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Subscription Based Licensing (SBL) FAQ

In June of 2019, Power Line Systems introduced a fundamentally new way of licensing its software: this is Subscription Based Licensing (SBL). SBL is a subscription license that features dramatically lower upfront costs, simplified enrollment and more flexible deployment. SBL replaces the hardware key-based licensing that has been in effect since 1993. What follows are answers to frequently asked questions regarding this new option:

1) What is a Subscription Based License?

SBL is a named user subscription license that entitles you to run PLS software for some period (generally one year).

2) What are SBL benefits?

Enables access to PLS software for a lower upfront cost.

No hardware key so a license can be delivered immediately over the Internet. No shipping delays!

SBL may be used in virtualized environments and with Windows Remote Desktop Services Servers, Citrix or other shared computing environments.

3) How does SBL work?

During order processing, PLS will provision licenses for you on the PLS Subscription. You will be provided with a link to download your software as a ZIP file. This ZIP file contains the information necessary to view and claim licenses for your organization from our servers. Alternately, you may be emailed a “.plsreg” file that contains this information. In the latter case, your PLS software will prompt you for the “.plsreg” file and upon receiving it will show you all licenses available to your organization and allow you to claim one.

When claiming a license, you will provide your name and email address. The license will be reserved for your use until you request that it be released. Licenses may be transferred between employees of the same organization once a month.

All your PLS software is controlled by a single SBL. You do not need to claim multiple licenses. One SBL enables all the software you are entitled to. Likewise, all the PLS software you have licensed is always distributed bundled together. You only need to run the Setup program once to install all of it.

4) How are licenses provisioned and served?

SBL entitlements are provisioned by PLS as described above and served exclusively via the PLS license server. Third party license servers are not supported. The software must be able to periodically communicate with <https://balancer.plscloud.com> (which is not a human accessible web site) in order to operate. The PLS license server operates with multiple levels of redundancy from multiple widely dispersed datacenters. You will automatically be routed to the one that provides you with the lowest latency connection.

5) Where is PLS software installed and where is my data stored?

SBL software is typically installed on your workstation. It does not run in the Cloud. Likewise, your data is stored on your workstation or local network. Your data is not stored in the Cloud and PLS has no access to it unless you submit it as part of a technical support request.

6) Can I use SBL without an Internet connection?

Desktop/mobile use only requires a network connection once every seven days. Each time the software connects it will automatically renew its license for the next seven days. So, you need only run the software while connected to a network within a week of leaving for the field or boarding an airplane or going anywhere else with less than reliable Internet. Note that since SBL covers all your PLS software, you only need to run one of the programs once in order to refresh the license for all your PLS software.

Virtualized or Server (Remote Desktop Services/Citrix) use must always have an Internet connection to function. Since a connection is also necessary to reach the server hosting the software this is not expected to be an obstacle to adoption. Virtual Machines such as Oracle VirtualBox, Parallels Desktop, VMWare, Microsoft Hyper-V and others require an Internet connection for SBL use.

7) I have a desktop and use a laptop in the field; can I use my license on both?

Yes, a license may be registered to a single user on two computers. You must first claim the license on both computers with the same name and email address. Then when connected to the Internet you will need to “check-in” the license on your desktop and then run the software on your laptop where it will automatically “check-out” the license. Simply repeat this process upon returning to the office to reactivate the license on your desktop.

Note: this option is only for a single named user to run the software on two computers. Use by more than one person will result in license termination without warning or refund.

8) Can I lose or damage a SBL like I could a hardware key? Can it be stolen?

No. You cannot lose or damage the license and it can't be stolen. If your computer fails or is stolen with a SBL license checked-out, you need only contact the PLS Technical Support Team (email support@powerlinesystems.com) to have your license reset. There is no charge for this service.

9) What happens when my SBL term nears its end?

Starting 60 days from the end of your subscription period the program will warn you that it will cease functioning at the end of 60 days. These warnings become harder to ignore at 30 days. When zero days are left the software will cease functioning. PLS will also send an email to you 30 days from expiration.

10) Is technical support included with my SBL subscription?

Yes. Technical support includes assistance installing the software and making it run on your system. It also includes verifying that the software functions correctly as described in the manual and fixing it if it does not. Advanced questions regarding the (new) capabilities of the software are included. Note that technical support does not include training, model review or consulting services.

11) Are upgrades included with my SBL subscription?

Yes. You may download and install them directly from within the software. Alternately, your IT department may manage which upgrades are available to you. Note that only the current and previous production versions are guaranteed to be supported on the PLS Subscription.

12) What do I need to be able to claim and refresh a SBL entitlement?

You need an installation package (.zip file from Power Line Systems) or a “.plsreg” file. In all cases you must be connected to the Internet when claiming or refreshing a license.

13) What should I know about running PLS software in a virtualized environment/Windows Remote Desktop Services/Citrix?

Running in a virtual/server environment requires a network connection to the PLS license server. In addition, you should be aware that the software is far more computationally demanding than most software run in shared environments. As such it may need to be provided with more memory and cores than are typical. If you have a performance complaint, we will ask you to try running on a standalone desktop that meets our minimum recommended hardware requirements as the first trouble shooting step.

14) What platforms does SBL support?

SBL licenses will initially be supported on x64 editions of Windows 7 and newer. SBL is only offered as a 64 bit program and will not be available in a 32 bit edition.