CUSTOMER MAGAZINE OF SCHRACK SECONET

02

DECEMBER 2020

fire&care

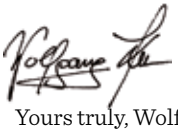
Editorial

Dear customers and business partners, this very unusual year has made it clear just how fragile our supposed certainties are – not just here in Austria and Europe, but around the whole world. What the upcoming year may hold – it is surrounded by uncertainties. The coronavirus pandemic and its consequences, particularly the economic terms, will follow us for a long time.

Ground-breaking challenges
How can we secure the things we value and treasure? This question is at the core of our business, and it has now become a central question for us all. We can only master this challenge adequately if we work on a rational foundation and with expertise. As a company, we are therefore required to address the pandemic responsibly while keeping our company's objectives in sight. This year, we provided an important contribution with our communication systems for hospitals. In Russia, Schrack Seconet equipped a full 21 new emergency hospitals for Covid-19 patients with Visocall IP in just a few weeks – we present this extraordinary project in detail on page 14.

Strategic projects
We also continued to work on strategic projects in 2020. Next year we will launch a next-generation fire alarm system – on the next page we describe what you can expect from Integral EvoxX.

Europe's most modern hospital
This edition's focus story is about Klinik Floridsdorf. One year after its opening, we take a look at the high-tech equipment of Europe's most modern hospital. We will also take a tour of the Danube Tower in Vienna, which has just gotten a state-of-the-art fire alarm system. We also introduce Maurice Quail and his company Synergy – our partner in Ireland had a very special success story on the Emerald Isle.
A momentous year is coming to an end. For the upcoming year, I wish you all much success in the challenges, large and small, that await us.



Yours truly, Wolfgang Kern

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PHOTO: © DONAUTURM

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PHOTO: WIENER GESUNDHEITSVERBUND/HUBERT DIMKO

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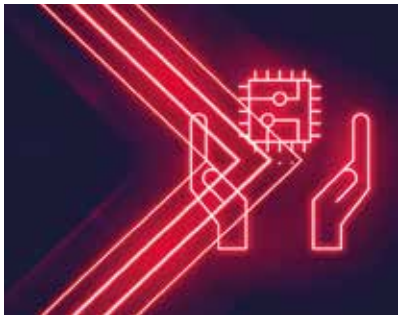
Integral EvoxX – the next-generation fire alarm system launches in 2021. With the latest technologies and highly secure cloud services, Schrack Seconet has developed a system that is ready for the challenges of tomorrow. Even top-rate products can always be improved.

Fire protection – ready for the digital future



Ready for the technologies of tomorrow

Digitisation is accelerating technical progress. With Integral EvoxX, Schrack Seconet is meeting this challenge: the new fire alarm system integrates innovative components in the standard configuration. Wherever the digital journey may lead – Integral EvoxX is ready. Powerful processors, large storage capacity and high transmission speed are all combined in a fire alarm system that is optimally equipped for future applications.

Connectivity will be a central criterion in the smart buildings of tomorrow. The new fire alarm control panel is all set: it can be directly integrated into building safety and technical management via standard interfaces. It also includes a Bluetooth interface enabling easy interaction via mobile devices. It will therefore be possible to implement and use tailored apps developed in the future flexibly and without expert knowledge. ✱

Safe in the cloud

Integral EvoxX is connected to a highly secure cloud platform. This makes intelligent services available, which enable efficient interaction over the fire alarm system's entire life cycle. All system states are monitored and evaluated around the clock. The data is connected and analysed.

Targeted measures can be derived automatically for a more efficient operation of the system. The functionality and availability of the system achieve new levels, while life and valuables get even better protection. ✱

Always grow

Integral EvoxX continues Schrack Seconet's principle of seamless forward and backward compatibility, which is still unique on the market. The new system can be easily integrated into existing networks, existing peripherals and cabling can be used without adaptations. Different generations of Integral fire alarm systems can be connected through Integral WAN and Integral LAN.

This means that Integral EvoxX is a safe investment. Previous investments are sustainably secured, and existing systems can be modernised economically step by step. The fire alarm system can be expanded flexibly depending on the operator's requirements for the building. The system is the ideal basis for successive modernisations and future system expansions. ✱

Smart Emerald Isle

PHOTO: MBBIRDY / ISTOCK

"We have found the Schrack Seconet System to be extremely reliable, the service support from Synergy has been second to none, so much so that we have invested in replacing several older systems within the hospital since our first major installation with Schrack Seconet in 2017. We have found the overall cost of ownership to be far superior to our previous system. The clinical staff report that the Visocall IP system has provided a significantly increased level of safety and freedom to our most vulnerable patients."

