

Case Study | SICK

Scaling Industrial Software Business Models with CodeMeter in Sensor Automation

SICK is expanding beyond intelligent sensors and integrated automation solutions with digitally enhanced products, standalone software, and cloud-based services. To support this evolution, the company needed a consistent way to protect software intellectual property, manage licenses at scale, and enable digital business models across manufacturing and logistics. CodeMeter provides the protection, licensing, and delivery foundation for this growing portfolio.

The Challenge

SICK's software-driven offerings span a broad technical landscape, from standalone applications and device-level functionality to cloud services. Licensing therefore has to work in connected environments as well as on shop floors with limited or no connectivity. The approach must support varied delivery scenarios, integrate with enterprise and production processes, and give customers a way to receive, activate, and manage their licenses. The challenge was not a single application, but a scalable foundation that could evolve with multiple product lines and business models.

The Solution

Starting in 2021, SICK introduced CodeMeter first for standalone software, then for digitally enhanced products, and subsequently for cloud services. AxProtector supports software protection, while CodeMeter Runtime and CodeMeter Embedded enable device-level licensing. Depending on the deployment scenario, licenses are held in CmDongles, CmActLicenses, or CmCloudLiteContainers. CodeMeter License Central centralizes license management and distribution across SICK's growing portfolio and varied licensing environment. For digitally enhanced products, licensing is integrated into production and activated during device commissioning. Standalone software and cloud services use ticket-based activation, enabling customers to activate and manage licenses independently. Tickets are supplied digitally, while integration with e-commerce, CRM, and ERP environments supports automated license fulfillment and management.

The Results

SICK has established a common licensing framework that accommo-dates offline, device-based, and cloud-based scenarios while enabling the scaling of software-driven business models. Adoption of digital licensing is growing strongly across multiple product lines. The continuing rollout gives SICK a scalable basis for delivering additional customer value through software and digital services, with a customer-facing license portal, broader cloud licensing, global expansion, and pay-per-use models planned for future development.

Christoph Müller, Senior Vice President Integrated Automation, SICK AG



"Our customers expect software and digital services to be delivered with the same reliability and simplicity as our physical products. CodeMeter helps us provide a consistent licensing experience across our portfolio while enabling scalable licensing and entitlement processes across the entire customer lifecycle."

SICK
Sensor Intelligence

The Company

SICK AG is a global technology company for intelligent sensors and integrated solutions in industrial automation. Founded in 1946 and headquartered in Waldkirch near Freiburg, Germany, the company serves manufacturing and logistics customers around the world. With more than 10,000 employees and EUR 1.85 billion in sales in 2025, SICK combines sensor expertise with a growing portfolio of software and digital services designed to support greater efficiency, safety, and sustainability across industry.

Wibu-Systems and SICK Scale Secure Digital Business Models for Industrial Automation

From Sensors to Software-Driven Value

SICK has built its business around intelligent sensors and integrated solutions for industrial automation. As manufacturing and logistics become ever more digital, the company is extending that foundation with digitally enhanced products, standalone software, and cloud-based services. This broader portfolio creates new ways to deliver value, but it also changes how products must be protected, licensed, fulfilled, and managed throughout their lifecycle.

For SICK, the requirement extended beyond protecting intellectual property in one application. The company needed a licensing foundation able to support different technical and commercial settings: software running independently, functionality linked to industrial devices, and services delivered through the cloud. It also had to accommodate connected operations and shop-floor environments with limited or no connectivity. The solution therefore needed to combine security and licensing flexibility with practical delivery processes for both SICK and its customers.



A Staged CodeMeter Rollout

SICK began to introduce CodeMeter in 2021. The rollout started with standalone software, expanded to digitally enhanced products that combine hardware and software, and now includes cloud services. The staged rollout now spans standalone software, digitally enhanced products, and cloud services across the breadth of SICK's growing portfolio.

AxProtector supports the protection of SICK software, while CodeMeter Runtime and CodeMeter Embedded provide the foundation for device-level licensing. SICK can select from several secure license containers according to the deployment scenario: CmDongles, CmActLicenses, and CmCloudLiteContainers cover offline, device-based, and cloud-based requirements. CodeMeter License Central provides centralized license management and distribution across this mixed environment. Together, these components cover multiple scenarios across various SICK's product lines.

Licensing Integrated into Delivery

For digitally enhanced products, licensing is integrated into SICK's production processes, with activation taking place during device commissioning. This implementation forms part of SICK's broader licensing approach that also supports standalone software and cloud services through ticket-based activation.

Standalone software and cloud services follow a ticket-based activation model. Customers receive a license ticket with a standard product shipment or through a digital channel and can then activate and manage the license independently. This provides a consistent principle for license delivery while retaining the flexibility required by different offerings and operating environments.

SICK has also integrated licensing with its existing enterprise landscape. Connections with e-commerce platforms, CRM systems, and ERP environments support automated license fulfillment and management. The program therefore involves Product Management, IT, R&D, Customer Fulfillment, Operations, and commercial departments. Licensing therefore spans product design, production, delivery, and customer interaction.

A Foundation for Continuing Growth

Since the initial introduction, SICK has continued developing the implementation and has seen strong growth in the adoption of digital licensing across multiple product lines. The common framework enables the scaling of software-driven business models while accommodating the realities of industrial deployment, from offline shop floors to cloud-based services.

The next stage is intended to extend this foundation. SICK plans to introduce a customer-facing license portal, expand cloud-based licensing capabilities, and roll out global licensing further across its regions. Cloud licensing and pay-per-use are also among the models planned for future development. Together, SICK's automation expertise and Wibu-Systems' protection and licensing technology provide a scalable basis for delivering software and digital services as an integral part of industrial customer value.

About Wibu-Systems:

Wibu-Systems is a global leader in cutting-edge cybersecurity and software license lifecycle management. We are committed to delivering unparalleled, award-winning, and internationally patented security solutions that protect the intellectual property embedded in digital assets and amplify the monetization opportunities of technical know-how. Catering to software publishers and intelligent device manufacturers, the interoperable hardware and software modules of our comprehensive CodeMeter suite safeguard against piracy, reverse engineering, tampering, sabotage, and cyberattacks across mainstream platforms and diverse industries.

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