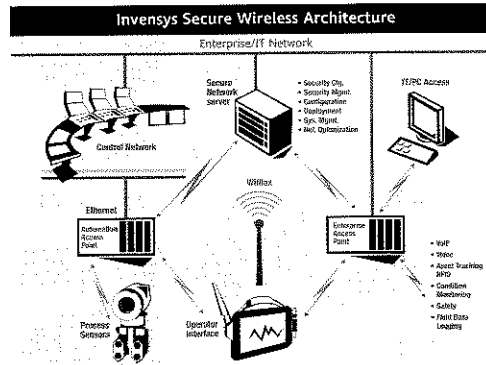


Managing & Securing Industrial Wireless

In October at ISA Expo 2005, Invensys Process Systems introduced its strategy for managing and securing industrial wireless communications. The initiative touts the need for a single access point for wireless solutions to bolster the security and manageability of such systems. The technology behind the program will be provided as a managed service whereby users will pay a monthly fee to enable the platform, which, in turn, Invensys will manage and support.

According to Hesh Kagan, technology director for new ventures at Invensys Process Systems, the company's wireless strategy is designed to enable the trend from wired to wireless in industrial environments. Currently, Kagan says industrial wireless solutions are typically being implemented as a series of point solutions, often operating via different protocols, frequencies, and networks. As a result, he says the systems raise compatibility issues and are opening new doors to the overall network. These doors, Kagan says, create manageability and security issues. "Invensys proposes to feed all wireless communications through one door, providing for a more manageable system and one that is more secure," he says.

Invensys Process Systems' wireless approach is comprised of three main elements: a roadmap; access point systems management software; and the ability to offer the solution as a managed



Invensys Process Systems' service-based architecture aims to make industrial wireless manageable and secure for end-users.

service. Ultimately, Invensys envisions its wireless program as an enabling technology for effective asset performance management, including process optimization, device management, real-time equipment condition monitoring, energy management, personnel tracking, asset tracking, security, and enterprise asset management.

In Kagan's view, the key stumbling block for current-generation wireless solutions is fundamentally a systems management issue. With the number of wireless devices coming to market, each supporting vendor-specific network options, Kagan says it is difficult for users to employ wireless in a logical way and virtually impossible to ensure an appropriate level of security. "The problem in the wireless world is that good networking practices aren't really well defined," say Kagan.

As president of the Wireless Industrial Networking Alliance (WINA, www.wina.org), Kagan is working to promote common methodologies for wireless architecture. One of WINA's core goals is to influence and support applicable standards for industrial wireless, and it has been particularly active in promoting ISA-SP100, a base set of guidelines for deploying wireless manufacturing and control systems.

Invensys Process Systems' access point software provides a common data and security model for all wireless frequencies and protocols (WiFi, WiMax, 802.15.4, RFID, ZigBee, VoIP, proprietary protocols, etc.). The shared access point enables a common data model to make it easier to incorporate wireless data into asset performance management applications. Meanwhile, the standardized security model helps ensure appropriate levels of protection and performance for all wireless-enabled devices.

Harry Forbes, a senior analyst with ARC Advisory Group (www.arcweb.com), says the most interesting aspect of Invensys Process Systems' wireless strategy is the managed service element. By providing its wireless architecture as a service, Forbes says Invensys can keep the technology up to date so users aren't burdened with a never-ending series of updates to accommodate the latest versions of wireless protocols, frequencies, and networks. Further, he says this approach is a good fit for users because it will ensure that new wireless devices are fed through a common architecture with access to all of the manageability and security features it provides.

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