



[Access control](#) July 1, 2024

There's no future without convenience

Safety and convenience don't have to be at odds with one another. In this interview, Carsten Hoersch from Sesamsec explains how this works, where the potential lies and what limits need to be set in terms of convenience and security.

By Marie Graichen



People want convenience. If access to a building is made difficult for them, they often try to circumvent this problem. This results in security gaps.

Mr. Hoersch, at this year's Access Control Forum, the question how to reconcile security and convenience raised the issue that high security and security need to be seen as separate topics. What's your view?

Security is not an absolute value; it exists on a spectrum. In our projects, we often work with a three-stage security concept: convenience, security, and high security. While for the likes of a canteen, the convenient solution is probably sufficient, with which I only grant access via RFID card, for a laboratory I need a solution that checks both entry and exit. In other words, it needs to enable me to check attendance and/or anti-passback, for example. For a high-security laboratory with dangerous viruses, on the other hand, I have to extend this solution to another level and minimize the risk of fraud and manipulation. This can be done by using two-factor authentication with an RFID card and PIN code, for example.

Why does the question of convenience even come up when we are talking about security?

We often forget that the most important security feature is the human being. The best security solution offers no protection if people bypass it. I'm thinking of the famous wooden wedge that holds security doors open when there is no door status monitoring. People quickly find alternative ways if the operation at the access point becomes too complicated. Convenience is therefore an important factor when it comes to making a careful and sensible decision as to the right identification and authentication procedures.

Where are the limits of convenience in both the security and high-security sectors?

If you like, convenience and security can be seen as two ends of the same spectrum. Our aim is to keep shortening this spectrum so that convenience and security come as close together as possible. However, the current situation remains the same: Although simple operation is preferable, if I need to be able to clearly identify people, for example, I can't do so without using a more sophisticated authentication measure such as a PIN request or the use of biometrics. This may limit the user's convenience somewhat, but is necessary at this point.

Which areas and segments require convenient access solutions?

The highest level of convenience should generally be ensured with every solution. However, it is particularly important at access points that have to be passed through very frequently and in places with high visitor traffic. In any case, it is important to consider the scenario. The security concept should always take priority over being as convenient as possible.

In your opinion, how can we raise awareness and anchor the importance of security in the minds of users?

Knowledge transfer and training are very important here. Users often accept a higher security effort if they have a better understanding of the background and, above all, of the consequences a weaker security concept would have in this situation. Above all, however, it is important to convey the motivation for the security measures in an understandable way. This is because the aim of security measures is not access monitoring, which is often associated with surveillance, but access control, in other words, the common goal of increasing security in the company for everyone.

In your opinion, how will access solutions develop over the next few years in order to offer even more convenience while still maintaining a high standard of security?

In my view, the big issue here is networking. Access, video, burglary, fire, and basically all security trades are increasingly being brought together via crisis and hazard management systems. This allows them to interact, in some cases automatically, making it more convenient for both users and administrators. AI-based applications will also simplify many things. Behind the scenes, they allow more detailed analyses, faster reactions and more comprehensive evaluations. In the foreground, they simplify identification at access points by connecting various technologies such as access control systems with intelligent video surveillance.

What needs to happen for integrated systems to become the norm on the market?

The key word is and will continue to be standardization. To achieve this, we need reliable, long-term commitment from manufacturers. I am convinced that the days of closed system solutions and proprietary approaches are over. Networking is progressing and security systems from different manufacturers can only interact meaningfully if we have standardized interfaces, file formats and the like, thereby meeting customer requirements. Those who do not realize this will disappear from the market in the long term.



“To increase standardization in the market, we need reliable commitment from manufacturers.” – Carsten Hoersch is Managing Director of Sesamsec GmbH.