TOMMY BEATTY *Capital Projects Manager & interim Head of Non-Clinical Services Our Lady's Hospice, Dublin*

The partnership between Synergy Medical Systems and Schrack Seconet started in 2008. Since then Maurice Quail introduced the Visocall IP to the Irish market and has successfully established it as the most innovative communication system in the Irish health care sector and the leading brand for nurse call systems in Ireland. We talked with Maurice about the innovative tech spirit of Ireland, some astonishing projects and the importance of personal relationships in the business-to-business sector.

fire&care — ***Your company has grown to become the leading provider of hospital communication systems in Ireland. How did you achieve this development in such a short time?***
Maurice Quail — We started in 2008. It was a difficult time for the Irish economy, budgets were tight, but there was still a lot of interest for technical innovation. Ireland may be located on the outermost edge of Europe, but we are at the centre of the continent as a tech hub. Many tech companies, such as Google, Facebook and Twitter, have their European headquarters in Dublin. It is this backdrop of being at the forefront of technological innovation that drove demand for a more advanced IP based solution to health care communications. We worked hard promoting the capabilities of the system and it was received well by local health care professionals and engineers involved in the design of health care facilities, so when the economy began to recover and more health care projects were planned, Schrack Seconet's fullly IP system was well placed and the obvious choice - the system was a real pioneer. The initial project in the 50 bed Ennis CNU on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean soon led to further projects in Galway, Dublin and Belfast. This innovative drive has also led to the first installation globally of the new generation Securwatch at the Mayo Palliative Care Centre.

fire&care — ***The National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dublin is one interesting project. Which patients are treated here?***
Maurice Quail — Many patients here are quite severely disabled, some are quadriplegic or have brain injuries. Visocall IP offers additional possibilities for these patients. With the assistive technology available within the system they can control elements of their environment such as lighting, nurse call, television and window blinds, all via breath control. This greatly enhances the quality of life for such patients. The project was originally tendered in 2008 so it's been a long road and its fantastic to see the staff and patients benefitting from the system and the facility as a whole.

fire&care — ***What do you think was essential for your success?***
Maurice Quail — Irish people are known to be warm and outgoing and so the personal relationships between distributor, client, and manufacturer are important. It's about the right technology, but even more so, the right people. Many of our clients often meet us at Medica to see the products first hand and meet the Schrack team.

fire&care — ***What else helps to build relationships, what supports customers in their decision making?***
Maurice Quail — Trust is vital, we are providing life critical safety systems that will be part of the facility for at least 25 years. When Synergy recommend a solution to the clients engineering team, it is essential that they fully trust Synergy to deliver for their client. In turn the client has placed their trust in the engineers to provide a system that works for them in the long term. That kind of trust is built of many years of successful projects, it's a long-term commitment, but immensely rewarding. The client and design team's trust is further enhanced by Schrack Seconet providing us the opportunity to engage with and perhaps visit existing installations and customers prior to making a final purchasing decision.

fire&care — ***What's coming up next?***
Maurice Quail — It's a very exciting period for Synergy and Schrack Seconet in Ireland, we are just beginning to supply the largest ever health care project in Ireland, The National Children's Hospital, Dublin. The awarding of this contract is a very tangible recognition for the many years of partnership between Schrack Seconet and Synergy and we are very proud of that. The current crisis has highlighted the need for investment in health care and more specifically in speech enabled IP systems, we look forward to being a part of Ireland's recovery from this difficult period as we were in 2008. ✱

The new National Children's Hospital in Dublin will use the nurse call system Visocall IP. At the heart of the competition-winning concept is an oval ward pavilion, set within one of Europe's largest roof gardens.

Maurice Quail is the founder and Managing Director of Synergy Medical Systems and has been working in the Irish health care sector for over 20 years. His company has grown to be the largest provider of medical systems such as nurse call and medical supply units in Ireland.

