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新公司成功开发提款卡第三重保安

ENGLISH VERSION - Receive an SMS during your cash transfers: New firm successfully develops "3-factor authentication" for transactions.

ATM cards have only two-fold security. First is the ATM card itself, second is the PIN Number. This two-level security is still not enough, therefore thefts often happens.

A local software company makes use of the handphone's popularity to develop a third level of security. Once a bank account registers large transactions, whether in the case of cash withdrawal, purchases or GIRO payments at the end of the month, the handphone of the registered account holder will receive an SMS that shows the questionable transfer data.

The account holder, after verifying the transaction data, can then choose to continue with the cash transfer or to terminate all together. This of course applies when account holders draw cash from ATM machines too.

Albert Ching, Chan Kim Hing and Gu Guoliang were originally executive managers at the local Citibank office. They are respectively from Hong Kong, Malaysia and China. Due to common interests and the shared vision of lacking security in banking software, they gave up their five-figure salaries and on March 2000, founded at the Chai Chee Technopark, i-Sprint Innovations Pte Ltd (www.i-sprint.com).

Albert and Guoliang are already Singapore citizens while Kim Hing is a permanent resident. They invested about \$1,000,000 to start the business with an initial employment of about ten people.

CEO Albert said, " There are no telecommunications information booths in the whole of Singapore where you can locate the location of handphone owners in Singapore. If the person is at Orchard Road, there should not be a transaction in Jurong at the same time, hence the proof that there is a ATM theft occurring whereby the system can alert the authorities immediately."

"The account holder can also set arbitral limits to withdrawals or US dollar transfers. Once the thief fails to realize that he has exceeded the limit, the system will halt the transaction immediately. These are various layers of security."

He also proposes the fourth layer of security which is an authentication code God created for mankind - Fingerprints. He said that Japan had already developed mobile phones that can identify fingerprints and this can be used as authentication for transactions. After the receipt of the SMS, the fingerprint read by the mobile can be used as the proof for the banks to proceed with transactions.

e-Banking thefts have raised the awareness of banks, said Albert, and boosted the security measures for online and network transactions systems, but application software security is still lacking and fragmented while most banks are still adopting varying methods and standards of security in their application software.

i-Sprint Innovations identified this area of weakness and developed Access Matrix, a holistic administration, authentication, authorization and auditing software. Bank employees only need to have one account (Single Sign On) for different application software where all usage are logged and are traceable at later dates.

Date: 16 Oct, 2002

Tracking the enemy within.

The search is on for a perfect security solution that will protect from attacks from outside and inside a company, says Albert Ching.

Mention "security" and buzzwords like smart cards, tokens, PKI and biometrics come to mind as the mechanisms that could transform any business into Fort Knox. Yet, why haven't they quite caught on in the industry?

A check with most conglomerates, including banks, financial institutions and other security-sensitive organisations, shows that it's back to using the age-old user ID and password system to enforce business security. This, despite the numerous drawbacks that it brings.

According to a recent report in Computerworld US, "security managers have been spending 80 percent of their security budgets on trying to keep people out when in fact, 80 percent of all attacks originate from inside the firewall." Why is this so?

For one, the escalating IT administration costs that are being accumulated by large organisations are experienced almost ubiquitously. Chief technology officers (CTOs) will need to up their IT administrator staff to cope with multiple software applications.

Of late, the CTOs in banks have taken on new IT responsibilities like customer relationship management and e-banking solutions, to help their employers generate higher sales. This change in job nature or job "overload" has resulted in lapses in enforcing security policy. You get passwords not being changed regularly enough. This could be due to insufficient IT resources to go around to cover the different application security systems to enforce the change.

There are other repercussions. Say, a bank staff has just returned from a business trip. But he can't access the system to do an update because his passwords had been reset while he was away. Sometimes taking on too much can mean losing more. Faced with all these challenges, wouldn't it be ideal if there was a technology to help CTOs reduce support costs of administering passwords, set software access rights according to company policies and employee roles and audit log files intelligently and easily?

