

“Security ‘Made in Germany’ will prevail in all industries.” - futureSAX interview with Matthias Kirchhoff of digitronic computersysteme gmbh



The company digitronic computersysteme gmbh is something akin to an “old acquaintance”, as the Chemnitz-based firm has already successfully taken part in many futureSAX competitions over the years. One example is their success in the race for the 2017 Saxon State Prize for Innovation 2017, where they placed among the top ten companies. In this interview, manager Matthias Kirchhoff tells us where this innovative energy comes from and what the advantages of Secure Logon™ 2.0 are.

futureSAX: Mr. Kirchhoff, please describe your innovation in one sentence:

Matthias Kirchhoff: Secure Logon™ 2.0 enables a secure and comfortable logon to computers with well-known technologies, but also with the millions of smartphones that will be present in the future.

futureSAX: Why will this product prevail on the market?

Matthias Kirchhoff: It is going to succeed because we will combine years of experience in research and development of German security technology with the smartphone market. Thus, we can fulfil the compliance requirements in nearly all industries.

futureSAX: We are always particularly interested in the people behind such projects - who are they?

Matthias Kirchhoff: The people behind this project are all employees of the digitronic® team. Apart from the market input provided by our colleagues in the sales department, our junior



developers were the ones who participated hugely in this innovation. For example, Mr. Carsten Tewes was the one who researched the idea of using a motion sensor in exchange for the removal of a key medium, which he then transferred to the prototype.

futureSAX: What triggered this idea? How did it come about?

Matthias Kirchhoff: We already had the idea of a "cell phone key" in 2006. At that time, we showed how you can logon to a PC via a Siemens S55 cell phone. Unfortunately, the market was not yet ready for this idea. At the security convention "Systems", I asked for a panel speech on the topic "Putting an end to the card chaos". However, all I got was a lack of understanding on the part of the listeners, card reader and smart card producers. Yet, at the RSA conference in San Francisco in 2016, we did not encounter any producers of smart cards or card readers. Instead, everyone was only talking about smart phones. At that point I was sure that it was the right time for our product.

futureSAX: What was the best advice you ever received?

Matthias Kirchhoff: I'm sorry, I don't have an answer to this question. However, I can give you the advice that you should always believe in yourself and that you should always check your visions in regard to their relevance, their technological environmental factors and the best starting point for their release.

futureSAX: Please describe the moment when you found out about your nomination for the Saxonian Government Award for Innovation!

Matthias Kirchhoff: It was indescribable! The team took charge of the application on their own, and the management was really surprised by the nomination. I believe this is only possible if a "culture of competition" is part of a company's strategy and if all colleagues are able to put forth their ideas for the implementation of a product.

futureSAX: Describe your ideal business meeting. Who would you like to meet and what would you talk about?

Matthias Kirchhoff: I think I will tap into a feeling of happiness I had during a "workshop" at an agency not long ago: After a request via the internet, we received the model of a business identification card. Consequently, we had to carry out a quick adjustment to our software, which we were then allowed to showcase to a distinguished audience.

What I want to say by that is this: I would wish for a meeting with a large company or a national IT service provider for which the challenge of "compliance" is acutely on their agenda, and that we can figure out a way to help them with that challenge.



If you are then also able to present an initial approach to a migration strategy during that same meeting, and if you are also allowed to follow that approach to a pilot project, there is a chance for long-term cooperation. This scenario is a special situation that I have been able to experience several times over the course of our company's 25 years of history.

futureSAX: When you leave the computer, it will switch to a security mode – what advantage does your innovation have over a “classical” 2-factor authentication?

Matthias Kirchhoff: Our product is not necessarily bound to additional readers or separate security tokens (e.g. USB-type smart cards). This new smartphone technology works on a par with and parallel to traditional business identification cards, smart cards, time cards, ...

Depending on the safety requirements, the level of security can be configured via software tokens on cell phones, additionally implemented micro SD smart cards, or EID cards (e.g. RFID smart cards or new identity cards) that are scanned with the help of a cell phone's NFC scanner.

Our product is therefore an open authentication concept for which there is yet no “technological end” in sight, but which can already be put into practice with traditional technologies.

futureSAX: What does the future hold? What will your company look like in five years?

Matthias Kirchhoff: In 2014, at the suggestion of a large producer of card readers, we re-explored and implemented the architecture of the third generation of our authentication product Secure Logon™ 2.0. Since July of 2016, Secure Logon™ 2.0 has been in practical use as an addition to a time-recording system. In combination with our encryption product HiCrypt™ 2.0, we offer All-In-One Security Packages for the technical implementation of requirements that stem from the fields of audits or compliance. We will revolutionise the access to computer systems in companies and agencies with sensitive areas of application, and we will be able to pass on login details to underlying virtual server systems. Today, we already enable a complete authentication via a browser to SAP. In the framework of Industry 4.0, we will equip more and more “worker PCs” or “KIOSK PCs” with our technology. We cannot predict how exactly all of this will play out – but I'm certain that security “Made in Germany” will prevail in all industries. Initial projects have already been implemented in the healthcare, pharmaceutical and financial sectors. As a producer of security products, we will be there for our IT expert colleagues, so we can meet future challenges together.

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