Industry Expert Warns Gym Operators Against Costly Access Control Vendor Lock-In

Tuesday 8 July, 2025

Nortech MD reveals how traditional systems create "integration nightmare" costing operators thousands in switching fees

Cwmbran, Wales – 08/07/2025 – Gym operators across the UK are falling into expensive vendor lock-in traps that can cost tens of thousands of pounds when switching software providers, according to access control industry veteran Amer Hafiz, Managing Director of Nortech Control Systems.

In an exclusive interview, Hafiz highlighted how traditional access control systems create what he terms "two disjointed systems" that plague leisure facilities with integration challenges, security vulnerabilities, and inflexible vendor relationships.

"The most common mistake is choosing a generic access control solution that wasn't built for the leisure sector in mind," said Hafiz, whose company has supplied the leisure industry for over 20 years.

The Hidden Cost of Proprietary Systems

With over 11 million gym memberships across the UK (CBRE, 2024), the financial impact of poor access control decisions is substantial. Hafiz revealed that switching from integrated systems often requires complete hardware replacement, with costs reaching £9,200 per lane for typical installations.

The average breakdown includes speed lanes/turnstiles (54% of costs), readers/controllers (16%), and installation labour (27%). Recent Building Cost Information Service data shows construction costs have risen 21% between 2021-2024, making delayed upgrades increasingly expensive.

"A typical 4-lane refresh can quickly grow to cost more than the membership management software license for the same period," Hafiz explained. "Many operators find themselves held hostage to their initial technology choice."

The Integration Challenge

Traditional access control systems create critical operational problems through database synchronisation issues, authentication challenges, and fragile APIs that can break with software updates.

"When these connections fail, your front door becomes disconnected from your membership database – a nightmare scenario for unmanned access points," Hafiz noted. "Software updates occur on the access system side and then that API may break, the whole system will stop."

OEM Solutions Provide Future-Proofing

Hafiz advocates for Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) approaches that separate hardware and software concerns, allowing operators to future-proof their investments against rapidly evolving credential technologies.

"The hardware is future proofing. The only thing which needs to be changed by the end user would be the front end – the reader technology itself," he explained.

Modern OEM controllers, such as Nortech's DeltaQuest system, support multiple credential types simultaneously – from RFID cards to smartphone apps with QR codes and biometric readers – all using the same controller infrastructure.

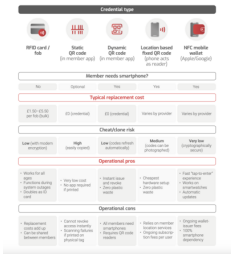
Industry Implications

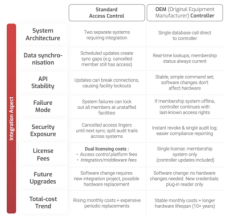
The warning comes as the UK fitness market reaches record membership levels and continues to innovate. Hafiz emphasises that access control infrastructure typically serves facilities for a decade or more, making strategic flexibility crucial.

"Not to actually just buy for next six months or a year. Think about now, and then also in the mid to long

Media:







Related Sectors:

Business & Finance :: Charities & non-profits :: Construction & Property :: Consumer Technology :: Government :: Health :: Leisure & Hobbies :: Sport :: Travel & Tourism ::

Related Keywords:

Access Control :: Gym Access :: Oem Access :: Gym Security :: Member Management ::

Scan Me:

term," he advised. "In a competitive market where member experience and operational efficiency drive success, that flexibility is increasingly becoming not just an advantage but a necessity."

Supporting Infrastructure

Modern OEM controllers offer enhanced installation flexibility through network-based connectivity, eliminating the need for dedicated serial cabling and reducing infrastructure costs. Advanced systems like DeltaQuest can manage up to 32 access points through a single network connection, simplifying expansion and maintenance.

The solution addresses operational concerns through comprehensive UK-based technical support, partnerships with over 20 leisure-sector installers globally, and backward compatibility that protects existing investments. As Hafiz noted, "Even if we release a new platform, we make sure that platform is compatible with the old hardware, which has been tried and tested in the field for many years."

About Nortech Control Systems Ltd

Founded in 1992 and based in Cwmbran, South Wales, Nortech Control Systems is an independent British company specialising in innovative access control solutions. With over 25 years of experience in the leisure industry, Nortech's products are deployed across more than 50 countries in applications including corporate campuses, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and leisure centres. The company holds ISO9001:2001 certification and Investors In People accreditation. For more information, visit www.nortechcontrol.com.

Media Contact:
Elliot Blackler, Marketing Manager, elliot.blackler@nortechcontrol.com

Technical Contact:
Amer Hafiz, Managing Director
Nortech Control Systems Ltd
+44 (0) 1633 485533
info@nortechcontrol.com

Company Contact:

_

Nortech Control Systems

T. +44 (0)1633 485 533
E. elliot.blackler@nortechcontrol.com
W. https://www.nortechcontrol.com/

View Online

Additional Assets:
https://www.nortechcontrol.com/products/oem/deltaquest-with-psu-in-plastic-enclosure

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.nortech-control.pressat.co.uk