



## Live from the drivers' seats

1989-2014: “25 years propelling your business to new heights” is a bold statement that only exceptional company founders and top managers can make. In this interview, Oliver Winzenried, CEO of WIBU-SYSTEMS AG, and Marcellus Buchheit, CEO of WIBU-SYSTEMS USA, Inc., reveal some exclusive details about their personal journey and the ingredients of their special recipe which made them achieve a long-term vision and gain world recognition as one of the top three leading vendors in software protection, licensing, and security.

### When did the two of you meet, and what caused you to form Wibu-Systems?

**[Marcellus]** Oliver and I first met at the Karlsruhe University while we were working on a mixed software/hardware project for the university's amateur radio station. Over the next couple of years, while still attending classes during the day, we developed several custom-specific projects at night. They were all successful and this made us confident that we could create a product that we could sell to the mass market. We soon realized that original software for PCs could be easily hacked and that security solutions on the market were still in a primordial stage. The plan took shape in 1987, when Oliver developed the WibuKey chip and its hardware, and I focused on the protection technology and tools on the PC.

### WIBU-SYSTEMS has kept a unique vertical focus over the years. How did you spot this niche, and why have you not embraced additional technologies?

**[Oliver]** WibuKey 1.0 was released for DOS and already contained a basic version of the sophisticated automatic protection to come. Over the following years, the number of operating systems exploded – 16-bit Windows, OS/2, Novell, Linux, 32-bit Windows, MacOS, etc. We wanted to present a universal solution for all platforms to our customers. However, supporting so many platforms with a single architecture and one unique programming interface (API) was challenging, and our development resources were limited. Meanwhile the software protection market was growing

worldwide, so we decided to keep faith to our original technological challenge. With a clear technological focus, we could listen to prospects' and customers' demands and provide them with an unprecedented advanced technology. We felt that to enter other security markets would dilute our core focus of software protection. At the end of the day, still in our niche, our solutions have gone through tremendous development: from IP “Protection” against counterfeiting and reverse engineering, to “Licensing” as an enabler of new business models, to “Security” to prevent tampering and cyber-attacks.



### Alexander H. Delaney, President, eSim Games, USA

Happy birthday and congratulations for your 25th anniversary! We're looking forward to the next 25 years of innovation and excellent service.

**John Gibs, Product Manager  
Agfa Licensing Software,  
Agfa, Belgium**

Congratulations to the whole team at Wibu-Systems! Working with you for the past eight years has been a pleasure. We are looking forward to securely growing our business together.

**Where did the idea of CodeMeter originate?**

**[Marcellus]** Before the Internet, software was burned on a CD and shipped in a box; adding a dongle was a no-brainer. In the Internet age, CDs became obsolete and software was all downloaded, which completely changed the rules of the game. Threats multiplied, allowing us in turn to grow our market share, but at the same time we had to rethink the concept of the product itself. We ended up envisioning a dongle which could be shared by many software publishers, but strictly programmable and upgradable at the end user's computer. After lot of brainstorming we came up with the idea that the name for this new product would be "CodeMeter" to express the purpose of the technology, namely that the "metering" aspect related to the use of software, so that the act of measuring could be used as an attribute of the source code.



**Being the CEO of a company for 25 years is not an easy business; what is your way to keep a clear vision of the future strategies you want to pursue?**

**[Oliver]** WIBU-SYSTEMS' first core value is to be of service to our customers so that their business can expand, once their assets are protected. And for that we listen closely to customers' wishes; they are an incredible source of ideas due to their diversity in their markets, cultures, and perspectives. Further, we try to anticipate the market trends, and that's where our active role in several international business organizations and standardization bodies lets our imagination flies to a different



Even the busiest people need to take a break sometimes

level. Last but not least, competition and new security threats challenge our brain and ensure we continuously evolve our products.

