

## Flexibility is key

Integrators are no strangers to the importance of flexibility. Their jobs depend on their ability to fill a variety of roles, from listening to customers and conducting security assessments to coordinating with manufacturers and trying to stay current with the latest products and code requirements. The pace at which technology is changing means new products are constantly entering the market, and their clients depend on them to choose the best solutions for that will not only meet today's needs, but tomorrow's as well.

When end users talk about their security needs, they are likely to use words like "strong," "effective" and "reliable." Some may also mention a desire that it be "easy to use." But one of the most important features that is often overlooked or underestimated in a security system is flexibility.

"Security systems are selected with longevity in mind," explains Robert Gaulden, project based business leader, electronic access control for Allegion. "However, technology is moving so quickly that it's really important to have the ability make changes over time as your needs change and new features and capabilities become available."

Flexibility not only allows end users to upgrade their systems over time, it can also allow them to have more options for how they use their facility. As the sharing economy becomes mainstream, a growing number of facilities are rethinking how and when their space is used, and security systems are playing a major role in facilitating those efforts.

### Flexible systems

The key to flexible security lies in open architecture. Unlike traditional systems that are only compatible with a specific brand or version of software, open architecture allows systems to be compatible with both existing and

future software from third party providers. Not only does this significantly limit the lifetime cost of ownership, it also gives facility owners maximum flexibility in determining the pace and location of any future security expansions or upgrades. Changes can be executed in a multi-phased approach, as budgets permit.

Open architecture systems also allow integrators the flexibility to determine what level of functionality and features are necessary for each opening and create solutions that are both customized and affordable. While high profile main entrances require comprehensive access control systems, secondary entrances that are primarily used for emergency egress may only need lockdown and status monitoring capabilities. By selecting the appropriate solution for each opening, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach to security, integrators now have the ability to significantly improve safety in a more cost-effective manner.

"The customer experience is based on expectations that are both known and unknown," says Gaulden. "The more you understand what their expectations are, the better able you are to drive that experience and make it positive. Open architecture allows you to pick and choose the right components to tailor that overall experience to meet the expectations and needs of the customer."

### Flexible spaces

The sharing economy is a revolutionary transformation of the way we think about ownership. Millennials were the first generation to fully embrace the idea of shared resources, but it has quickly taken hold across all generations as people recognize its financial and environmental benefits.

Business parks are opening their doors to small businesses that need office space, but can't yet afford



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the full costs of renting or owning a private space. Shared office space softens the burden by splitting conference rooms, common areas, administrative services and building usage fees with other companies. Co-working is another popular option, especially for startups and entrepreneurs. Many offer a dynamic, open-office environment and encourage collaboration. And, it's not just small businesses. Larger companies will often rent space for satellite offices or as a temporary measure to utilize unused office space in advance of future expansion.

Another sharing trend is hoteling, the concept of reserving temporary work space within your company's building. Employees are assigned a desk, meeting room or other space based on their needs for the day. This option is typically best for companies that have a large number of employees travelling or working remotely, which would normally leave several desks unused each day. Hoteling allows the company to minimize its square footage by only supplying space for the amount of people who will be in the office each day versus the total number of employees.

While shared spaces offer a great many benefits to a company's bottom line, they can present security challenges to traditional security systems, particularly when dealing with a constantly changing office floor plan. If the existing security system is not able to be reconfigured easily and effectively, a company may not be able to adopt this model of shared spaces without costly upgrades to their system. However, an open architecture electronic access control system can allow companies to easily transition to shared spaces by assigning individuals access to specific openings throughout the building. Those authorizations can then be adjusted or rescinded at any time, as needed.

"Open architecture allows third party partners to write their code and customize how they solve problems for customers," says Gaulden. "With traditional systems, the end-user's only available option is that company's

interpretation of what their needs are at that moment. But open architecture systems provide long-term options when deciding what will be the best solution. At the end of the day, the ability for integrators to have those solutions and customize them to the customer's needs is key."

### **Partnership opportunities**

Integrators play a vital role in helping end users identify and prioritize the security measures that need to be implemented. With the number of available security products, the selection process can be overwhelming to an end user. They depend on security integrators to ensure that the system or products installed are successful, appropriate, code-compliant and cost effective.

An open architecture system gives integrators the ability to not simply make a sale, but to form a long-term partnership with facility owners and managers, and develop a scalable, comprehensive security plan that is both effective and affordable.

“Integrators should be consultants, educating their customer base about the newest capabilities available. However they also need to ensure that the customer's investment in security is protected for the long-term by choosing open architecture systems that will provide the maximum amount of flexibility and usefulness.”

– **Robert Gaulden**, project based business leader,  
electronic access control

Building partnerships with end users also positions integrators to provide their services again in future. "Earning a new customer account is both expensive and time consuming," says Gaulden. "Open architecture systems offer integrators the opportunity to grow revenues with existing customers by extending the value of their electronic access control infrastructure."

## Conclusion

Whether it's the rapid pace at which technology is changing or the speed with which society has adopted the sharing economy model, the only constant businesses can rely on is change. The future needs and goals of any company are never certain, which is why maintaining flexibility is vital to ensuring long-term success.

Open architecture systems provide a solid platform on which integrators and end users can build solutions that meet today's needs without restricting future options. This level of flexibility not only protects the end user's financial investment in a security system, it also protects the integrator's relationship with clients by providing a wide range of fully customizable options that can be used to address any future challenges.

## About Allegion

Allegion (NYSE: ALLE) is a global pioneer in safety and security, with leading brands like CISA®, Interflex®, LCN®, Schlage®, SimonsVoss® and Von Duprin®. Focusing on security around the door and adjacent areas, Allegion produces a range of solutions for homes, businesses, schools and other institutions. Allegion is a \$2 billion company, with products sold in almost 130 countries. For more, visit [www.allegion.com](http://www.allegion.com).

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