A view with full protection

The Vienna Danube Tower is the highest landmark in Austria: the observation tower in the middle of Donaupark in the 22nd district stands 252 metres tall. The terraces at heights of 150 and 155 metres offer visitors a splendid panoramic view of Vienna and its surroundings. Like the Donaupark, the tower was built on the occasion of the Vienna International Garden Show in 1964. After extensive renovation work was completed in 2019, it has finally been rebuilt to its former glory. The famous tower restaurant and the tower café, which rotates on its own axis, is now set to the style of the 1960s with a modern twist. Of course, the technology and thus the security systems have been brought up to the very latest standards. The fire safety technology was provided by Schrack Seconet, as it has been for the last 15 years.

The Vienna Danube Tower, which is also used as a carrier for transmitting stations, was retrofitted with comprehensive fire safety equipment including a special solution for the extreme requirements of the elevator shafts during the renovation process.

Expansion during ongoing operation

In the course of the renovations, which took almost two years, Schrack Seconet not only wanted to modernize the tried-and-true fire safety system but also expand it as a standard to parts of the building that had previously been unmonitored. Because the tower was completely closed for only a few months during this period, large parts of the installation were carried out during ongoing operations. It proved successful: With good reason we can now speak of the highest monitoring standards that cover all areas from the basement to the very top.

A high-performance Integral IP MX fire alarm system consisting of three linked subcontrol units has now been installed, which alarms the Vienna Fire Department via a network connection. The fire safety system in the elevator shafts of the two express lifts is completely new. In the concrete elevator shaft are three approx. 50 cm wide risers with HV cables located close together. Installing conventional smoke aspiration systems in the shafts that could rapidly detect any cable fires was not possible in this case: the elevator cages moving up and down at high speeds cause great pressure differences, which would have triggered false alarms. For this reason, Schrack Seconet, in close collaboration with the test centre, decided to come up with a specialised solution: an ADW line type heat detector. They are resistant to local influences and reliably trigger an alarm if the temperature in the risers goes up sharply within a short amount of time.

Automatic fire-protective curtains

Now the small elevators that transport food and beverages between floors also have protection, because the restaurant and the café are located on levels different than the kitchen. If the fire detectors detect smoke on one level, the fire alarm system automatically activates fire-protective curtains that close in front of the elevator shafts to keep smoke or fire away from other fire zones. With the extension of the fire alarm system, the intermediate floors of the revolving restaurants are now also protected. Here, point detectors monitor the motors that move the entire level. Furthermore, two basement areas that were not previously covered by the fire monitoring system are now fully integrated via detectors.

Control of external systems

The flexible design of the fire alarm system makes it possible to control safety-relevant facilities such as extinguishing systems in the utility room, which are triggered immediately in the event of a fire. In addition, automatically activated flashing lights and signs are intended to be pre-alarms to support swift evacuation of danger zones by prompting people to leave the room. Finally, the personnel in the Danube Tower can now easily see where in the tower an alarm has been triggered via an additional operating panel of the fire alarm system in the reception area on the ground floor. Now nothing stands in the way of an enjoyable, safe visit to the highest Viennese landmark with the best view. ✱

From the basement to the very top, all areas of the Danube Tower are protected - including the intermediate floors of the rotating restaurants and the dining lifts.

PHOTOS: © DONAUTURM

PHOTO: WIENER GESUNDHEITSVERBUND/HUBERT DIMKO

Klinik Floridsdorf went into full operation nearly a year ago now. With around 800 beds, the most innovative hospital in Austria is ensuring that the rapidly growing north of Vienna can provide medical care. Requirements on technical equipment were extremely high – only a few suppliers were able to meet the requested functionality and innovative capacity. It is therefore a testament to the company‘s performance capability that Schrack Seconet was able to contribute solutions from all divisions, from fire safety to nurse call and disorientation systems.

The high-tech hospital

Fire Alarm

Complex fire alarm system with around 2,000 fire control systems

A total of around 13,800 fully automatic fire detectors and more than 140 aspirating smoke detectors

Networking via more than 70 fire alarm control panels

Health Care

Visocall IP hospital communication system in use in around 70 wards

750 patient devices in addition to pull buttons and staff terminals

Disorientation system with around 550 readers for patient and staff safety at selected wards

“The intense training courses have proved very successful, enabling our employees to handle the systems in a completely different way and, for example, to solve many disruptions themselves.”

