

Hexagon's AICON ETALON Streamlines Software Deployments with Thales Sentinel

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A customer since 1996, the company added software-based licenses and moved to cloud-based entitlement management.

Hexagon AICON ETALON GmbH, a business line within Hexagon Manufacturing Intelligence (HMI), specializes in high-precision measurement solutions. Acquired by Hexagon in 2016, the company delivers sophisticated structured light scanner systems, photogrammetry solutions, and full geometric analysis for machine tools, measuring machines, robots, and structures. Headquartered in Braunschweig, Germany, with approximately 140 employees, AICON ETALON distributes its offerings via more than fifteen Hexagon partners and subsidiaries.

A pioneer in secure software deployment and license management since 1996, AICON ETALON used hardware key licenses from Sentinel Hardlock, HASP and LDK (Licensing Development Kit) to protect intellectual property and prevent unauthorized access. At the same time, **Thales supports its parent company Hexagon HMI in their merger and acquisition activities, consolidating licensing and entitlement processes centrally.**

Ongoing Digital Transformation

AICON ETALON issues hundreds of licenses - and thousands of license updates - annually for software products. With their growing customer base and increasingly modular software design, the company needed a unified license management strategy to handle operational complexities, ensuring efficiency. Key goals included:

1. Continuing to reliably secure their software
2. Reduce engineering workloads, and
3. Unify licensing across product lines.

To address these challenges, they sought to consolidate multiple systems under one licensing framework. To address this critical need, in 2023, they migrated to a cloud-based entitlement management system, hosted and operated by Thales, enabling AICON ETALON to outsource system updates and maintenance. Moreover, by adding

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– **Andreas Kahle, Director Technical Service & Support for Hexagon AICON ETALON**



the option of software-based licenses in addition to hardware key licenses, they created more possibilities for recurring revenue and enhanced customer satisfaction.

Results

Thales Sentinel helped AICON ETALON improve security, enforce compliance, and build a foundation for scalable software business models. Using Sentinel Web Services, they were able to integrate their existing Sentinel instance into their new Sentinel instance, providing end-to-end automation and faster support resolutions. License updates could be processed without the need for direct customer interaction, significantly reducing support tickets. Customers benefited from a seamless lifecycle, including the following:

- Trial licenses can be issued rapidly, and conversion to paid is automatic
- Software updates are delivered automatically
- Expired licenses are handled through renewals and upgrades, while contract enforcement is ensured using version control and expiration
- Software protection continues with Sentinel Envelope’s obfuscation, preventing reverse engineering and piracy.

“Migrating to Sentinel software licenses allowed us to streamline operations at scale,” pointed out Andreas Kahle, Director Technical Service & Support for Hexagon AICON ETALON.

Support Now and in the Future

Thales’ support engineers maintained consistent, direct communication that ensured quick adaptation and carried out tailored recommendations for AICON ETALON. Looking ahead, Hexagon aims to merge AICON ETALON’s licensing into its existing entitlement management that uses Thales Sentinel EMSaaS. By incorporating AICON ETALON’s products into its instance of Sentinel EMSaaS, **Hexagon will broaden its portfolio monetization capabilities via centralized, automated licensing for cross-product bundling.**


Summary

For Hexagon AICON ETALON, Sentinel’s robust and flexible licensing solutions have proven essential in evolving from legacy hardware protection to a modern, efficient, customer-centric software-driven model. “Using Sentinel’s single source of truth licensing system, we are well-positioned to continue to scale our software business securely and effectively,” expressed Kahle. “Hexagon has seen success with Sentinel, and we’re pleased to be a part of that.”

About Thales

Thales is a global leader in cybersecurity, helping the most trusted organizations protect critical applications, data, identities, and software anywhere, at scale. Through Thales’ integrated platforms, customers achieve better visibility of risks, defend against cyber threats, close compliance gaps, and deliver trusted digital experiences for billions of consumers every day.

Thales Sentinel Monetization Layers

Data Insights	Drive customer success and business intelligence initiatives	
New Business Models	Find new ways to sell, access new markets and customer segments	
Flexible Packaging	Create new differentiators without product investment	
Licensing	Copy protection and revenue protection	
IP Protection	Safeguard against IP theft	