The next chapter

ISJ speaks exclusively with Jan Meiswinkel, CEO and Co-Founder of Advancis and James Chong, Chairman of the Board, Advancis USA

Jan, what are the biggest market changes you've seen during your time as CEO and Co-Founder of Advancis?

Jan Meiswinkel (JM): Over the past three decades, the security market has seen considerable change, both in hardware and software technologies. In the past, manufacturers planned and operated their systems as autonomously as possible.

On the integration level, there was rarely an open exchange between individual systems, which created barriers for interoperability, especially for enterprise applications. In the security market, there was a natural tendency to create silos, which was on the one hand politically desired, but oftentimes simply due to lack of common standards and interfaces – technologically conditioned.

When we look back at the early days of our company's development and the first years of product development of our open PSIM platform WinGuard, we were faced with exactly this challenge. Hardly any technology partner on the market was willing, or technologically able, to open their systems to third parties. However, as more customers started seeking heterogeneous or best-of-breed solutions that required harmonising data, our open platform product strategy started to get more traction.

Today, a multitude of individual systems provides massive amounts of information that is difficult to manage – whether from security management systems, building automation systems, communication technology, IoT or data mining. Over the past decade, unification of disparate systems and sensors is the only logical solution that most market participants seem to have recognised as viable. Therefore, manufacturers are now more willing to open their systems and enable data exchange via APIs and manage them via open PSIM platforms.

Parallel to this, integrators have also developed more solutions in this direction and today offer end customers holistic cross-manufacturer solutions with high benefit. Everyone sees the common added value of comprehensive solutions. Today, a growing number of security projects with more and more specific individual requirements that solutions based on generic or more open concepts; initially purely in data supply, followed by customising and increasingly variable interface solutions up to the consistently more generic design of the software architecture itself.

With our recent release of our new Advancis Open Platform (AOP) we are now taking this a step further and enabling the user or partner to extend the software as desired with functionalities, interfaces and individual UI components based on the existing generic concepts. There are almost no limits to the use of custom components, so even "applications within the application" can be implemented.

All extensions integrate seamlessly into the existing application and are based on a uniform API which is also used for WinGuard's own interfaces and UI components. When implementing extensions, a customer does not have to start from scratch. Redundant network structures, distributed data storage, system communication, object modelling as well as diverse UI components are available as a framework for different programming languages and

use the corresponding functionalities of the platform.

At IFSEC 2023, we will present our new WinGuard X5 powered by AOP, which will showcase over 500 of the top third party integrations from security, building automation, communication and IoT systems. In addition, we will be providing demos of our new Advanced Identity Manager (AIM) that uses open PSIA standards to integrate, consolidate and manage user access across both physical and IT systems.

How are you applying your executive leadership experience as Chairman of the Board of Advancis USA, James?

James Chong (JC): I've had the privilege of serving in multiple executive leadership roles throughout my career, including Fortune 500 companies, global software companies and start-ups. I've had P&L responsibilities to strategic advisory roles, collaborating with other C-Suites, board members and founders. The key commonality I've witnessed for success boils down to three things: Dynamic company culture; value of leadership versus management; the importance of finding strength in diversity.

Advancis is in the most exciting phase of its business, where it is going from a regional business to a global software company. The past ten years have been profitable, with incremental growth, even during the pandemic years; we are now well positioned to leverage 29 years of hard work and success in providing one of the most exciting software offerings in the security market.

I am enjoying playing a key role as Chairman of the Board where the management team can have a trusted partner and leader that understands the value of their technology, but also the personal, hands-on experience with both challenges and opportunities that they can collaborate with, to help navigate the risks associated with the next phase of the business. My plan is to help be a trusted advisor, a sounding board for new ideas, and to provide an example of how we can create a world class

> "MANUFACTURERS ARE NOW MORE WILLING TO OPEN THEIR SYSTEMS AND ENABLE DATA EXCHANGE VIA API'S AND MANAGE THEM VIA OPEN PSIM PLATFORMS."

company that genuinely values people, cultural diversity and leadership by example.