PETER VEITSCHEGGER
Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering, Communications Engineering, Materials Handling at Klinik Floridsdorf

The technology used in a hospital has made great strides in recent years. “A hospital built in 1990 and a hospital built today are worlds apart. Today, the standards and official requirements are far more demanding and a great deal is automated”, says Peter Veitschegger, head of the department of electrical engineering, communications engineering, materials handling at Klinik Floridsdorf, which was initially going to be named Krankenhaus Nord. In Austria’s most modern hospital, technology is omnipresent and patients come into direct contact with it, such as in their hospital rooms. The Visocall IP communication system brings various functions directly to the bed via a single cable; the terminal allows the patients to always be in contact with the nursing staff and to control useful functions.

Full IP all the way to the bed

“With Full IP all the way to the patient bed, Visocall IP has set new standards, making Schrack Seconet a pioneer on its way to the digital patient room”, says Andreas Grusch, head of project management Vienna, Lower Austria & Burgenland at Schrack Seconet. As the coordinator, he headed the Klinik Floridsdorf project together with Ronald Knor, the project manager at Schrack Seconet.

If you keep an eye out for it, you will find another Schrack Seconet product in practically every room at Klinik Floridsdorf: around 13,800 automatic fire detectors have been installed on the ceilings of the rooms to activate the alarm day and night if there is a danger of fire. In addition, there are around 140 smoke aspirating systems. They are there to detect smoke in areas with special requirements such as the operating theatres or the light and elevator shafts. There, smoke aspirating systems have one major advantage: service and maintenance are carried out outside the monitored area via a separate evaluation unit which is more easily accessible.

“Important steps are automated via the fire control systems without us having to think about it. The entire building is brought into a safe state.”

Gerhard Svatek
Commander of the Company Fire Brigade of Klinik Floridsdorf

On site in a matter of minutes

Being able to react quickly is crucial if the alarm goes off at Klinik Floridsdorf: “We have to be at any given location within 4 1/2 minutes because of the intervention mode to the fire brigade”, says Gerhard Svatek, commander of the company fire brigade at Klinik Floridsdorf. Alarms are forwarded via DECT telephones, with the time and place displayed as a push notification. Information can also be called up throughout the building via fire brigade operating panels. The use of Integral Mobile is being planned for operating the fire alarm system.

2,000 fire control systems

The fire control matrix of Klinik Floridsdorf is exceptional. More than 2,000 complex control systems enable numerous units to be directly controlled and processes to be triggered. “Crucial steps are carried out automatically without us having to think about it, the entire building is brought into a safe state”, says Ger-

For the commissioning of the technical systems there was a maintenance operation before the official start.

PHOTOS: WIENER GESUNDHEITSVERBUND/HUBERT DIMKO

Technical solutions from Schrack Seconet can be found in almost every room – from fire detectors to hospital communication systems.

PHOTOS: WIENER GESUNDHEITSVERBUND/HUBERT DIMKO

The clinic area is 111,000 m² in size, full operation started in September 2019.

hard Svatek. Fire zones are closed, sprinkler systems triggered, elevators blocked, while fire brigade lifts are made available and ventilation is secured with compressed air. Andreas Grusch gives an example of such control systems: "Say a fire breaks out on the ground floor, but there is an unobstructed way out via the first floor. The elevator then automatically comes to this evacuation level to allow people to escape from there."

Safety on all levels

In addition to fire safety and the communication system, Schrack Seconet contributed another unit to Klinik Floridsdorf. The Securwatch disorientation system has been put to use in several departments. "The patients are equipped with tags and are therefore pretty much free to move around. The system reliably sets off the alarm and thus provides important protection against wandering off, while also giving the staff a layer of security – they can make an emergency call if necessary", explains Andreas Grusch from Schrack Seconet.

New requirements

It takes time for such a complex building like Klinik Floridsdorf to completely attain normal operations. That is why before commissioning could officially take place, sustainment operations were initiated for a three-month period.

"That was exceedingly important. It takes time to know all the ins and outs of the systems. Many parameterisations still have to be adapted when going into full operation", says Peter Veitschegger.

Even during ongoing operations, a high-tech hospital will then face new challenges, with maintenance and servicing becoming more important. "Therefore, a well-functioning cooperation with the service technicians is very important", says Gerhard Svatek.

