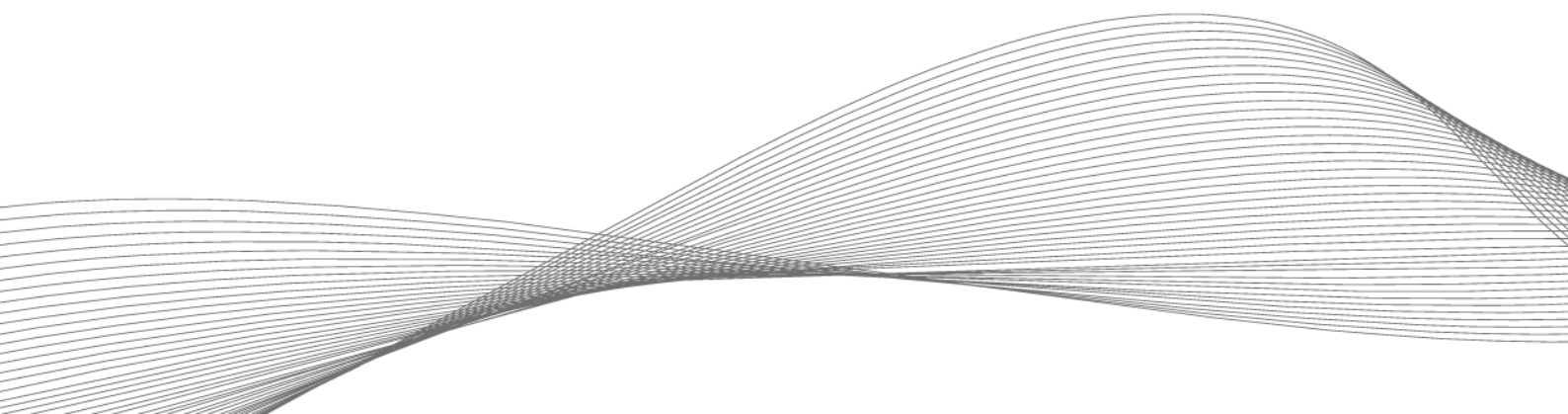


“IT TAKES OPENNESS IN THIS DYNAMIC MARKET”

Interview



Elatec, a provider of hardware- and software-based authentication solutions, sees demand for security products in a growing number of markets—for example, in the area of charging infrastructure for electromobility. In an interview with Smarthouse Pro, Michel van der Meijden and Torunn Siegler explain which partnerships are important for the company in this area, what companies need to look out for in such a dynamic market, and how demand is currently developing.

Interviewer: Lukas Steiglechner

Which markets does Elatec focus on in the e-mobility area?

Torunn Siegler: We are interested and involved in both public and private charging stations with our authentication solutions because the requirements are different in detail, but on the whole, they are identical as far as security is concerned. The important thing is that the solution works across applications. Access to the charging station should be enabled with the same application as access to the building. The various access applications—garage, charging station, building entrance, even printer—should all be able to be authorized with one app.

So, ultimately, the goal is to create an overarching access solution in a building complex, for example?

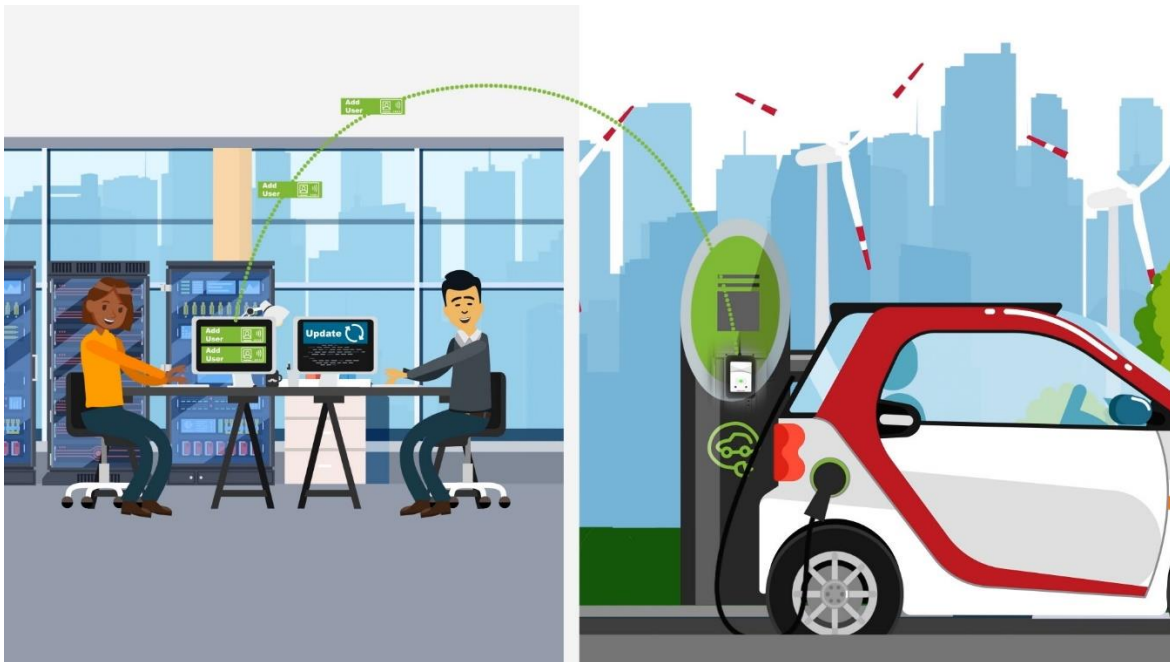
Siegler: Absolutely. One solution for everything. That's what we do as consultants, and that's what customers want. Otherwise, there will only be more costs, more complexity, more work—both on the operator side and on the user side.

