THE MYTH ABOUT
VENDOR CERTIFICATIONS

There is a lot of confusion in the market space currently about IBM and Oracle "certifications" of License Management tools. This document will dispel some myths by adding actual facts from the respective vendor websites to the discussion.

The reality is: there are no vendor certifications for License Management tools.

Of course not. Why would any vendor give up the right to audit just because the customer paid for a tool from a third party? Some companies may report certain vendor certifications, but what they mean is verification, which is different. Verification does not cover the license reconciliation which is what an audit comes down to. Nor does the verification itself actually protect you from an audit or save you time. What exactly is the verification then? Let's have a look at what Oracle and IBM say on the topic:

Oracle

—— Oracle has a verification process for discovery tools. The Oracle website says:

❝**The scope of the verification process only covers the data collection related to the installation and usage of specific Oracle products, namely Oracle Database and the associated Options. The verification does not include any other Oracle products or the overall capabilities of the vendor's solution. [...]. Please note that the installation and usage of a tool from a verified vendor does not replace an Oracle License Audit or True Up engagement or revoke Oracle's contractual right to perform a License Audit or True Up.**❞

The full text can be found here:
http://www.oracle.com/us/corporate/
license-management-services/index.html

So what's the catch? There are many, as follows:

- Only Enterprise Edition databases and associated options are covered. This excludes 90%+ of Oracle products.
- Tools are verified when output is consistent or exceeds what Oracle would produce. False positives are very common.*
- The data is used to supplement the Oracle License Management Services (LMS) review process – so would any other data that you are willing to share with Oracle.
- Using a verified tool does not replace an Oracle License Review or audit.
- The verification takes into consideration inventory/ measurement data only. It states that the verified tool outputs the same data when pointed at a database as Oracle's own scripts/tools. This means that verification does not encompass entitlement assessment or the compliance functions of tools.

*Common false positives that end-users have seen from "Oracle Verified" tools include: Options and packs like Advanced Compression, Tuning and Diagnostics Pack showing as being used when they are not, or Standard Edition installs showing up as Enterprise Editions after applying a patch.
See also:
https://www.itassetmanagement.net/2016/05/17
/publisher-tool-certifications-sam-tool-selection/

IBM

IBM does not provide any form of tool certification or verification. The IBM web site says:

> **The only two official tools for Virtualization Capacity (aka sub-capacity) that IBM provides and accepts are ILMT and BigFix Inventory together with legacy Tivoli Asset Discovery for Distributed.**

Source:
https://www.ibm.com/developerworks/community/forums/html/topic?id=ba2bdee6-8a2b-478b-a64c-836574900bd2&ps=25

IBM can individually review and agree on the use of other tools but the customer must formally submit a request with IBM to sign a Passport Advantage amendment and guarantee that the tool "must be functionally equivalent to the most current version of ILMT and provide equivalent reporting". The process to get that amendment is expensive, painful and includes working and sharing data with IBM's compliance team. Given that IBM updates Bigfix and ILMT the "functional equivalence" will be nearly impossible to maintain.

So let's clear up the confusion with some facts:

- There is no certification from IBM – your contractual obligations cannot be waived by a third party.
- The IBM acceptance terms for the use of a third party discovery tool put a significant risk and burden on the customer – e.g. it is up to the customer "to ensure functional equivalence with ILMT latest releases and updates and it is at full customer risk to do that."
- IBM explicitly recommends that customers not use third party discovery tools and instead to aggregate inventory data coming from ILMT or BigFix.
- A waiver would still not cover entitlements.
- A waiver would still not cover non-PVU/RVU licensed IBM products.
- The terms do not waive—but rather increase—IBM's contractual right to perform an audit. The data you have to share with IBM as part of the waiver application process will be used to supplement IBM audits—so would any other data that you are willing to share with them.

SO HOW DO I KNOW IF VENDOR VERIFICATION IS ACTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO ME?

Run a technical proof of concept (POC) to test the License Management tool's claims before you purchase. Test the solution with real data. Buying and implementing a technology that turns out to not meet your company's needs is an expensive mistake. Let's face it: Like all important things, to do it right the first time SAM takes due diligence.