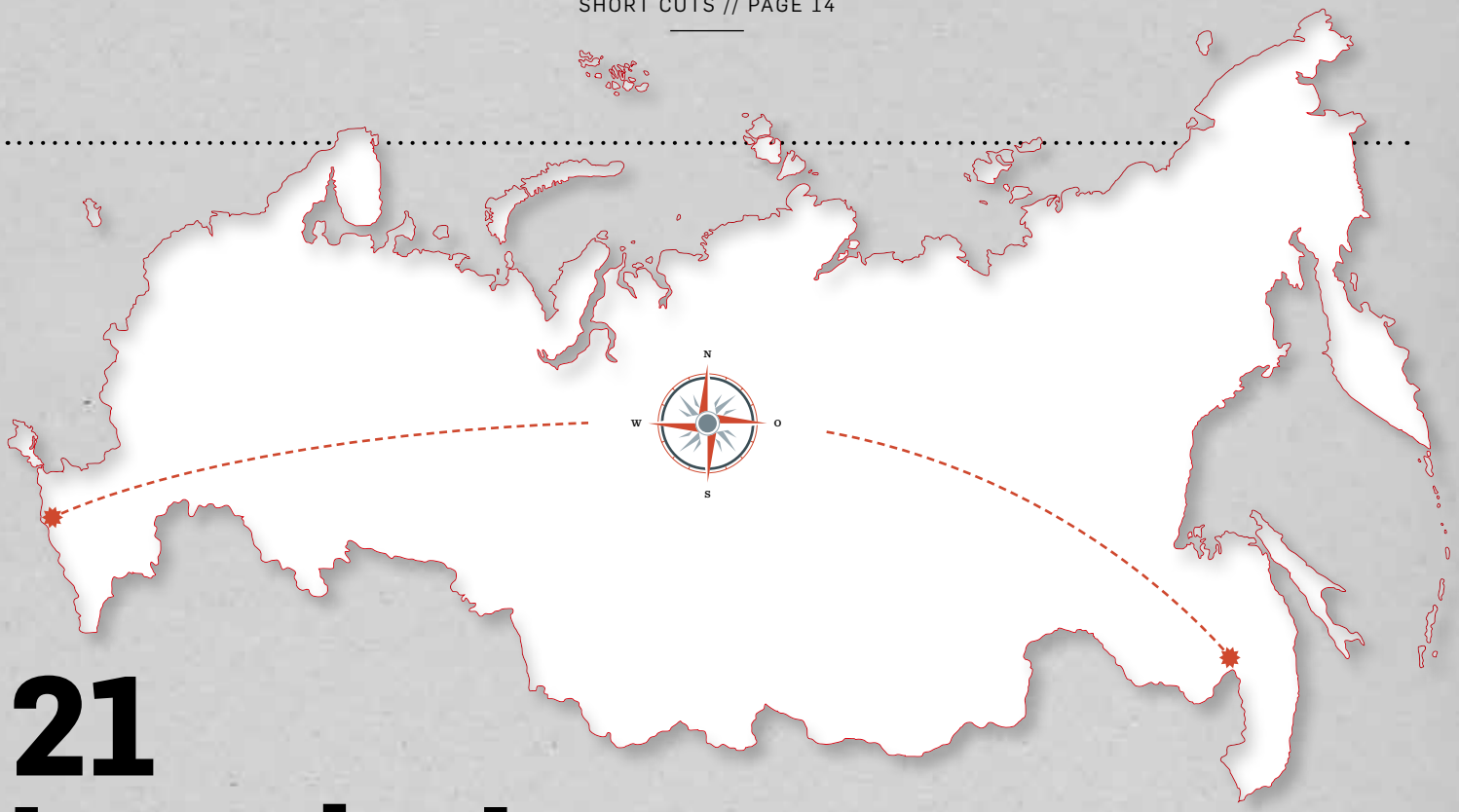
Documentation and training are also important. With much thought, the latter was thoroughly organised at Klinik Floridsdorf. The employees were trained on how to operate the components of the communication system and the fire alarm system by using the devices. In addition, the technical infrastructure was introduced in detail. The entire technical concept and the used products were explained. "The extensive training courses have proved very successful, enabling our employees to handle the systems in a completely different way and, for example, to solve many disruptions themselves", says Peter Veitschegger. ✱

FROM LAYING THE FOUNDATION TO GOING LIVE

All set to become the most modern hospital in Austria

The construction work of Klinik Floridsdorf began in 2012, with the topping out ceremony held in 2014. After completion, the technical units were tested for three months in sustainment operations. In spring 2019, the official approval was granted. Teams from all departments checked core processes and played out procedures with trial patients. Subsequently, the employees of three whole hospitals and individual departments of other hospitals moved in over the course of four stages. The 111,000 m2 site became fully operational at the end of September 2019, with 2,500 employees now working there.