Through which channels does Elatec intend to bring its solutions to the market?

Michel van der Meijden: In the first step, it was the public charging stations, the providers and the integrators. But now we want to go even further.

In what way further?

Van der Meijden: Fuel manufacturers are a classic example. They see a market at their service stations and want to add charging infrastructure there. Of course, they can't build the equipment themselves. As a result, they cooperate with large manufacturers of charging infrastructure that are already successful in the market.



Elatec starts directly with the manufacturers?

Van der Meijden: We start right at the development stage with our support. We integrate and design our solutions so that the manufacturers' systems work flawlessly right from the start. This also gives us an advantage over competitors from the Asian market who are trying to gain share here. This is because we implement the standards and regulations that apply in Europe.



"We are absolutely open to new start-ups. Because with them, we can grow together and break new ground. That's what's needed in this dynamic market, because there are always areas opening up where new know-how, new expertise and new technologies are needed."

Michel van der Meijden,
Sales Manager Germany, Benelux and UAE at Elatec

Which standards are particularly important to you?

Van der Meijden: For example, the VDE application rule "VDE-AR-E-2532," which has been in effect since July 2021. This states that charging stations that can be used via RFID technology must be absolutely secure—i.e., the RFID cards or keys cannot be copied or manipulated. This means that secure communication must be guaranteed between the transponder and the reader for authentication. As a result, there is almost no device left in the wallbox sector that does not have RFID hardware installed. All manufacturers will implement this in the next few years because otherwise, there is basically no chance of selling on the private market.

Do you see your job as done once the hardware is running error-free?

Van der Meijden: Not at all. We remain in contact with those who have integrated the solution—providers, manufacturers and system integrators. We are not only working on the hardware, but also on the firmware, which we are constantly updating. As with smartphones, we always offer the latest firmware, which we use to open up new possibilities. However, we work in a backward-compatible manner.

Why is it important to always have up-to-date firmware?

Siegler: Such flexible firmware is necessary to keep pace with the dynamic market. This future viability requires the option of remote maintenance, and the firmware must also be upgradeable and updateable. That's why we not only work closely with the manufacturers, the OEMs, but also with system integrators with practical experience.

Are these significant partnerships for Elatec?

Van der Meijden: Yes, we have a lot of experience with the big global players in the market. But suppliers of systems are also enormously important for us. At the same time, we are absolutely open to new start-ups. Because with them, we can grow together and break new ground. That's what we need in this dynamic market, because new areas are constantly opening up that require new know-how, new expertise and new technologies. You have to be very agile.

Are you just as agile in your choice of system integrators, or do you have fixed partnerships here?

Van der Meijden: Basically, a European integrator has the relevant certifications, because otherwise, they would not be allowed to work in this market at all. Nevertheless, we always carry out a proof of concept. In doing so, we quickly determine whether a

particular partner is capable of meeting the customer's requirements and whether there are any technical, process-related or organizational issues that still need to be clarified afterward.



"It is important that solutions work across applications. Access to the charging station should be enabled with the same app as access to the building."

Torunn Siegler,
Global Head of Marketing Communications at Elatec

How have you perceived supply chain problems in recent years? Have you felt them as well?

Van der Meijden: Of course, we also feel that the current situation is difficult. But we are working continuously to ensure our ability to deliver and to switch products if necessary. This flexibility and the intensive exchange with both partners and suppliers have ensured that we have always had flexible solutions.

But has the pandemic, in turn, increased the need for access solutions?

Siegler: In areas such as hospitals, but also in smart offices, companies have noticed that they need to invest more in authentication. Due to digital transformation and the digitization of processes, we are always active in growing markets with our solutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the whole thing.

And is demand in the EV charger sector currently also increasing because of the electrification of mobility?

Van der Meijden: Demand is definitely increasing, that's for sure. Of course, the loss of subsidies has slowed things down a bit. Smaller start-ups that were dependent on this funding have also disappeared from the market, for example, those serving private households who wanted to implement the solutions. This is less relevant in the public sector because European legislation stipulates that there must be a charging station every 60 kilometers. Therefore, the demand in this area has increased exponentially.

Apart from chargers, what other future markets does Elatec want to tap into with its solutions?

Van der Meijden: Smart office, machine authentication, the education sector and the healthcare sector are all in our focus.

Siegler: All these areas are part of digital transformation. That's why they will also need forms of authentication. And that's where our solutions comes in.

Author

Interview with:

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