The other problem facing CTOs is the disparate systems that most companies work with. The lack of collaboration between the technology providers and the companies using them completes the Achilles' heel. Many have been confounded by the hassle of remembering a cumbersome list of passwords in order to access various applications like e-mail, sales orders and payroll administration. But why the need for all the memory work?

Currently, IT security vendors provide either application, operating systems (OS) or network security. There is no known perfect security solution that tightly integrates secure access from the hardware to the software.

OS vendors do not release their programme source codes to the application vendors; similarly. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) application vendors do not provide their source codes to the security solutions vendors. Except for applications developed in-house that come with source codes, most access control security solutions only manage access security up to administration and authentication levels. For such applications, the administration of passwords and identity management are centralised and secured and users enjoy single sign-on (remembering only one password).

However, authorisation and audit services that are essential to highly security-sensitive environments are not attainable unless security solution vendors build a segmented hierarchy technology that is capable of simulating a corporation's management structure and security policy.

To illustrate: a bank teller may open an account and read the balance, but is not allowed to withdraw beyond a certain amount of funds within the account unless authorised by his/her supervisor. The transaction is then subsequently audited. This policy varies from function to function in different banks. Only IT architectures that have been designed to incorporate flexibility and granularity in security policies can cater to the highest level of application security; namely the 4As - administration, authentication, authorisation and audit.

In the never-ending pursuit of the complete IT solution, the main defences for now are firewall, network security and anti-virus software, which in essence form the front gate, security guard house and door alarm system of a company. But more importantly, there is a need for an enterprise security that can bar unauthorised access to business critical data and prevent any manipulation of confidential information.

After all, security is not just about protecting your fence or wall but also safe-guarding the information within.

Author : Albert Ching, CEO and co-founder of i-Sprint Innovations Pte Ltd
Source: The Business Times, Wednesday, October 16, 2002

Date: 14 Oct, 2002

Entrepreneur Profile Q & A - Convenient Access.

It's often said that if you want to try your hand at entrepreneurship, you should do something related to your core competencies. There's high risk in straying into something that might be highly interesting and dynamic but which you have no competitive advantage in. Instead, if you focus on what you're good at, you'll probably have a better chance at making it work.

Former vice-president at Citibank's Regional Asia-Pacific Technology group Albert Ching helped establish the technology roadmap for Citibank's Corporate Banking Group as well as its e-business solutions. He also managed the company's large-scale distributed application and database server environment for the Asia-Pacific region. When he decided to come out and start his own company, he naturally leveraged on his years of experience in the bank as well as on security-related matters.

His company, i-Sprint Innovations, is an information technology (IT) security company that focuses on a very specialised niche targeted at banks and other financial services companies. Its main product, AccessMatrix, is described as an application that provides centralised administration, authentication, authorisation and audit services for users to access different e-commerce and enterprise resources; for example, web and application servers.

In plain English, what AccessMatrix does is allow staff members to access variety of business and enterprise software programs with just a single secure password.

"If you work for a bank, you'll need to remember multiple passwords for different systems that you need to access," Ching says. "With AccessMatrix, you no longer have to do that. You just have to remember one."

Ching says his inspiration for creating this product came about when he wanted such a solution while he was with Citibank, but instead found there was none in the market. This represented an opportunity. Ching left his job one and half years ago to found i-Sprint with a few partners.

Like most entrepreneurs, he got his seed financing from relatives; in particular, his mother-in-law. His partners also pitched in. Together, they set out to build AccessMatrix, a product that they believed would be popular



Ching believes i-Sprint will grow beyond the start-up stage and start earning money by the second quarter next year

with banks and other organisations where security is crucial (for example, the police and the army).

The company, which now has a big-name investor in the form of Acer Technology Ventures of Taiwan, already has clients including the National Institute of Education and the Institute of Systems Science (both in Singapore) and the Shinsei Bank in Japan.

