CLAAS Accelerates Farmer Efficiency with Thales Sentinel Software Licensing

Sentinel integrates with the CLAAS backend including SAP

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If you drive past a farm anywhere in the world, there is a good chance you will see a CLAAS agricultural machine in the field.

CLAAS is a family business founded in 1913 and one of the world's leading manufacturers of agricultural engineering equipment. The company, with corporate headquarters in Harsewinkel, Germany, is the European market leader in combine harvesters. Globally, CLAAS is also the leader in self-propelled forage harvesters and is renowned as well for its tractors, agricultural balers, and green crop harvesting machines.

Along with its machinery, the CLAAS product portfolio includes state-of-the-art farming information technology. For example, its digital platform CLAAS connect is designed to support smart farming by streamlining and simplifying farm and fleet management for customers and partners. Accessible via computer or mobile app, the CLAAS connect software enables users to manage their operations flexibly and conveniently, offering optimized workflows and seamless communication through digital efficiency for modern farming practices in real time.

The search for a solution to handle software licensing, protection, and monetization for digital solutions led CLAAS to the Thales Sentinel platform in 2019.

Goals

CLAAS needed an advanced software licensing platform that was secure, flexible, and scalable. In terms of security, the company wanted to block software piracy and unauthorized overuse that could lead to revenue leakage. From an operations standpoint, CLAAS looked to streamline multiple existing licensing solutions with their back end along with the Thales Sentinel licensing platform. On top of the software protection and streamlining objectives, CLAAS was keen to explore software monetization opportunities for its harvester machine telematic function, fleet management and autonomous driving and steering. In particular, CLAAS wanted to transform their offers to an ecommerce model, whereby customers buy with one click and are sent the software instantly.

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>
> – **Ilija Panov**
> **Head of INF-Cloud, Integration & Identities, CLAAS Global IT**

Partnership

CLAAS wasn't merely looking for a licensing platform to implement on their own. Rather, they wanted a partnership with the licensing platform provider to ensure their technical best practices would align with their business plans.

Thales stood out against the competition as an exemplary partner, providing personal advice and support. Thales' relationship with CLAAS began with providing extensive pre-sales consultations to ensure project success. The Thales Professional Services, along with its Premium Technical Services (PTS), supported CLAAS' licensing and entitlement integration for protection and monetization.

Licensing and Protection

Thales implemented the following licensing and protection functionalities for CLAAS using the Sentinel Entitlement Management System (EMS).

1. Coexisting with 3rd-Party Licenses. Sentinel replaced CLAAS' homegrown licensing system while continuing to enable existing 3rd party licensing software, such as an application that uses GPS data to inform optimal harvester positioning. Sentinel uses an API to call the 3rd party vendor to issue its software license and then issue it along with Sentinel licenses.

2. Automation and Back-Office Integration. Before implementing Sentinel EMS, CLAAS managed back-office processes manually. With the integration of Sentinel, CLAAS streamlined and automated their licensing processes, seamlessly connecting with their SAP backend. For example, CLAAS successfully developed a SAP connector using the standard API from Sentinel, enabling automatic creation of entitlements with every SAP order entry.

3. Flexible License Delivery – Online or Offline. CLAAS took advantage of Sentinel's licensing delivery options. One option was to download a license from a CLAAS portal while online which allows farmers to install the software immediately. Conversely, if the CLAAS machine does not have internet connectivity, farmers can use a portal to activate the license offline, administered via a terminal on the vehicle. These terminals are mobile among vehicles, allowing the same license to be shared.

4. Fingerprints as a Service. To generate fingerprints, Thales provided CLAAS a custom component which is a web version of the Sentinel fingerprint capability.

5. Platform Support. CLAAS software runs on multiple operating systems, and Thales was able to support a port for each.

6. Factory Preloaded Perpetual Licenses. Some CLAAS machines are factory-built with embedded software along with a pre-activated perpetual (non-expiring) license. This license creation is done by Sentinel EMS.

7. Customer Self Service Portal. Customers can see, buy and download licenses with the software feature packaging they chose.

Monetization

Thales Sentinel enabled CLAAS to scale its software business with recurring revenue subscription models. To do so, Thales set up the following capabilities for CLAAS:

1. Order Types. CLAAS used Sentinel EMS to configure feature packaging and pricing. They took advantage of its subscription features to implement free trials, new orders, update and renewal orders, and channel orders.

2. Bidirectional Synching. A major advantage of Sentinel for CLAAS is that it updates both hardware and software with the most recent licenses and features. From the hardware end, whenever a device was powered up, it had an API call to a cloud application to assess whether there were any new licenses. If so, those licenses would be downloaded onto the device. On the flip side, the same cloud application would update the device with any new Sentinel entitlements. This way, Sentinel enabled all devices to include the latest licenses and features, speeding up update delivery times.

Upcoming Plans

In the future, CLAAS intends to add Sentinel licensing for the following:

Thales Sentinel Monetization Layers / CLAAS Use of Thales Sentinel

- Data Insights
- New Business Models
- Flexible Packaging
- Licensing
- IP Protection

a) Other software products, including SaaS.

b) Additional pricing options.

Given the successful partnership Thales support maintains with CLAAS, the company looks forward to working together for future plans.

Summary

Sentinel enabled CLAAS to make their agricultural efficiency software itself be distributed efficiently. CLAAS customers are now able to activate and renew time-based licenses directly without the need for a technician or support from their distributors. In doing so, they increase customer satisfaction, in turn growing revenue and reducing churn. By streamlining the licensing process, CLAAS also reduced operational expenses, raising their bottom line. "Our customers look to us for efficient farming software. They therefore appreciate that our software is licensed and distributed with utmost efficiency in a customer-centric way," notes Ilija Panov, Head of INF-Cloud, Integration & Identities, CLAAS Global IT.

About Thales

As the global leader in data security, Thales helps the most trusted brands and organizations around the world protect their most sensitive data and software, secure the cloud, provide seamless digital experiences, and achieve compliance through our industry-leading data encryption, identity and access management, and software licensing solutions.