**CodeMeter seems to be a complex product. How can it be described simply?**

**[Marcellus]** In our early years our attention was fully taken by dongles as they represent the utmost security level when it comes to software protection. But we also knew that the criteria for adopting such a technology would sometimes include other circumstances, like at times the impossibility to connect to hardware at the end user's site, or a peculiar license distribution model, or a security solution so advanced that it was the most expensive part of the application. This is why we added CmActLicense to our portfolio. It still resides under the same CodeMeter umbrella, because

licenses can actually be stored in a mix of containers, all handled by the same core technology. CodeMeter is still involved when it comes to the creation, management, and distribution of licenses, but now it's a different layer of the CodeMeter technology – License Central. License Central interfaces with hard- and soft-license holders and streamlines the whole process in conjunction with the existing business ERP, CRM, and e-commerce systems in place.

**Who are WIBU-SYSTEMS' ideal customers?**

**[Oliver]** Essentially we are coming across two main user groups. One uses PC software in office environments, while the other consists of manufacturers that deal with industrial applications and embedded devices. The former is gradually implementing a centralized license

**Christian Vardin, President, ControlEng, Canada**

Happy 25th Birthday. We first started using WibuKey back in 2004 to protect our flagship product "SERVOsoft". We now use CodeMeter for both protection and license management. Thanks for responding so quickly over the years to our requests and the requests of our customers and distributors.



F.l.t.r Oliver Winzenried and Marcellus Buchheit

management solution to handle all new license models and automate the related processes. The latter is facing not just global counterfeiting but also sabotage, tampering, and cyber-attacks which are unprecedented in history, and therefore needs to become knowledgeable in security and to implement integrity protection solutions. In the case of ISVs, the product can easily be a standard package with optional customization features. For OEMs, the scenario is more complex for both sides, which is why we have begun forming strategic partnerships in order to generate facilitated solutions for developers. We are extremely satisfied with our customers and the long-term relationships we have with many of them testify to this mutual feeling.



**Guido Walther, Director Technical Support, Wincor Nixdorf, Germany**

We have been using CodeMeter successfully for CryptTA since 2009. Thank you for your co-operation and our congratulations for the 25-year anniversary of Wibu-Systems. We'll continue to rely on Wibu-Systems' technology for protection and process integration.

**The approach to market has changed as technology has pervaded our lives; are you a precursor of new trends or do you keep a more conservative attitude?**

[Marcellus] We have always strived to be creative and develop innovative and proprietary solutions, and to support new emerging technologies, whether it's a new operating system, a trend like the cloud, a revolution like connected systems in industrial automation, or the portability found in mobile technology. That's the approach we started with 25 years ago when we first began protecting Windows applications without requiring any source code modification, or later with Wibu-Box in the

**Socorro Sesma, Director of Technology and Product Management, INDRA Sistemas, Spain**

Congratulations for your 25th anniversary! It's been a pleasure working with you over the last seven years. We'll continue to rely on your products, confident that you will keep on innovating and delivering the best solution as you have been doing so far.

form factor of a PC Card, or later on with the USB interface, and even today with CodeMeter units available as µSD cards or CFast cards, to today's support of PLCs and real time operating systems.

At the same time customers are right in asking for backwards compatibility and retrofitting, and we work hard to ensure our oldest dongles are still compatible with our newest technologies. This is a great benefit for their business continuity even though it somehow limits our possibilities.

**You have opened other subsidiaries of Wibu-Systems across the world. What drove your decision to start a business in the US and in China? Are you considering further expansion?**

[Oliver] The foundations of software development are pretty much identical around the globe – same platforms, computer models, development tools, etc. Other factors determine the success of a company abroad, like the completeness of the localization services, the skills of the local support team, and the training of the sales team. The liaison between the headquarters and the local realities are challenged by time differences, distinctive cultural approaches, linguistic barriers, diverse legal problems. We will definitely expand further on, but since we want to make sure we offer a tailored approach that meets the regional demands, we'll proceed progressively at a pace that allows us in the end to have a stable and competent foothold in each country.

