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Tuesday April 12 2011

Organizations have enforced smart card authentication in recent years; however this technology is perceived as cryptic and cumbersome by many. by Sven Gossel



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Organizations have enforced smart card authentication in recent years; however this technology is perceived as cryptic and cumbersome by many.

iEnigma by charismathics simplifies strong authentication by using smart phones instead. The software is compatible with most PKI applications on computers and smart phones, maintaining the same security standards the marketplace has been offering over the last years. Smart cards and related hardware can be replaced in favor of a new user experience. With the touch of the phone screen, iEnigma users can log to their system, sign emails and documents, as well as encrypt communications.

Corporations can thus benefit of reduced investments to protect their communications: they can save on buying additional hardware and thus be open to new and wider ranges of use cases. By supporting charismathics smart security interface (CSSI)® - the agnostic and leading PKI middleware - iEnigma can on the one hand run in a hybrid environment where both smart cards and mobile authentication devices coexist; on the other hand it ensures the compatibility with multiple smart card operating systems and computer platforms. Rather than disrupting a technology for another, iEnigma enhances IT security by design, maintaining compatibility with the investments made already. Enterprises can then both constantly enlarge the number of active authentication users and progressively reduce the per seat cost of the existing ones. On top of it the flexibility mobility only offers is encompassed: no additional piece of hardware to carry or lock down that might be lost or stolen or fail in use, but rather credentials kept in one of the closest companions of our daily life: the smart phone.

iEnigma is in fact a mobile full PKI security system, completely unique and thus patented. Comparable products are either OTP or password based solutions. But companies should rather invest in architectures securing the communication between smart phone and laptop or mirroring the strong authentication and digital signature functionalities like a smart card does. iEnigma bridges user credentials from phones into computers, encrypting the communication channel, allowing PIN entry on the smart phone itself, thus enhancing the security compared to standard smart cards. With iEnigma, charismathics has translated standard APIs into Bluetooth language, reproducing the exact PKI authentication environment, and thus ensuring IT administrators that the architecture and internal processes already in place can be preserved unaffected. Providing full TMS compatibility, enabling secure PIN entry and secure channel messaging by default, the software is immediately available for Windows Mobile. iEnigma will soon run on Android, RIM and Apple, also supporting NFC enabled units.

iEnigma re-invents the smart card and is the first strong authentication product that incorporates the expected permutation of corporate IT systems. Running on the common smart phone platforms, it supports applications both on the computer and the smart phone, putting all credentials together in a secure data container on the phone, whether it is the key chain, the flash memory, the SIM card or the optional secure microSD card such as the Secure Element for NFC operations.

As iEnigma starts to be known and appreciated, it is also being integrated with other vendors' applications, first and foremost the Single Sign-On platform of IBM called Tivoli Access Manager for Enterprise Single Sign-On, commonly referred to as TAM-E SSO. charismathics PKI middleware, the CSSI, has already been certified Ready for Tivoli. iEnigma extends this opportunity to IBM TAM-E SSO users holding a smart phone, who can then enjoy two-factor authentication with the charismathics smart security interface engine and then pick up either smart cards or mobile devices to log on to their system. With the same software they can equally log to their Windows session and perform all PKI operations. And most outstandingly different users can log to and off from the same machine by establishing private sessions the moment they reach the active Bluetooth field of the computer.

All current products in the market are proprietary or represent a niche - no one offers an iEnigma-like 2-in-1 solution and with side benefits such as: full PKI compatibility; significant reductions in hardware cost by replacing tokens and readers with the phone instead; encrypted communication; secure PIN entry; flexible credentials manageable by the user. iEnigma makes full use of the advantages of smart phones and is still fully compatible with all standard processes, APIs, cryptography algorithms and identity management systems. There is no other product opening the range of contactless authentication applications for PKI, such as in hospitals or transportation or payment schemes. The simple user interface opens up strong authentication to small organizations and the single user, reducing identity thefts and phishing attacks within day-to-day use.

Sven Gossel is Managing Director at Charismathics

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