

Intralox



Intralox used Azure AD B2C to build a secure, self-service portal that customers can access with their own corporate

To help customers evaluate modular conveyor belt systems, Intralox created a tool that runs engineering analyses related to their products. Intralox wanted to give customers easy access to the tool, while protecting its intellectual property. With the help of Oxford Computer Group, the manufacturer deployed Azure Active Directory (Azure AD) B2C and integrated it with Microsoft Dynamics 365 to validate and authenticate users. Customers sign in using their own work credentials, so accessing the tool is simple and secure.

Headquartered in Louisiana, Laitram is a manufacturer with a commitment to innovation. In 1947 the company's founder received a patent for inventing the first automated shrimp peeling machine. He launched Peelers, Inc. (later changed to Laitram LLC) to manufacture and sell his invention. Needing a way to move the shrimp, he invented the modular plastic conveyor belt, and in 1971 Intralox was born. Today the company holds over 1,435 patents from around the world and is Laitram's largest operating division.

Intralox's modular plastic conveyor belts are used in general food processing; meat, poultry and seafood processing; beverage handling; can manufacturing; baking; case and box handling; and packaging. Each customer's conveyor belt system is unique. Some need to move products that are sticky or leave behind acid. Some must meet strict sanitation standards. As organizations have adopted smart devices and other emerging technologies, conveyor belt specifications have grown more complex. For example, today's conveyor belt systems can include

Summary

Client profile

Intralox, headquartered in New Orleans, Louisiana, is the largest division of Laitram, LLC. Intralox is a manufacturing company that provides modular plastic conveyor belt systems and services to the food processing industry.

Problem

To help customers evaluate and order customized modular conveyor belt systems, Intralox created a tool that runs engineering analyses related to their products. Intralox wanted an authentication system that gave customers easy access to the tool, while protecting its intellectual property.

Solution

OCG helped Laitram deploy Azure AD B2C and integrate it with Microsoft Dynamics 365 to validate and authenticate users.

Outcome

This project helped Intralox streamline their sales and distribution channel while protecting the company's intellectual property using Azure AD and Azure B2C and B2B. Customers can now access Intralox's tools and efficiently place accurate orders.

sensors to read bar codes and divert packages down different belts based on data contained in those bar codes.

Balancing customization and complexity

Customers benefit from a modular system that lets them customize their conveyor belts, but it also makes ordering new systems complicated. To simplify the process, Intralox created a tool called the Intralox Engineering Program. Customers use the program to



input data about their application requirements. The program processes the inputs along with their belt selection and evaluates if it is appropriate to use. As John de St. Germain, Product Manager for CalLab at Intralox explains, “You specify which belt you want to use with all of the application parameters and then the Engineering Program outputs various calculations including information you can use to finish designing your conveyor and order parts.”

The Engineering Program provided immediate value to customers, but Intralox ran into challenges distributing it. Initially the company created a downloadable version of the app that the Customer Service team emailed to customers. As Intralox made changes to its products, the app was updated and resent. Unfortunately, customers often used an old, saved version of the Engineering Program and got inaccurate results when they ran calculations, or they missed out on new product releases.

The Engineering Program contains product information that the company doesn’t want competitors to access. The conveyor belt manufacturing industry is small, and it’s common for people to work for a customer one day and a competitor the next. “The process had the potential to expose critical intellectual property that we don’t want to fall into the hands of competitors,” says Rich Rodemann, System Architect at Intralox.

Enabling easy access, while protecting IP

To address security and distribution issues, the IT team at Intralox decided to publish a web-based version of the app that customers could access with a username and password. They needed an authentication system that was secure and easy for customers to use, but that didn’t require Intralox to manage external identities. The team considered various identity solutions and selected Azure Active Directory (Azure AD) B2C.

Intralox chose Azure AD B2C because it met all three

of their requirements. Customers sign in using Single Sign-on with their corporate account—no need to memorize a new password. External identities are managed by the customer’s identity solution, removing that burden from Intralox IT. And it’s more secure. “With Azure AD B2C customers authenticate using the account provided by their employer. When they quit their company or change jobs, their username and password are no longer valid. This significantly reduces the risk that a non-customer will get access, which was a huge plus for us,” says Rodemann.

Augmenting the team with the right partner

Once they chose Azure AD B2C, the Intralox IT team wanted help with implementation. They had experience setting up Azure AD for their internal employees; however, they recognized that managing external identities requires an even greater level of scrutiny. As Chris Walker, Systems Engineer at Intralox explains, “This was our first journey into allowing customers access to an application. The application includes intellectual property that we want to protect, so we needed to cover our bases.

Given their limited experience with Azure AD B2C, Intralox hired Oxford Computer Group, a Microsoft Gold Partner that specializes in implementing identity and security solutions. “Finding a resource like Oxford Computer Group is uncommon. They are credible and experienced in the identity space. Without Oxford, we couldn’t have done what we’ve done so far,” says Rodemann.

Future-proofing the implementation

Oxford Computer Group and the Intralox team made a few decisions up front that set the project up for long term success. First, they decided to integrate with Microsoft Dynamics 365. Intralox hosts all its customer relationship data in Dynamics 365 CRM. By integrating Azure AD B2C with Dynamics 365, the team solved two



issues. Dynamics 365 populates profiles in Azure AD B2C, which simplifies sign up for external users. Azure AD B2C also uses Dynamics 365 to authorize users. If someone attempts to create an account, the system requires key attributes to match in both Dynamics 365 and Azure AD B2C. This significantly limits the risk that a user who works for a competitor will be able to successfully sign in and access Intralox's intellectual property.

To integrate core systems like Azure AD B2C and Dynamics 365 CRM, the team used a Common Data Model to create consistency across applications. The Common Data Model provides a shared data language for applications. This decision simplified data management and app development by unifying data into a known form and applying structural and semantic consistency across the apps and deployments. As Steve Brugger, President at Oxford Computer Groups says, "The common data model will pay benefits downstream. By understanding how the data interchange works, it can automate a lot of processes."

Oxford Computer Group also recommended Dell Boomi, as the middleware. With this solution the team didn't have to write custom code to access Dynamics 365 data from Azure AD B2C.

Paving the path to a self-service portal

The launch of Azure AD B2C met the team's goal of providing easy and secure customer access to the Engineering Program, but it also delivered another benefit. The Engineering Program includes a feedback form, so that customers can let Intralox know if something is missing from an app. This data combined with in-app analytics help IT decide which enhancements to prioritize. "The new application allows customers to make suggestions, and the analytics gives us insight into what calculations they're doing, so we can focus on expanding those areas of

the application," says Walker.

With the Engineering Program up and running, the team has turned their attention to the second phase of their Azure AD B2C deployment. Soon customers will sign into a portal where they can view orders, customer data, and an expanding pool of apps. "Azure AD B2C allows us to give our customers self-service tools that make working with us easier, without putting our intellectual property at risk," says Rodemann.

About Oxford Computer Group

OCG has specialized in providing customers with flexible and secure identity and access, identity governance, and data protection solutions for 20 years. We've designed and implemented custom solutions for more than 900 organizations large and small across the globe.

Offering workshops, design and development sessions, implementations, and managed services, OCG is a Microsoft Security Solutions Partner, a member of MISA, and has won Microsoft's Partner of the Year Award eight times.

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