Overview
Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit educational organization that changed television forever with the legendary Sesame Street. As the single largest informal educator of young children, local Sesame Street programs produced in countries as diverse as South Africa, Bangladesh, and India are changing children’s lives in over 120 nations.

Challenge
As a nonprofit organization, Sesame Workshop leases most of its desktops, laptops, and servers. Manually tracking its hardware and software inventory was time-consuming for a small IT staff. Sesame Workshop wanted to streamline inventory and asset management to free up its IT staff and properly manage its leasing contracts.

Solution
Working with ITAM Services, Sesame Workshop selected ZENworks Asset Management to streamline its inventory processes, and selected SUSE Linux Enterprise Server as the open platform for its web architecture.

“ZENworks Asset Management is a good fit for us because it works across our multiple platforms including UNIX, Windows, Linux, and Macintosh,” said Noah Broadwater, vice president of information services at Sesame Workshop. “We tested several solutions and found that ZENworks Asset Management doesn’t place a big burden on our network like other solutions. We are getting great performance.”

Sesame Workshop implemented ZENworks Asset Management, and within days of receiving a shipment of new equipment had everything inventoried and ready to distribute. The IT staff used ZENworks to install software based on the user’s identity and role within the organization.

“At a Glance

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<th>Industry</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
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<td>Location</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Manually tracking hardware and software inventory was taking too much time, making it hard for IT staff to manage other projects.</td>
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<td>Solution</td>
<td>Use ZENworks to install identity-based software and track it on each machine.</td>
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<td>Results</td>
<td>+ Reduced inventory administration time by 70 percent</td>
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<td>+ Moved to an open web infrastructure that costs 85 percent less than a proprietary solution</td>
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NOAH BROADWATER
Vice President of Information Services
Sesame Workshop
organization. ZENworks Asset Management then tracks the software on each machine and alerts the IT staff if users try to install unauthorized software.

“With ZENworks Asset Management, we know exactly what is installed and where,” said Broadwater. “Having a real-time inventory makes it easy for us to comply with software licensing requirements, as well as our leasing schedules.”

Sesame Workshop is currently relaunching many of its websites and is replacing its Sun Solaris, Microsoft Windows, and Debian servers with SUSE Linux Enterprise Server. To date, the company has already seen dramatic improvement in its web performance as its home page load time decreased by 130 percent.

“Instead of paying for proprietary hardware with UNIX, we can now get competitive pricing from all the major x86 hardware vendors,” said Broadwater. “Moving to SUSE Linux Enterprise Server gives us the same reliability and performance as UNIX, as well as the option to run whatever open source tools best fit our business. The cost savings from Linux are incredible.”

With an open platform, Sesame Workshop is taking advantage of a host of open source software including MySQL, Apache Tomcat, Alfresco, Joomla, and Liferay. Using SUSE Linux Enterprise Server with built-in Xen virtualization, the company can easily configure virtual web servers to run multiple websites, and no longer requires several physical servers per website.

“We estimate that we are doing with 12 servers what most companies do with 100,” said Broadwater. “We are huge advocates of open source which defies the industry adage that you can never get cheap, fast, and good. As a nonprofit organization, we have to be innovative with a limited budget.”

Results
By implementing ZENworks Asset Management, Sesame Workshop reduced inventory administration time by 70 percent and can better comply with auditing requests and leasing contracts.

The company moved its web infrastructure to SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for a cost 85 percent less than that of a proprietary UNIX and Windows solution. Consolidating web servers by 80 percent with Xen virtualization reduced hardware costs by 30 percent. By leveraging open source software, the company has dramatically reduced its software costs, contributing to an overall IT budget reduction of 18 percent.

“Without Novell solutions (now part of Micro Focus), we would need to increase our IT budget every year by at least [US]$1 million,” said Broadwater. “Just as Sesame Workshop innovates in media and entertainment, we try to innovate in IT. Novell gives us the tools to compete with our bigger competitors, but without the huge price tag.”