



CASE STUDY



Water Softener

Water Softener Company Enables Dealer Access

Water Softener OEM Balances End-Customer Privacy with Dealer Service Access Using Ayla's Role-Based Access Technology

Background

A leading original equipment manufacturer (OEM) of residential water softeners, sold under very recognizable brand names, are available throughout the United States from all the major retailers. In addition to the retail channel, the company also has a lucrative dealership channel, with dealers installing units in customers' homes and performing ongoing maintenance.

The OEM had already decided to create cloud-connected models of its water softeners using Ayla's Agile Internet of Things (IoT) Platform. Dealers would be able to proactively monitor the connected devices and service them remotely, to achieve significant increases in efficiency, time savings, and service revenues.

The Challenge

The OEM was concerned about the privacy of the data generated by the connected water softeners and about how much data a dealer could and should obtain on their customers' installed units.

Because most of a home's water supply flows through the water softener, the unit could collect data revealing information about the number of people in a household and their water usage patterns, perhaps even their vacation schedules. Concerned about this level of data, the OEM wanted to put in place controls that would allow an end customer to determine how much information their connected water softener shared with dealers on an ongoing basis.

At the same time, the OEM did not want to hinder the dealers' ability to be notified about certain events that would help detect or avoid problems with the installed units. The OEM wanted the dealer to have enough data to remotely troubleshoot or resolve issues.

Company Profile

- In business since 1925, providing water treatment for over 90 years
- One of the world's largest manufacturers of residential water treatment systems
- Also offers a full line of commercial-industrial equipment
- More than 500 authorized dealers world-wide
- Company founder was issued the first patent for an automatic water softener
- First company to offer customers a two-way remote and WiFi app to monitor water treatment devices

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The Ayla Solution

The Ayla cloud team built a sophisticated role-based access framework that is configurable with granular access control rules. The framework allows the OEM to define roles and the privileges associated with each role. Each user in the system can have one or more roles, even down to having different roles for different devices. For example, Jane Doe can be the owner of one device, while having restricted privileges on another device.

The OEM defined a “Dealer” role and identified the subset of data from the water softener that this role can have access to during normal operations. This way, dealers are notified only when a unit reaches certain critical thresholds that would be of interest from a service standpoint. When a service event occurs, the dealer can request access to the unit from the customer.

Alternately, the customer can grant greater access to the dealer for a specific duration of time. During this time, the dealer gains enhanced access to the unit for easier troubleshooting. Once the problem is resolved, the time-based access can expire or can be explicitly revoked by the customer, and the dealer falls back to a lower level of access.

The Benefits

As a result of Ayla’s role-based access framework, the water softener OEM was able to navigate the delicate balance between exploiting the capabilities of a connected device and addressing the key privacy issues that arise out of it. The OEM has put the control of devices firmly in their customers’ hands—without diminishing dealers’ ability to provide a superior level of service.

Using Ayla’s framework, the OEM built a dealer portal allowing dealers to monitor and manage their customer base and installed devices. With this portal, dealers are offering a level of service that was previously hard to achieve. In addition, the OEM built its own support portal based on the Ayla Service API that provides a view into dealers’ activities and into each dealer’s customers and water softener units.

The OEM leveraged a comprehensive, flexible, and configurable solution from Ayla that not only meets the manufacturer’s stringent privacy requirements, but also provides for future changes to access control policies. The portals built using the Ayla API have increased productivity and revenues for both the OEM and their dealers, while enhancing customer satisfaction.

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About Us

Ayla Networks is a leader in software and solutions that enable the Internet of Everything. Based on the premise that any device should be accessible from any location, the company has developed an end-to-end platform that allows any device to be managed remotely. Headquartered in Santa Clara, Calif., the company has partnered with major electronics manufacturers, leading venture capital firms and investors who share this vision.

For more information, contact Ayla Networks at www.aylanetworks.com.