Klinik Floridsdorf combines the latest developments in medicine, technology and architecture to offer patients the best possible care and make their stay as pleasant as possible. Patients stay in single and double rooms only, and around 800 beds can be occupied. The operators are expecting around 250,000 outpatient visits and 46,000 inpatient visits per year.



21 hospitals in 5 months

It was a project that reached far beyond the usual: Within just five months, Schrack Seconet equipped a whopping 21 new hospitals in Russia with the Visocall IP hospital communication system – and that at the beginning of the corona pandemic. "We worked very hard to master this project of gigantic scale. When we started, the lockdown had restricted work and mobility, public life was paralyzed. Our employees were only able to move around because of a special permit", says Larissa Kirsch, Area Sales Manager at Schrack Seconet.

Disinfectable patient terminals for external contact

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia built new medical centres nationwide in just a few weeks. Corona patients in these hospitals are isolated in single rooms to prevent the spread of infection to others. The hospital communication system is a central pillar of the concept: the patient terminal is the only connection to the outside world when quarantining. Voice communication was therefore a crucial requirement for the call systems in these acute care hospitals. Visocall IP was able to fulfil this condition in addition to the second essential criterion: the ability to disinfect the patient terminals.

Working under high levels of time pressure

Schrack Seconet implemented a design example at the first medical centre, which served as a model for the subsequent projects. Nevertheless, each project was different: each construction site had different professionals on site, not to mention the great physical distances in Russia. The time pressure was enormous and work on the construction sites was carried out around the clock. Schrack Seconet employees were often working under the most adverse conditions. They even had to work in protective clothing at times, as one hospital had already admitted its first patients while the finishing work was still being completed.

From Kaliningrad to Habarovsk

"Mastering this project proved to be an enormous challenge. But we were able to manage it by being very organised. The whole process from planning, ordering, delivery and installation to training and commissioning was completed in a very short amount of time. Our entire team worked together on implementing the project, in Moscow as well as in Vienna." 21 hospitals were thus successively equipped with the most modern hospital communication systems: from Kaliningrad in the west to St. Petersburg and Moscow and on to Habarovsk in the east. Schrack Seconet's years of local experience was instrumental for the successful outcome. "The present belongs to those who prepared themselves for it yesterday", emphasizes Larissa Kirsch. ✱

"It was a project that was inspiring in every aspect. Within the shortest amount of time, we equipped 21 hospitals across Russia with Visocall IP – from Kaliningrad in the west to Habarovsk in the east."

Larissa Kirsch
Area Sales Manager
Schrack Seconet

ILLUSTRATION: LYSENKO ALEXANDER / ISTOCK

Experience systems in operation

Schrack Seconet frequently provides reference viewings to observe installed hospital communication systems in operation. Interested parties from Lithuania and the United Kingdom were recently invited on an excursion to two houses in Switzerland; the latest generation of Securwatch aroused particular interest. The group visited the buildings Heiligkreuz in St. Gallen and Casa Giesserei in Arbon. There was also a brief stop in Vienna. There, the guests visited the headquarters of Schrack Seconet as well as the hospital Rudolfsstiftung, which operates the Visocall IP system. ✱

Mixed reality

Innovative technologies are opening up interesting possibilities for fire protection systems. With the new Integral EvoxX system, Schrack Seconet is also well-prepared for the challenges of digital fire protection. "As part of a collaborative project with Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences and Ebcont, we are currently looking into the possibilities of augmented reality for operations at the fire alarm control panel", says Alexander Schober from product management fire alarm systems, who is in charge of the project at Schrack Seconet. Read more on p. 18. ✱

