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When The Western Mind Meets The Eastern Heart

Society has often not only been fascinated by the differences - but also the similarities - between Western and Eastern cultures. Extracting the best of both civilisations could reap promising benefits, as one card reader vendor discovered. We spoke to Gilbert Leung of ACS to find out more...

PAN : What prompted ACS to start developing products to bridge the various gaps in the contactless sector?

Gilbert : More and more available applications are showing potential use of contactless cards and readers. Some current successful projects around the world like transit (eg. Octopus card in HK, Oyster card in UK and Suica card in Japan), payment (eg. PayPass & payWave) and enterprise security (eg. Soliton's "Smarton" in Japan) are demonstrating the benefits of using contactless smart card and reader technologies. As one of the leading players in the market, ACS has no reason not to contribute its expertise in this important market. On the other hand, it has been realised that in the areas of medical, gaming and emergency services, there is an increasing demand for contactless smart cards and readers to fulfil the need for security, volume and enhanced transaction speed in those sectors. Currently, ACS has 3 major contactless readers that are available in the market, namely the ACR122 NFC contactless, ACR128 contact & contactless and ACR120 contactless readers.

PAN : What would consumers be demanding next in their contactless devices? Are you equipped to address those demands?

Gilbert : We are expecting system integrators to begin looking at contactless readers with automatic driver installation for their large-scale projects. This kind of driver installation can dramatically reduce costs brought about by after-sales services. Thus, we developed an ACR122 NFC smart card reader compliant to CCID standards. The reader uses the standard Microsoft CCID driver which is already bundled in the Windows Vista platform. ACS is always quick to respond on its development roadmap according to the market demands.

PAN : How do you maximise your expertise, global resources and technological capabilities so that your customers will always receive the best in the contactless industry?

Gilbert : Currently, we allocate over 75% of our resources for R&D and general administrative functions. As a technological company, we have to keep developing new products to meet the global market changes. We always ask ourselves, "where are we now?" and "where are we going?" One of the model answers to these questions is to co-operate with customers to develop new products - so-called "collaborative product development". When we work together with our partners to develop and commercialise a specialised product, we may contribute our technical or creative expertise, while the partner may be more likely to contribute capital, marketing and distribution capabilities. Collaborative product development can help us bring products to market quicker and increase customer satisfaction by delivering the right products - thanks to efficient collaboration between partners and our design teams throughout the development cycle. In short, instead of competing with other companies that would result in the draining of our resources, we seek to thrive on a working relationship with our partners to develop and commercialise products on a shared effort of resources.

PAN : ACS is already a household name in the card industry. How would you foresee yourself evolving further in the contactless sector?

Gilbert : From a technical point of view, contact and contactless technologies are under one roof. More or less, these technologies share a similar core expertise and effort of development. Some advocates of smart card technology have said that they are separated into 2 different segments. However, the situation has changed, with the technology now being very matured and most card vendors promoting their combi/hybrid cards. Dual-interface readers are also commonly available in the market, thus, it might not be a true statement to separate these 2 expertises any longer. There is no doubt that we will continue to increase our resources to develop new products that meet market requirements.

PAN : What sort of impression would you want to leave in the minds of your customers when they think of the ACS brand name?

Gilbert : Of course, the core image that we want to deliver is that ACS is one of the world's leading smart card and smart card reader providers. We adopt the strengths of the East and the West by integrating the Western scientific mind with the Eastern Confucius philosophy. We take an experimental approach in the R&D of our products by continuously analysing and improving from past experiences, which ensures product quality. On the other hand, we incorporate Confucius ideas in our management style and interaction with people.

- **Trustworthy** - We deliver total commitment to our business partners and our colleagues
- **Be reasonable to others** - We offer our best to customers, somewhat more than being just fair to them
- **Keep close to customers** - We keep in touch with customers regularly
- **Flexible in business dealings** - We have the reputation of being flexible and fast on delivery of products