CASE STUDY

Snell Protects Valuable IP and Streamlines Licensing Operations with Sentinel RMS & EMS

When Snell, world leader in broadcast and post production technology, developed its new Snell On Demand Framework to address the needs of a rapidly changing market, the company sought a flexible but secure way to license its new technology while also protecting the valuable intellectual property contained in its software code. After careful consideration, the company chose Gemalto Sentinel to secure its competitive advantage, to power flexible and scalable licensing, and ultimately, to grow its business.

Background

Broadcast media and postproduction is a rapidly changing industry. There is an increasing need for file based media processing, in particular format and frame rate conversion to enable the consumption and monetization of media globally on different platforms and devices.

Also evolving, are the tools. In the past, broadcast and post production involved baseband real-time systems to support live TV broadcast. With the rise of over the top services, this too is changing. Content for such services typically requires non linear post production process utilizing commodity IT infrastructure, which requires a powerful suite of software tools.

To address these changes, Snell recently developed the Snell On Demand framework – a move that transformed the company's postproduction solutions from purely hardware-based to software-based. "The new Snell On Demand software framework allows us to offer our broadcast and post production customers solutions which have previously only been offered in custom-designed hardware," stated Jeremy Courtney, business leader for Snell On Demand. Enabled by its Snell On Demand framework, Snell now offers its Quasar OD and Alchemist OD products as software, powered by commodity off the shelf IT equipment from makers such as HP, Juniper Networks, and others.

Requirements
> Protect IP from reverse engineering and tampering
> Flexible & scalable product licensing options
> Automated order, fulfillment, activation, and license management
> Cross-platform support

Solution
> Sentinel RMS
> Sentinel EMS

Results
> Strong security protects source code
> Enabled flexible packaging of features
> Reduced operational costs
> Integration eliminated potential for manual errors
> Future proof solution
> Excellent license consulting & support

Requirements

Snell recognized the need for strong security to protect its intellectual property. "Before we could offer our Quasar OD and Alchemist OD software commercially, we knew we had to protect our source code from reverse engineering and tampering," said Jeremy Courtney. "We also wanted to investigate the different options for commercially licensing, and fulfilling orders for the software – and then managing it once it was in the field," continued Jeremy.

It was important that Quasar OD and Alchemist OD could be ordered through the company's online store and that the fulfillment and software activation process could be automated. In order to provide the best user experience, Snell required the licensing and enforcement to be virtually invisible to the customer and support the many operating systems its customers required.

"Our strategy was to focus our efforts where we add most value – very high quality media processing technology. Our intellectual property is what differentiates our products, and a commercial licensing technology that offers maximum protection was critical. We needed a solution we could trust and one which was just going to work for us and for our customers."

Jeremy Courtney

The Solution

Snell considered three different commercial software protection and licensing solutions and after careful evaluation, chose the Gemalto Sentinel solution.

Sentinel RMS protects the intellectual property in Snell source code. In addition to reducing the risk of IP compromise, RMS enables Snell to easily offer and enforce a variety of licensing models and packaging options for its Snell On Demand products. Sentinel RMS powers secure trial versions and the ability to enable or disable product features through its Snell On Demand software framework – without the added overhead of building custom hardware products.

Sentinel EMS manages Snell Quasar OD and Alchemist OD software entitlements and Snell's back office licensing operations, including the software fulfillment and activation for which each customer is entitled. Snell integrated the Sentinel EMS license server with its Snell On Demand store to enable online customer self-service – including payment, automated order fulfillment, activation, maintenance releases, and upgrades. Once payment clears, EMS creates the entitlement and returns an activation code to the customer. To enable future integration of Sentinel EMS with Snell's CRM system, Gemalto also supplied a Salesforce.com Connector.

Jeremy Courtney: "The integration of Sentinel RMS and EMS was straightforward. Our engineers use RMS to protect the framework. Then deciding which products we do, how we package features and whether we charge for a feature or make it part of maintenance release – these are all product management decisions which are enabled by Sentinel."

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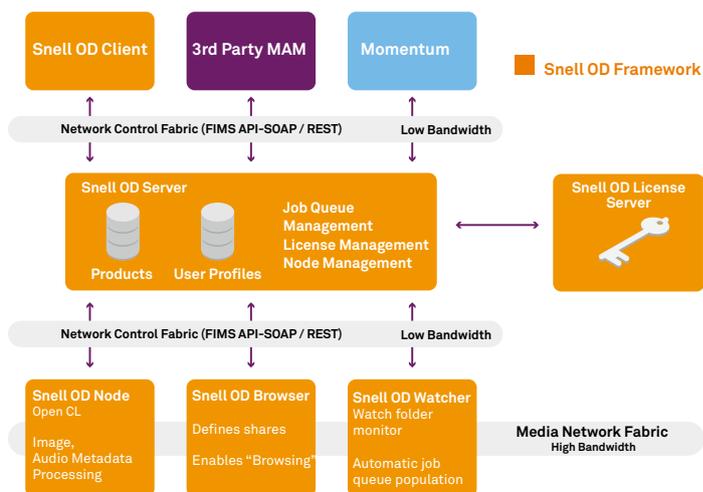
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The Results

Since deploying Sentinel, Snell is able to protect its source code from reverse engineering. "It's hard to quantify the ROI of implementing protection exactly, but if our IP was not protected and fell into the wrong hands, it could be devastating financially," reported Jeremy Courtney.

Through integration of the Sentinel license server with its online store, Snell has eliminated the need for manual fulfillment processes — saving time, reducing operational costs, and the potential for errors.

"Operating in a dynamic e-commerce space means we are dealing with an increasingly digital-savvy client base, and offering that extra security and ease-of-deployment for our software packages is what makes all the difference," stated Jeremy Courtney. "One of the advantages of our Snell On Demand framework is its flexibility and scalability and we wanted the same in the protection and licensing solution that we chose. The addition of Sentinel RMS and EMS has only enhanced that."

"What I didn't anticipate when we embarked on this process a year ago," Jeremy Courtney volunteered, "was just how complex the licensing part of the project would be. Gemalto pre-sales staff helped us think through the problems we were trying to solve and then how to apply licensing so that there were no negative operational consequences downstream.

What I like most is the fact that Gemalto are one step ahead of us with respect to licensing trends and technology. They are always thinking about the next step before it's even a problem for us, which means there is a solution ready for us to deploy as and when we need it."

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