on the company's computers, and (3) Acting to correct breaches in policy and the law, keep the Policy and its procedures current, and prevent future breaches.

[Company] will strive to create an environment for success by communicating this policy; educating employees about their responsibilities; training employees in the software supported by this company; identifying and modifying as necessary the software employees need to fulfill their job responsibilities; establishing a secure repository for original storage media, software licenses, and software documentation; and requiring that all software be procured through official and clearly defined procedures.

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As part of this company's software management process, the CIO shall conduct periodic, random reviews of all company computers and networks to determine the software resident on such systems and whether the company has the appropriate licenses for all such software. The CIO also shall conduct periodic, planned reviews, in which the CIO may ask you to complete a Software User Survey. This Survey will be used to determine your existing and future use and need of particular software programs. Your cooperation with all reviews and Software User Surveys is greatly appreciated. The CIO will endeavor to conduct its work with the least possible disruption of your workday.

You may be held responsible for the existence of any software on your computer for which the company lacks the appropriate licenses. Consequences for such unauthorized use of software range from a reprimand for minor offenses to termination of employment for repeated, willful offenses.

PART 4: COMPANY COMMITMENT

The company is committed to communicating this Policy with its employees. The company will:

- Include the Policy Statement in the employee handbook, and distribute the updated handbook to all employees.
- Train new employees during their initial orientation on how to comply with the Policy.
- Hold seminars on Software Policy for existing employees to inform them of the types of software licenses, how to detect and prevent piracy, how to implement the Software Policy, and consequences of violating the Policy and relevant laws.
- Require new and existing employees whose responsibilities include the installation, maintenance, or oversight of information technology systems to acknowledge and sign the Software Policy Statement.
- Circulate reminders of the Policy on a regular basis (at least annually) or remind employees of the Policy in other ways (at least annually), for example, through notices or newsletters.
- Inform employees where they can get additional information on the Policy and software theft prevention.

If you have any questions concerning this Policy or your obligations under it, you may direct them to either your supervisor or the CIO (provide phone numbers, office locations, and e-mail addresses).

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONSIBILITY:

PRINTED EMPLOYEE NAME: _____

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____