

Security for digital content: world-wide success of the Karlsruhe based company

Wibu-Systems: Achieving technological leadership in software protection for 20 years

Karlsruhe – Early this July, the German company Wibu-Systems AG celebrated its 20th anniversary together with its international distribution partners, local dignitaries, guest speakers, and staff at the ZKM, Center for Arts and Media in Karlsruhe. During his address, CEO Oliver Winzenried drew a timeline from the beginning days of the company to the present. He illustrated the important and successful innovations in the company's history. He also outlined some exciting ideas that will shape the company's future and ensure continuous growth. For example, the Karlsruhe-based company is an active and leading member in some current research projects: "Pro-Protect" for protection against product piracy in the machinery sector, and "VitaBIT" for a secure platform in mobile nursing services.

Twenty years ago, it was not easy for a software company to protect its programs and prevent piracy and illegal copying. Either protection measures were easy to circumvent, or they displeased users who could not save backup copies, or faced non-operating printers due to a connected dongle.

"We can do much better!" Oliver Winzenried and Marcellus Buchheit told themselves. In 1989, they founded the company Wibu-Systems in Karlsruhe with the goal of developing and marketing the most effective and most reliable hardware-based software protection system in the whole world.

Since then, the company has successfully established its place in the global market. And both founders achieved many milestones in the area of software protection and license management. For example, they achieved the first protection hardware based on PCMCIA as Express Card, as SD Card, and as CompactFlash Card; first solutions for Mac OS X, Sun Solaris and Windows CE. They were the first to

design hardware combining protection and mass storage. Unique is the variety of platforms: next to desktop solutions, the company provides solutions for the industrial sector, and for embedded and mobile platforms. The vision is to have a single protection system spanning across all applications: starting with cellular phones over to embedded software and production data in machines and installations, up to desktop PC platforms covering server structures and cloud computing where the software is provided as a service over the Internet on temporarily leased PCs.

Today, Wibu-Systems' products not only protect programs from illegal use. They also manage the access to hosted software, i.e. SaaS or Software as a Service, to websites, and they protect documents and multimedia files – and this is not simply “vapor ware”. In several contests Wibu-Systems challenged hackers worldwide to try removing their protection systems – and they still remain unbeaten.

According to an IDC study, Wibu-Systems AG ranks third in sales, in the global software protection market. The company currently has a staff of 80 employees, 55 of them at the headquarters in Karlsruhe. The company's international sales and consulting activities are supported by subsidiaries in the USA (Seattle) and China (Shanghai), with sales offices in Belgium, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, and distributors in more than 16 countries.

Oliver Winzenried proudly revealed, "Many customers who began using our solutions from the very start are still among our top customers. They appreciate that our WibuBox from 1989 is still available today, has been further developed, and works with the newest CodeMeter solutions. Just try to name a competitor able to match such continuity!"



Image 1: Small-sized software protection with big properties: Marcellus Buchheit (left) and Oliver Winzenried with the protection hardware CmStick.



Image 2: The company founders of WibU-Systems AG at the anniversary in the ZKM (left: Oliver Winzenried, right: Marcellus Buchheit).

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WIBU-SYSTEMS AG was founded in 1989 by Oliver Winzenried and Marcellus Buchheit. The main focus is in the fields of Digital Rights Management, software protection, license management, document protection and access control. The company located in Karlsruhe has distributors all over the world, offices in Seattle, USA, as well as in Shanghai, China, and sales offices in Belgium, Great Britain, Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands..

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