What strategies do you use to research and understand regional differences when expanding your business to new international markets?

JM: As a rule, we develop regional markets that offer a certain market potential with our own country representation and our own staff, primarily from the areas of technical sales, services and business development. On the product side, we always start with our complete product portfolio; we do not make any country-specific differences here. To support our growth and expansion, Advancis is launching two new business units, Global Business Development and Global Account Management, to focus on supporting international partners and end customers, along with providing a single point of contact for key accounts across all markets.

We are making significant new investments in product development and professional services this year to strengthen our processes allowing for an even closer collaboration with our partners to meet growing market demand for our products. We also leverage strategic partners who have a local presence in those markets we are interested in expanding into, to help identify variables and risks we may need to consider.

Can you tell us about the growth of your US and UK operations specifically?

JM: In the UK, it has been about five years since we officially entered the market and we are very pleased with the progress and growth we've witnessed, year over year. We have several key accounts that have benefited from investing in Advancis software and those are steadily growing to enterprise levels. As we are now already established in the market, we are starting to see inbound sales opportunities with many of our certified Advancis partners. We also have a growing team that is continuing to provide local support, which is key to our long-term success.

JC: The US has a multi-year investment and growth plan that officially launched in late 2022. Over the next four to five years, we are looking to establish a network of certified Advancis integrator partners as part of the go-to-market strategy and also collaborate with technology partners that are global but have a significant presence in the US market. The US will be the regional headquarters for the Americas, including Canada and South America.

You recently attended ISC West in the US and will be heading to IFSEC International in the UK in May – how important are exhibitions to Advancis?

JM: Over the past decade, IFSEC and ISC West have both firmly established themselves as leading international trade fairs for security and safety markets. Having a presence at exhibitions, including Security Essen, was already a priority for Advancis in our founding days.

We aligned our product development cycles with industry trade fairs to present new major releases of WinGuard; we did the same at ISC West where we launched WinGuard X5 and showcased our latest release of AIM. Due to the fast pace of change in our market, these shows have become even more important for us to not only demonstrate new products, but to get real time feedback.

Nothing can replace the value of having direct contact with partners, integrators and end customers and these shows help us to do that on a regular basis. Although it is a high investment to participate in these shows, Advancis plans on being present to provide that forum for direct communication with current customers and partners and to seek out new business relationships.

How do launches like that of Advanced Identity Manager (AIM) align with the company's growth strategy?

JM: In recent years, we have seen an increasing demand in the market for the integration of different physical access control systems into a uniform platform. The ability to manage, enrol, authenticate and revoke any badge from any system. Therefore, we made a strategic investment last year to expand the vendor neutral concept of Advancis to the topic of access control and identity management.

With Advanced Identity Manager (AIM), we now offer a great addition to our product portfolio while keeping our philosophy of vendor-neutral integration. The main function of AIM is to ensure that the logical and physical access rights associated with an employee's role are always synchronised. We are very excited about the early response from the market and look forward to offering this solution in the converged security marketplace.

> "OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES, THE SECURITY MARKET HAS SEEN CONSIDERABLE CHANGE."

What are your key focuses for 2023 and beyond?

JM: After the launch of our new products, WinGuard X5 and AIM, the focus of our activities in 2023 is to define our product roadmaps to align with new market requirements. Our focus for the next few years is also to establish a strong foundation in the US market and to execute our internationalisation strategy. We will need to be more focussed and strategic to support healthy expansion. The key to this is dialogue and knowledge transfer between subsidiaries and the headquarters to create the right culture.

Release of AOP was the most transformative product development announcement in Advancis' history. This paves the way for growth and opportunities for partners and customers by creating an open platform that offers almost unlimited possibilities. Over the coming years, development of AOP will be another focus area for our activities.

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