Solving security challenges for customers with a long-term approach to technology

A trip down memory lane is enough to remind ourselves of how quickly the world changes. Just 40 years ago, walkmans were trendy, CDs were the preferred format for data storage, Microsoft was releasing the first version of Windows, and the Apple Macintosh was just reaching the mass market. It was against this backdrop, in 1982, that IT solutions provider Bytes was founded to help businesses use technology to transform, grow, adapt, and stay competitive in this fast-changing world.

Today, Bytes brings this mission to life across the UK and Ireland with more than 500 employees specialising in cybersecurity, virtualisation, cloud computing, software asset management, and software licensing. As the world continues to change at an even quicker pace, Bytes helps SMEs, large corporations, and public sector organisations to adopt technologies that help them stay productive and secure, while reducing their operational costs. Bytes is committed to understanding the priorities and needs of its customers before proposing the adoption of new technologies, an approach that has earned it the trust of over 4,000 organisations. Together, Bytes works with these clients to solve their business challenges and tackle cybersecurity concerns through workshops, consultancy services, and hands-on support.

"We're not in it for short-term gains and quick wins. We're not about reactionary sales," says Toby Noble, Security Specialist at Bytes. And he would know: it's part of Toby's job to think long-term when helping customers address their security concerns through identity management technologies that are relevant both today and beyond. That's why he reached out to Okta in early 2018, looking to enrich Bytes' portfolio with dedicated identity management solutions that could enable this kind of flexibility for its customers.

"We don't restrict ourselves to one way of solving problems, because what works for one customer may not be ideal for another, and customer challenges change over time. The identity solutions they use need to be adaptable, and Okta brings that to the table," says Toby of the decision.

Helping customers to make smarter investments

As the largest provider of Microsoft Azure and Office 365 in the UK, Bytes also saw Okta as a natural fit due to its strong Microsoft expertise. "Okta integrates seamlessly with Office 365 and massively speeds up its deployment for our customers, and we wanted to be able to offer this kind of agility to them," Toby recalls. However, Bytes also takes an agnostic approach to technology, which means that it helps customers to pick the best possible tools to strengthen their identity and security posture no matter what IT set up they have in place. Therefore, another criteria for selecting Okta as Bytes' go-to identity vendor is how well it integrates with different technologies.

"Selecting an identity solution doesn't just come down to the Gartner and Forrester reviews," Toby jokes, "even though those reviews do help to steer conversations with customers, because Okta has outperformed the competition in the last couple of years. What's also key for us is that Okta enables any company to link any user with any technology on any device, which means that customers have the freedom to determine how identity management can work best for them," he adds.

The beginning of a company's identity journey mapping is, according to Bytes, the perfect time to consider adopting technologies that can grow and mature with the company, not just address immediate needs. That's a central concept to Bytes' approach to identity management technology, as Toby explains: "We advise our customers to always think long-term. That doesn't mean buying a whole portfolio of products in advance, it means selecting tools today that will adapt to meet your needs tomorrow, when a new requirement comes up."

"With Okta, customers are free to start off with a fairly basic requirement for identity management, such as Multi-Factor Authentication, and add more at their own pace. This flexibility perfectly aligns with our approach to selecting technologies that can solve immediate needs but also grow with the company and continue to pay off in the future," says Toby.

It makes sense that Bytes' long-term approach to implementing identity management solutions is based on its mission to help customers react to challenges, productively and securely, while reducing operational costs in the long run. "Cost reduction is a priority for our customers, even more so during COVID-19," Toby explains. "Tackling cost reduction is not always about reducing what customers are using, it's also about helping them to make smarter investments so they can make the most of what they already have. Sometimes, this means boosting their current setup with a third party solution like Okta. For example, in 2020, we noticed a big surge of inquiries about enabling remote work securely. With Okta, we're helping our customers adopt identity solutions that complement their work tools, by adding a layer of Multi-Factor Authentication and Single Sign-On to Office 365, for example. This helps them to adjust very quickly and securely to dynamic working, so they can take better advantage of the investment they have put into Microsoft products."

Besides supporting companies to safeguard workforce identities, Bytes also helps them to protect their customers using customer identity access management (CIAM) solutions from Okta. In one instance, Bytes helped a fund management company to consolidate, manage, and streamline customer identities - and experiences - across its three main businesses. Toby and his team see CIAM becoming a major objective for companies in the near future, running alongside workforce IAM.

Bringing market-leading security to the table

As a cybersecurity specialist, Toby emphasises that security and identity management should always be part of the same conversation with customers, and Okta has played a part in facilitating this conversation, too.

"From a cybersecurity perspective, identity management has always been a juggling act between making it easy for end-users to find what they need, and protecting assets and applications from unwanted visitors. Okta has found a balance between the two, where adding security doesn't complicate things for users," he says.

Bytes gives its in-house vendor managers and security teams access to Okta so that they have a single place to access their various vendor portals. "With Okta Verify and Multi-Factor Authentication in front of a Single Sign-On portal, we can give users a hassle-free way to prove that they are who they say they are," he shares.

An award-winning approach to technology

Testament to the success of Bytes' strategy and its commitment to its customers, is the impressive number of awards it has won, including three from Okta. In 2019, Bytes won both the UK and Ireland Partner of the Year and the Pre-sales Rep of the Year awards. It was also recognised during Okta's Global Partner Summit at Oktane Live 2020, when it took home the EMEA Partner of the Year award.

"We're all about great relationships, and that goes both for our customers and vendors. Winning three awards from Okta feels great because they are acknowledgments that the relationships we work hard to build and nurture are bringing benefits to all parties," Toby celebrates.

When asked what it means for Bytes to be an Okta partner today, Toby doesn't hesitate: "That's a simple question, actually. Being an Okta partner means we get to lead with the very best," he says. "It means that whenever we talk with a customer about any challenge they might be facing regarding identity projects, whether it's related to their workforce or their customers, we can help them explore market-leading identity management technology as a solution to tackle that challenge."

"We've had several proud moments as an Okta partner over the last few years, and we feel like we've only just scratched the surface," Toby adds with a smile. "Okta brings so many potential solutions to our customers that we can help them explore, and this makes us excited about the future.

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Toby Noble
Security Specialist, Bytes

Okta

Okta is the leading independent provider of identity for the enterprise. The Okta Identity Cloud enables organizations to securely connect the right people to the right technologies at the right time. With over 6,500 pre-built integrations to applications and infrastructure providers, Okta customers can easily and securely use the best technologies for their business. Over 8,950 organizations, including Engie, JetBlue, Nordstrom, Takeda Pharmaceutical, Teach for America, T-Mobile and Twilio, trust Okta to help protect the identities of their workforces and customers.

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