It has appointed two resellers in the Lion City and one in Hong Kong, which it considers a gateway to China. It's also in negotiations to get its product into Japan and South Korea too. Surprisingly, it has not yet found a reseller for Malaysia, which is normally considered the hinterland for many Singaporean companies. However, it has managed to get the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (Mimos) to invest in the company.

Providing a platform that allows user to access different applications and services with just one password is something that several industry giants have been trying to do. Even the mighty Microsoft is in the game with its controversial Passport program. But Ching is unfazed by the competition. Firstly, Passport is web-based and designed to work with online services. Secondly, he says that Passport provides administration and authentication controls.

"AccessMatrix can work with web and non-web (based) applications," Ching says. "In addition, it also has authorisation and audit controls which Passport doesn't."

For most people, the concept of IT security sound like a boring topic, but Ching is clearly passionate about the subject.

"We believe what we are doing can change the way people look at security," he says. "Our system is simple, yet it meets the security requirements of our clients."

Does Ching, whose first degree was in computer science, enjoy entrepreneurship as much as he likes IT security? Well, his Master's was in business administration, if that's any indication of his fondness for doing business. He says there's nothing like running his own company and wishes he had come out earlier.

"Funding would have been much easier if we had started a year earlier," he maintains. "Instead, we had to face the bursting of the dotcom bubble and the backlash against technology companies that followed."

Still, he's definitely glad to be doing his own thing now instead of being someone's employee. Starting up a company is like going for a PhD, he says. "There are so many things that I've had to learn, like how to attract good people (to join the company), how to retain them, how to motivate them and so on."

Ching also actually likes the volatility of start-up life.

"When you work for someone, your work is predictable, but when you're an entrepreneur, it's very challenging because nothing is predictable," he says. At least in the initial years. He believes the company will grow beyond the start-up stage and start earning money by the second quarter next year.

And how does his wife like the topsy-turvy lifestyle?

"She gave me three years to make it big," he says, with a big smile.

Author : Oon Yeoh

Source: The Edge Singapore - Issue no: 33, Page 52, October 14 - October 20, 2002

Date: 10 Sep, 2002

Acer launches i-Sprint information security range.

PC vendor Acer Africa launched a new range of security products and services from i-Sprint Innovations yesterday.

Singapore-based i-Sprint Innovations specializes in application security and technology infrastructure, on both an internal and external level. It is in the process of launching its new range of products around the world, starting in SA, with Acer as the exclusive local agent and 20% stakeholder.

Acer is taking i-Sprint's products to market via the local channel. Acer chairman Peter Ibbotson says the company will be talking to the likes of Didata and Comparex. Said resellers will provide first line support, an in-house Acer team, recently trained in Singapore, will act as the second line of support, with i-Sprint in Asia as the third line in the support chain.

The i-Sprint offering includes AccessMatrix, Universal Sign-On (USO) and Enterprise AdminGuard. It is initially only launching the first two into the local market. AccessMatrix is an integrated access management product designed to meet the four As (administration, authentication, authorisation and audit) of security-sensitive environments. USO, i-Sprint says, is a non-intrusive approach that enables organisations to achieve single sign-on to both in-house applications and packaged software without any source code changes.

Ibbotson says Acer is moving towards providing a total solution, hence this step into the security space.

These products are targeted at the financial services industry in particular and the enterprise space in general, i-Sprint says.

Author : Yule Glowacki

Date: 30 Aug, 2002

Passion and the pioneering spirit.

Name: Dutch Ng
Title: Manager, Professional Services
Company: i-Sprint Innovations

Previous work:

I used to work for the Citibank regional IT team, supporting server structure and application rollout in the region.

Why i-Sprint:

I joined i-Sprint as one of the pioneer staff. I knew the company's founders even before the company was formed, and I firmly believe the company has a solid management team and strong potential to become a major player in the information security space. Over the last two and half years, the company has established itself as a major regional security product company with strong customer references.



Working in a startup company like i-Sprint helps me to develop a better view of the entire operation and the challenges involved in running a company, which I cannot gain by simply going through a degree course or

reading textbooks.

