

Using a License Server

Some programs let you purchase network licenses that enable you to install the software on as many computers as you want, but regulate the number of people who can use the software at any given time. To control how many people use the software, a special license server is set up. Whenever a user starts the program, the program checks with the license server to see whether a license is available. If so, the program is allowed to start, and the number of available licenses on the license server is reduced by one. Later, when the user quits the program, the license is returned to the server.

A commonly used license server software is FlexNet Publisher, by Flexera Software. (This program used to be named FlexLM, and many programs that depend on it still distribute it as FlexLM.) It's used by AutoCAD, as well as by many other network software applications. FlexNet Publisher uses special license files issued by a software vendor to indicate how many licenses of a given product you purchased. Although the license file is a simple text file, its contents are cryptic and generated by a program that only the software vendor has access to. Here's an example of a typical license file for AutoCAD:

```
SERVER server1 000ecd0fe359
USE_SERVER
VENDOR adskflex port=2080
INCREMENT 57000ARDES_2010_0F adskflex 1.000 permanent 6 \
VENDOR_STRING=commercial:permanent BORROW=4320
SUPERSEDE \
DUP_GROUP=UH ISSUED=07-May-2007 SN=339-71570316 SIGN="102D \
85EC 1DFE D083 B85A 46BB AFB1 33AE 00BD 975C 8F5C 5ABC 4C2F \
F88C 9120 0FB1 E122 BA97 BCAE CC90 899F 99BB 23C9 CAB5 613F \
E7BB CA28 7DBF 8F51 3B21" SIGN2="033A 6451 5EEB 3CA4 98B8 F92C \
184A D2BC BA97 BCAE CC90 899F 2EF6 0B45 A707 B897 11E3 096E 0288 \
787C 997B 0E2E F88C 9120 0FB1 782C 00BD 975C 8F5C 74B9 8BC1"
```

(Don't get any wild ideas here. I changed the numbers in this license file so that it won't actually work. I'm not crazy enough to publish an actual valid AutoCAD license file!)

One drawback to opting for software that uses a license server is that you have to take special steps to run the software when the server isn't available. For example, what if you have AutoCAD installed on a notebook computer, but you want to use it while you're away from the office? In that case, you have two options:

» **Use virtual private network (VPN) software to connect to the network.**

After you're connected with the VPN, the license server will be available so you can use the software. (Read about VPNs in Chapter 24.)