**Ing. Georg Wenninger, General Management, WSCAD, Germany**

WSCAD has been using Wibu-Systems technology since 1990 and has been able to follow the evolution of the company. We have no regret whatsoever about the decision we took back then. Congratulations for your first 25 years of success, and keep going.



**Markus Stoll, Director Engineering IAM Diagnostic Software, Bosch, Germany**

We are pleased with the integration of Wibu-Systems CodeMeterAct, which has allowed us to put an even safer solution in place.

We are very excited about our burgeoning growth into Latin America and Africa: these continents are amazing in terms of their economic potential and we would be excited to start local collaborations there.

**Many of your co-workers have been with you for an exceptionally long time. What is the secret behind such a loyal team?**

**[Marcellus]** Employees are the engine of innovation and design. Their input is very respected. Our company is growing in a stable fashion aiming at a broad ultimate picture; we are not the typical "hire and fire" business driven by short sighted financial results. At Wibu-Systems, the staff members of all departments contribute with their ideas and influence company's decisions. The atmosphere is cheerful, doors are open to invite dialogue, we all enjoy a high level of reciprocal trust combined with a receptiveness to cultural interchange both within our headquartered team and with all our offices and partners scattered all over the world. The company promotes high ethical

**Dieter Hess, General Manager, 3S-Smart Software Solutions, Germany**

Wibu-Systems is our partner for license protection and security on all desktop and embedded platforms. The reasons that led us to choose Wibu-Systems are the strong commitment to the industrial market, the long-term experience in the license protection technology, and the willingness to continue to improve the products together with us.

values which makes it easier for all to identify with them and pursue the common goals we set together. Last but not least, we invest in continuous training and education of our staff and share our commercial success with them.

**Matthew Fowles, Group Marketing Manager, LVD Group, Belgium**

After years of working with Wibu-Systems, we continue to be impressed with the extreme reliability and the easy handling of its security technology. CodeMeter supports us admirably in coping with LVD's ongoing technological evolution.

**You have achieved a proven track record of patents and awards. What is your role to this day with the educational world? And how much are you involved in training new students?**

**[Oliver]** Yes, that's true, we own several trademarks, domains and patents in the US, Japan, and Europe. Patents are the true essence of the value of a company. And to make sure our innovations keep being top-notch, we are very active in research and development, and thus cooperate with, among others, the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, the Fraunhofer organizations, and DFKI -- the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence.

**Antoon Laane, Product Manager EMEA, Controllers & Design Software, Rockwell Automation, Belgium**

Wibu-Systems has proven to be a solid business partner, clearly showing their understanding of the Industrial Automation market and the critical role of security in our industry. It is truly a pleasure to work with every member of the team.

Thanks to this constant exchange of knowledge, students are welcome for their internships in our headquarters or offices abroad while they complete their PhD. Moreover, we promote engineering, computer science, and other technology-oriented disciplines directly in primary schools, where we introduce pupils to these professions.

**If there was something flattering you were to say about your top competitors, what would it be?**

**[Marcellus]** We have a decent amount of competitors in the field, not too few and not too many, which gives us the right kind of encouragement to offer high-value products to our customers and spurs us to differentiate our offering. As independent analysts recently highlighted in a Hot Company Watchlist for our market segment, Wibu-Systems is actually one of the two top world leaders in hardware-based software protection and one of the three top global vendors in license management. Given that we have an innate tendency to over-engineer, the competition also plays a role in keeping us on track. With some vendors driven by sheer profit and others who have mainly turned their company from an entrepreneurial activity to a financial venture, we are happy to sit in the midst of all this and maintain our feet right on the ground and our minds in free rein mode.

**What is the legacy that you'd like to convey to aspirational entrepreneurs?**

**[Oliver]** Wait until you have a bright idea, but when it comes to you and you've tested it, start pursuing it no matter what. And then keep a good balance between external suggestions and your own insight. Patience and endurance are also top ingredients for a good mix. 