Current job:

My current assignment in i-Sprint is manager of Professional Services and I manage a team of five technical staff providing implementation services for our products such as AccessMatrix, Universal Sign On and Enterprise AdminGuard. We work closely with our customers to find out their requirements. We need to know the issues that they face and the situation that they are in, so that we can work with them to tighten security in terms of the network and operating systems.

It is important to engage the customers and give them an overview of the issues that they are facing right now. Some may not know very much about security and may not see a big impact immediately, but we help them identify loopholes and patch them up.

I do the high level planning and architecture, and relay the specifications back to the team to do the deployment.

Other than the implementation services, I am also involved in providing pre-sales and post-sales support - bao kar liao (cover everything). I travel to Japan, Hong Kong and Malaysia. In Thailand we have a rep office for sales. We also have reseller channels in Indonesia, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. We do exhibitions, and visit our customers and channels. We leverage on each other.

Key achievements:

I have seen the company evolve in the last two years, with new, unique security products, new customers in the region and strong investors.

We play an important role in helping to educate the customer and to share information. I feel good when I talk to a customer and they understand and say "Yes, Dutch, you're right". That realisation by customers is what makes this job so satisfying.

The culture:

The most important thing is passion. We have an excellent team with strong commitment and passion in working towards achieving the mission of the company, which is to provide leading edge information security products and services to help organisations secure their business applications and technology infrastructure.

There is a strong sharing culture which reinforces the learning organisation and teamwork environment. We need to be united in order to move forward. We want to create an environment that is fun and friendly and exciting. We work as a family.

I've worked in a big company before, but it is not that different. Ultimately, it's about knowing the team you work for - the trust, the friendship, the commitment.

To our customers, we don't do sales talk; we talk from our heart, when we advise them, "This is what you need." Yes, I know I need to strike a balance sometimes - time for my parents, time for my work. Right now, I think I spend more of my time at work than at home.

The perks:

Working with a group of very talented people with strong domain knowledge in information security, meeting with customers, potential clients and resellers from diverse technical, cultural and business backgrounds, and traveling around the world, to places like the United States, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

What's needed:

- Proven domain knowledge in security management and infrastructure management,

- Prior working experience in large corporations and the understanding of the IT operational procedures and processes,

- Strong leadership, good analytical and communication skills, and
- Able to work with all levels in different organisations.

In an interview, I also ask about the activities that the person is involved in, what they do on weekends, what they read. We are looking for active people who are willing to learn.

I think attitude is very important. In the security environment, it is the experience that counts. People who read more, and are more hands on, absorb more.

Source: ComputerWorld, Vol. 8 Issue No. 41, 30 August - 5 September 2002

Date: 22 Aug, 2002

i-Sprint and Netrust team up to offer combined solutions.

Netrust, the pioneer Certification Authority (CA) in South-east Asia and i-Sprint Innovations Pte Ltd, a provider of information security products, have launched a partnership programme which will provide large organisations with an integrated application security and single sign-on solution based on Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) and digital certificates.

The solution integrates i-Sprint's flagship product AccessMatrix and Netrust's PKI infrastructure for user authentication and digital signature.

AccessMatrix is an access management product designed from the ground up to meet the requirements of security-sensitive environments. Its unique security administration, authorisation and single sign-on model support new and existing applications in the enterprise.

"Netrust's customers will welcome the easy and cost-effective Single Sign-On (SSO) solution made possible with AccessMatrix," said Foo Jong Ai, CEO of Netrust. "With AccessMatrix, our customers can achieve secure single sign-on to different applications, in addition to using Netrust digital certificates for securing e-mail, files and folders, and for secure VPN solutions."

Said Chan Kim Hing, chief technology officer of i-Sprint Innovations: "AccessMatrix enables organisations to quickly integrate different applications with a common security infrastructure. Organisations will appreciate that our technology is open. The integration with Netrust digital certificates is a logical step forward for us and together we provide a compelling solution to our customers".

Netrust is a joint venture between Keppel Telecommunications & Transportation Ltd and Network for Electronic Transfers (Singapore) Pte Ltd (NETS).