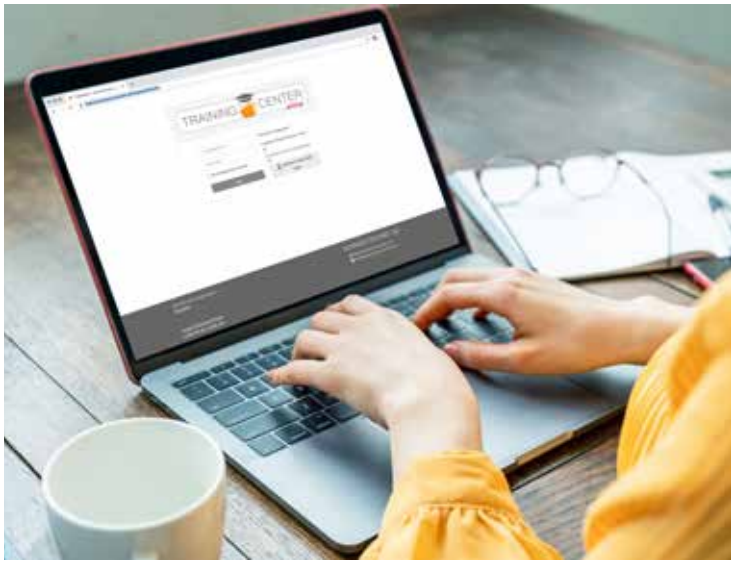


PHOTO: METAMORWORKS / ISTOCK

Learning is going online

Our experienced trainers share their expert knowledge at more than ten locations around the world every year during training sessions for specialists. At Vienna headquarters alone, around 200 courses were held each year. "With the rise of the coronavirus, new formats have become necessary. We therefore moved up the launch of the digital services and are now offering online courses", says training centre manager Robert Sack.

From self-study courses to blended learning The new training courses allow for vocational and continuing education to be completed, currently under the special conditions of Covid-19 yet also for the time thereafter. The training courses can be done completely online, and they take into account the special requirements of digital learning. Different methods are used to impart knowledge and multiple senses are engaged. Self-study courses, which can be done completely independently and without any time constraints, offer the most flexibility. In addition, there are courses that include supervised units and courses using the blended learning approach. The latter start with a virtual kick-off with all participants and are comprised of a remote practice unit. ✱

The new online training centre: training.schrack-seconet.com

New dongle system

Schrack Seconet is currently switching its licensing to a modern dongle system. It is now based on a new software on the service platform that can be reached through a specially set-up website. The new dongle licensing is state-of-the-art and offers better visibility and new features. It also enables a more flexible administration of dongle licenses. Training videos have also been created. The switch will soon be completed internationally. ✱

Innovation for the future

"My approach is strongly shaped by innovation and business development and is focused on customer benefit."

Wolfgang Sulzgruber will take over product management for the division Health Care in January 2021. In the interview, he talks about start-up spirit, the value of innovative thinking and the strengths and challenges of communication systems, especially in times of a pandemic.

fire&care — ***Your professional career has been heavily dominated by digital, innovation-driven topics. To what extent can that be of help for the health care solutions Schrack Seconet offers?***
Wolfgang Sulzgruber — Yes, my approach is strongly shaped by innovation and business development and is focused on customer benefit. One important question I ask myself is how we can support hospitals and nursing homes even better. It is helpful to integrate customers into the development process, such as by testing solutions in a safe environment at an early stage and by then quickly integrating our learnings into the development process. That is of great benefit to the process, from the idea to market maturity. I am intrigued by the three start-up principles: think big, start small, scale fast. This approach allows for quick success, offering our customers immediate added value.

fire&care — ***You are taking over as head of product management in a particularly challenging time. What are your views on the position of Visocall IP especially against the backdrop of Covid-19?***
Wolfgang Sulzgruber — Visocall IP is very well received in the market because of its modern IP technology architecture. The high flexibility, the high-quality terminals and the extraordinary user experience are a major advantage and are becoming increasingly important. The biggest plus in times of a pandemic is that Visocall IP keeps person-to-person contact to a minimum. Nursing staff can use Visocall IP to provide their services more efficiently and focus more on their essential tasks. Via the voice connection, the nurse knows what a patient needs in advance, which in turn eliminates unnecessary steps and saves time. And means more convenience for the patients.

fire&care — ***In times of Covid-19, the issue of disinfection is more important than ever. How has Visocall IP prepared for this?***
Wolfgang Sulzgruber — Hygiene and disinfection have always been crucial in hospitals, all the more so in times of the coronavirus. The surfaces on Visocall IP are designed so that germs cannot survive on them for long, and the devices can be easily wiped clean and disinfected – these qualities are particularly valuable in times of a pandemic.

fire&care — ***Securwatch is the second Schrack Seconet health care solution. Have any changes been made during the coronavirus?***
Wolfgang Sulzgruber — Securwatch is an emergency call system for the reliable protection of patients and staff in the health care and nursing sector. Using real-time locating, it enables patients to be mobile. Additionally, it can be used as a wireless call system. A temporary acute treatment unit can thus be easily equipped without the need for laying cables. Patients can simply call the nursing staff for help using a wristband.

