

Huge new market at firm's fingertips

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by James Barton, The Journal

A FINGERPRINT reading security company is hoping to unlock a &#pound;1bn market after signing up a Korean and a North American company as commercial partners.

North Tyneside-based UK Biometrics has joined forces with Korea's leading electronic security terminals maker, Keico Hightech, and North American medical equipment business, Lumidigm, which holds the patent to a new imaging process.

The company is at the forefront of biometric technology, which is the process of identification based on physiological characteristics, and has plans to increase sales from &#pound;1m to &#pound;100m in three years by launching 32 franchise operations nationwide.

UK Biometrics, which produces fingerprint locks, access control systems and safes, is hoping to launch the first products as a result of the new partnership in September.

It says improvements to the new personal authentication technology that have occurred because of the new three-way tie-up mean it can now be used over swipe card or pin number access control applications in much more difficult conditions.

UK Biometrics managing director Matthew James said: "This partnership will open up new markets in hostile industrial environments, hospitals and extremely high-volume locations such as leisure parks and stadiums.

"The combination of the Keico terminals, Lumidigm imaging technology, our systems and software development capability mean we have a truly world-beating product to further fuel our expansion.

"We were approached by both companies because of our expertise in biometric security and I believe that this deal will establish the North-East as a world centre for excellence for this new and rapidly growing technology.

"In a security market where there is &#pound;1bn annual spend, I don't think our growth plans are unrealistic, I cannot think of another biometric security company that is specifically targeting the small to medium-size company sector."

UK Biometrics is also expecting a delegation of South African representatives to visit over the next few weeks to discuss the applications of the access control equipment for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa together with interest from Bovis Lend Lease, a major contractor for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

The company employs 30 staff at its Killingworth head office, with the expectation of employing 20 more as a result of the new partnership agreement.

It has opened seven new regional franchises in Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Swansea and Bournemouth with a further 19 planned to open over the next 18 months.

Mr James said: "We have chosen to grow the business through franchising because this was better than borrowing millions of pounds to pay for a massive recruitment drive. We are growing the business using money that is invested by people who are genuinely interested in selling our products."



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