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Stadium Security Starts with Access Control

VfB Stuttgart Arena Betriebs GmbH relies on the consulting services and technology from Interflex



Illustration: asp Architekten Stuttgart

The Mercedes-Benz Arena in Stuttgart

This is the venue that hosted the 1993 IAAF World Championships in Athletics, which went down in the annals of sport as possibly the one with the best atmosphere. World-famous stars, such as the Rolling Stones and Jon Bon Jovi, have performed on its stage. Several matches of the FIFA World Cup 2006 took place here. The arena is also the home turf of VfB Stuttgart, five-time winner of the German national soccer championship, three-time winner of the DFB cup, one-time winner of the Super Cup and, for decades now, one of the top clubs in the local soccer scene. The Mercedes-Benz Arena, the heart of the NeckarPark in the east of Baden-Wuerttemberg's capital city, is no doubt one of the most famous stadiums in Germany. Since 1993, extensive construction and modernization measures have been taken at the former Neckar Stadium. The arena is now one of the most impressive sports venues in Germany, and not only in terms of architecture. It also offers the highest level of convenience, with seating for more than 60,500 guests. In 2009, construction began to convert the Mercedes-Benz Arena into a temple devoted solely to soccer. The athletics track was removed and the field was lowered. Thus, as of August 2011, all spectators will be even closer to the action with an excellent view of the green turf.

"A stadium where World Cups and national league matches are held, is of course, more in the public eye than other stadiums. This also has a direct effect on security requirements," says Marcus Bretschneider, head of sales, administration and organization at VfB Stuttgart Arena Betriebs GmbH. "To ensure that business operations run smoothly and, in particular, to guarantee absolute safety for stadium visitors, we have to make sure that only authorized persons have access to the stadium grounds and buildings, twenty-four-seven, every day of the week." It is necessary to effectively prevent any possible vandalism, sabotage or acts of terrorism by persons who could take advantage of the soccer game as a stage for their own purposes.



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Constant adaptation of access permissions required

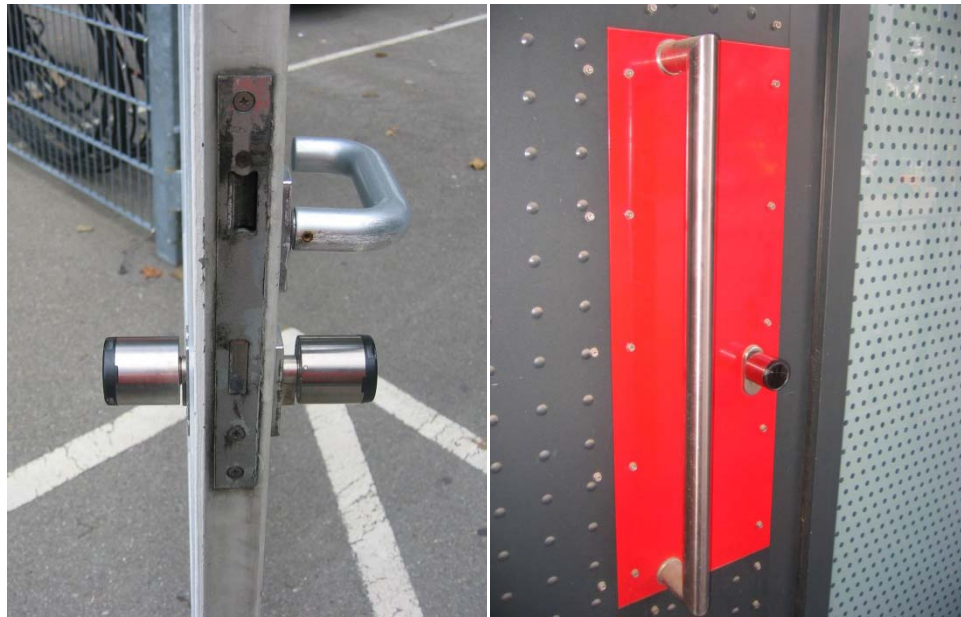
To carry out this responsibility effectively and efficiently, the stadium operator has been using an access control system, which also includes technology by Interflex Datensysteme GmbH, for the past ten years. In the course of rebuilding the stadium, it became necessary to expand and modernize the security system to make the assignment of access permissions even more transparent and convenient. "In the past, each time a key was lost, we had to obtain a replacement and, in some cases, we even had to replace the entire locking system. This was not only time-consuming, but also very expensive. It was also hard to keep track of who had which key and when," says Marcus Bretschneider, explaining the reason for initiating the project. It was also planned that the SCHARRena, open since April 2011, would be equipped with an independent access control system. This multi-purpose sports hall is integrated into the Mercedes-Benz Arena and was built on the space that became available during the reconstruction of the 'Untertuerkheimer Kurve.' Smart Allianz Stuttgart, the national women's league volleyball team, is one of the teams that will be using the venue for their games. VfB Stuttgart Arena Betriebs GmbH, as the future sole tenant of the stadium, issued a request for tenders for the development and implementation of a new access control concept. After intensive meetings, the contract was once again awarded to Interflex, the company's long-standing partner. And according to Marcus Bretschneider, it has proven to be the right choice: "The cooperation with Interflex could not be better. The contact persons are always available and deliver excellent work."

Not only was the software updated in the course of the project, but the hardware was significantly upgraded. The implemented multi-level security system for the Mercedes-Benz Arena alone consists of ten terminals networked directly with the software and more than 100 electronic lock cylinders - with the ID card as link between online and offline access control. Furthermore, numerous mechanical locks as well as the existing KEMAS connection, with its two key depots secured by Interflex readers, were seamlessly integrated into the system. Thus, each entrance is equipped with an effective protection against unauthorized access. In addition to the main entrances to the building, the perimeter of the arena, including the fences, security gates and other access points, is also secured. Inside the arena, the access control system comprises the equipment rooms shared with the SCHARRena and other security areas.



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Fast Facts

Due to the consulting services and technology provided by Interflex, the Mercedes-Benz Arena is now equipped with a new security system that provides far more transparency and flexibility in the assignment of access permissions than originally anticipated and significantly lowers operating costs.

Location-bound and time-limited access permissions

The system is currently used by approx. 200 employees with individual ID cards. Employees of external companies, who require access to the arena, are also integrated into the system – with appropriate restrictions in the form of local and temporal access rights. This service is used, for example, by catering services, construction workers, and craftsmen. Thanks to the new system, those responsible are now able to precisely assign access rights and, for the first time, specifically define locations and attach a time restriction. For example, it is possible to specify that users, who have access to the equipment rooms shared by the SCHARRena and Mercedes-Benz Arena, are not permitted access to other stadium areas. "With conventional keys, such differentiation would be impossible. Furthermore, we are now in the position to grant an employee access to certain areas for a certain period of time and just as easily cancel these rights from one day to the next," says Marcus Bretschneider, and points out that this increase in transparency and flexibility also pays off in the form of lower operating costs: "If necessary, we can reconfigure our access organization at almost no cost and, with the new system, the loss of an ID card is no longer a serious problem: With one click, access can be blocked for the lost ID card."