fire&care — ***What are the long-term prospects for the division Health Care at Schrack Seconet?***
Wolfgang Sulzgruber — Our hospital communication systems provide essential added value for hospitals and nursing homes. We now want to accelerate the shift to a next-generation solution. To achieve this we will strengthen and complement our good portfolio, not only with our own solutions but also with intelligent products from partners. ✱

ABOUT THE PERSON

Wolfgang Sulzgruber (45) studied industrial management at the technical college FH Joanneum and has completed post-graduate trainings at the WU Executive Academy and the Graz University of Technology. He initially worked in product management at Skidata, where he then built the Australia & New Zealand market from the ground up for a business unit. Afterwards, he headed the Scandinavian region out of Sweden at Anton Paar as managing director before making the switch to Drei Österreich, where he worked as a digital solutions division manager. Wolfgang Sulzgruber likes spending his spare time with his family – he has a son and a daughter. He is a sports enthusiast, enjoying everything from tennis to swimming.

Augmented reality, enhanced safety

Augmented reality (AR) allows for an intelligent combination of the real and the virtual. The possibilities of this technology are exciting – but what concrete implementations are conceivable in the professional realm?

Proof of concept

One interesting area of application are fire alarm systems – the possibilities range from the commissioning of systems to their operation and maintenance. In collaboration with Schrack Seconet, we are currently looking into a concrete implementation: as part of his master's thesis at Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences, Florian Braun of Ebcont is investigating how different AR programmes can support processes at the physical fire alarm control panel. His work has revealed significant differences in the stability and quality of object recognition. As the basis of his master's thesis, Florian Braun is using the developer environment Utility which was developed as a gaming engine and is used for various 3D applications.

3D overlay over the control panel

As part of this feasibility study, a user scans the fire alarm control panel with his mobile device. The AR programme then projects a 3D construction over the actual equipment. Through access to specific information, various applications then become imaginable: for instance, the programme could provide assistance with the on-site commissioning. Visual aids would help connect cables more quickly and reliably without having to leaf through instruction manuals. The AR application could also support all personnel authorised to intervene on the fire alarm control panel in their daily operations, for example in trouble-shooting and routine testing.

Virtual trainings or product demos are also possible. Concept studies that don't yet exist physically could thus be presented virtually at events. Similarly, training on new equipment could be simply conducted virtually – a tablet placed on the table would provide practical step-by-step instructions coupled with 3D views.

From mobile phone to smart glasses

AR applications can run on tablets and smartphones, but also on smart glasses like the HoloLens. Each mobile device has its advantages: using smart glasses frees up both hands for manual operations on the fire alarm control panel. Important information is directly superimposed on the field of vision, and the experience of space is particularly authentic. Interaction is easily possible through gestures.

On the other hand, tablets and smartphones are accessible and cost-effective – they are usually readily available, removing the need to buy additional equipment. Furthermore, the resolution, and therefore the level of detail, is even higher. Using them simply requires installing a corresponding app. Several concrete future scenarios are therefore possible for the application of AR technologies. Augmented reality could provide important assistance in security technology in the foreseeable future. ✱

An image of the application of the AR technology with a tablet can be found on page 15.

Gerhard Hanzmann is head of the Western Region at the Austrian IT company Ebcont and has specialised in the creation of technical and marketing AR/VR applications.

SAFE IN THE DARK WITH CAT EYES

MORE THAN 80 YEARS AGO PERCY SHAW, AN ENGLISHMAN, WAS ON HIS WAY HOME FROM A PUB WHEN HIS HEADLIGHTS CAUGHT THE EYES OF A CAT: THE LIGHT WAS DIRECTLY REFLECTED BACK AT HIM. THIS ENCOUNTER SPARKED THE IDEA FOR AN INVENTION THAT WOULD ULTIMATELY MAKE HIM RICH. FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLE OF CAT'S EYES, HE DEVELOPED RETRO REFLECTORS: HIS FIRST CAT'S EYES WERE MADE OF GLASS AND WERE SET INTO STREETS. THEY REFLECTED THE LIGHT BACK, BUT ONLY IN THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH IT CAME. EVER SINCE, REFLECTORS HAVE EVOLVED GREATLY – TODAY, WE FIND THEM NOT ONLY ON EVERY BICYCLE BUT OFTEN ON CLOTHING AS WELL.

ILLUSTRATION: SUDOWOODO / ISTOCK

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