

Best Practices for Product Activation

Product Activation is gaining widespread acceptance.

Product activation is a process used by software publishers to help end-users respect the applicable license agreements, to ensure that the software they are using is genuine and to deter unauthorized copying. Today, many software users provide contact information as part of a voluntary software registration process, however, product activation may be required to fully enable the software. Over the past few years, a growing number of leading software companies including BSA members such as Adobe, Autodesk, Bentley Systems, Macromedia, Microsoft, Network Associates and Symantec have added product activation to their products in an effort to protect the spirit of innovation and intellectual property that is at the heart of the software industry.

There is a consensus among BSA members that product activation features should be designed with the needs of end-users in mind.

The terms under which software companies license their intellectual property is a matter for the individual software publisher to decide. Software developers must determine the appropriate licensing policies and strategies for their software, their markets and their customers, uniquely and independently. However, there is agreement that several key attributes of a product activation solution are important to striking a proper balance between the interests of end users and the needs of software publishers.

These best practices for product activation are:

Respect for Privacy

Activation should not collect or transmit personally identifiable information without the users' explicit knowledge and should comply with applicable data protection laws.

Ease of Use

Activation methods should not be burdensome to the user. Ideally, they should be limited to a one-time step or process per machine.

Full Disclosure

Publishers should clearly explain the activation process, including the activation data and how it is transmitted, so that users understand how activation works and are assured that their privacy will be respected.

Support

Documentation and access to high quality support should be made available to assist users with activating their product and to answer their questions.

Security

The activation solution should use appropriate security to protect stored and transmitted activation data.

Speed

The activation process should be completed as quickly as possible.

User Control

Activation should empower users to easily move their software program to a new or upgraded computer in a manner authorized by the license agreement.

The Business Software Alliance (www.bsa.org) is the foremost organization dedicated to promoting a safe and legal digital world. BSA is the voice of the world's commercial software industry before governments and in the international marketplace. Its members represent one of the fastest growing industries in the world. BSA educates consumers on software management and copyright protection, cyber security, trade, e-commerce and other Internet-related issues. BSA members include Adobe, Apple, Autodesk, Avid, Bentley Systems, Borland, CNC Software/Mastercam, Internet Security Systems, Macromedia, Microsoft, Network Associates and Symantec.