

Doing IAM distribution differently by focusing on people, not just tech

Digital transformation has been a buzzword for years, and for good reason. Companies that are integrating new technology into all areas of business to improve processes, create more value for customers, and secure data are forecast to contribute to more than half of global GDP by 2023, even with the impact of COVID-19. But even for experts, selecting new technology can be challenging, time consuming, and risky if not done right.

Distology is dedicated to combing through the market in search of high-quality security solutions, so that its partners can instead focus on serving their customers and making sure they implement new tools in the best possible way.

Despite the deep level of technical knowledge this task demands, at Distology's core is a focus on people, not just technology. "We do things differently," says Stephen Rowlands, Sales Director at Distology. "Many think that IT distribution is all about sales quotas and low margins. But we're about finding cutting-edge technology that solves problems for people, and building long-lasting relationships with partners." To that end, Distology uses two main criteria when selecting vendors: "Their technology must be innovative and of the highest quality, and their work culture must fit with ours," says Stephen.

In an industry that never stops, Chris Collier, Technical Manager at Distology, says that the only constant is learning. "New cybersecurity solutions come out all the time, each one claiming to be the newest and greatest out there. We need to inspect them closely to find the ones that can genuinely solve problems for users, and are innovative but also effective in the long term. When we examined the Okta Identity Cloud, it didn't just tick all those boxes, it stood out for us," Chris recalls of 2016, when Distology decided

to become the first Okta distributor, not just in the UK but in Europe and the rest of the world. But not before getting to know the Okta team. "Having great technology doesn't automatically mean you're a great vendor. We also need to fit culturally and have similar goals when it comes to collaborating with partners. Distology and Okta are a good match because we both focus on positive disruption: how we can innovate and solve problems together," says Stephen.

Helping partners select the right tools in an ever-changing market

Since 2016, Distology has helped partners to sign up hundreds of joint customers with Okta, and played a significant role in helping Okta grow by 110% in the UK from 2019 to 2020 alone. The secret sauce? It all comes down to good communication, according to Stephen. "We have regular catch-ups with Okta and our partners, to ensure that everyone involved is making the most of the technology and of our relationship. Instead of waiting for partners and their customers to have questions or issues, we are proactive in bringing them the latest information and support on a regular basis," says Stephen.

This proactive approach is key in Distology's aim to help partners become self-sufficient in using new technology. "We want our partners to work as comfortably and

confidently with the Okta Identity Cloud as we do, so that they can have great conversations with their customers about it, and everyone can make the most of the technology,” says Stephen. To do that, Distology tailors its support to each partner with demos, consultancy, proofs of concept, workshops, and webinars hosted on Okta’s behalf.

Bringing all this to life is a highly skilled team of 28 and growing at Distology that understands Okta from both a pre-sales point of view, which focuses on how the technology works, and a post sales one, which requires a holistic understanding of how it can impact organisational culture and improve processes. “We couldn’t train our partners effectively without technical expertise and deep knowledge of Okta’s ethos,” Stephen explains. “Okta relies on us to scale in the region and trusts us to position it in the best

Addressing urgent challenges while preparing for tomorrow

Meanwhile, an increased interest in IAM hasn’t gone unnoticed by experts like Chris, who sees it as one of the top cybersecurity concerns of businesses today.

“We live in a world where anyone can access anything from anywhere, and it can be challenging for companies to know for sure whether the person asking for access is who they say they are,” he explains.

“In this world, you’ve got to either implicitly trust people, or you need additional security layers in place to check their credentials before you let them access your applications or data. This isn’t just for cloud services, but also for systems that live on premises, because cyber threats don’t only come from outside companies, they can originate internally, too,” he says.

way possible. So we need to work as an extension of the Okta team, know its technology inside-out, and stay up-to-date,” Chris adds.

With Okta in its portfolio, together with complementary products from other technology providers, Distology is able to deliver end-to-end IAM solutions that address these concerns both now and in the long-term. “Because Okta integrates with 6,500 applications, businesses can invest in it to secure their systems today, in one year, in five years, and beyond, no matter what other services they adopt moving forward, and that’s quite a feat in the cybersecurity world,” Chris explains.

This became even clearer in the first half of 2020, as Europe went into lockdown due to COVID-19, and Distology partners needed to help customers start working remotely in a matter of days. “It’s great that many companies have been able to enable people to work from home so quickly. But at the same time, the pressure brought by coronavirus has led many to do that without proper planning and without being able to reflect on the security of their new work environments,” Chris explains. “During lockdown, we helped our partners explain how, with Okta, it’s possible for companies to adapt very quickly, implement new cloud services and hardware, and support a remote workforce to access the applications they need, while maintaining utmost security,” says Chris, who speaks from firsthand experience.

When Distology became an Okta distributor, it also started using the Okta Identity Cloud to access applications such as Slack, Salesforce, and Office365 through a single portal with Single Sign-On, and secure them with a layer of Adaptive Multi-Factor Authentication. Distology also uses Lifecycle Management to provision users joining the fast-growing company. “You can only talk passionately about a solution that you actually use, and I can confidently say that Okta has made my life a lot easier, taking care of time-consuming jobs that we were

happy to automate,” Chris shares. “When onboarding new team members, which happens almost weekly, I only need their name and department to give them the correct access rights. Okta does the rest,” he says. “We’re also confident in using Okta as our first line of defence against cyber attacks on some highly targeted platforms that we use in our daily operations. Our real-time cybersecurity reports show that Okta is effectively blocking attackers and protecting us against any compromise. This, in turn, makes it easy for us to get our partners excited about Okta,” Chris explains.

Continuing to push the industry forward

As Okta’s longest serving distributor in the UK, Distology reflects on how much its industry has evolved throughout the four years of partnership. “When we started distributing Okta in EMEA, few partners had heard of it. Now, it’s the other way

around: partners come to us because of the Okta Identity Cloud. They know we have a great relationship with Okta, and that we know the products inside out, and we’re proud of that,” says Stephen.

“Today, our partners see us as enablers,” Chris adds, “because through us, they get to work with market leaders like Okta and help more people to adopt this disruptive technology. In our ambition to continue growing ourselves, and with identity and access management at the forefront of cybersecurity, Okta becomes more and more a cornerstone of our business. We’re excited to see what the next years of partnership will bring for all of us,” he concludes.

“Having great technology isn’t enough to be a great vendor. We also need to fit culturally and have similar goals when it comes to collaborating with partners. Distology and Okta work well together because we both focus on positive disruption: how can we innovate and solve problems together.”

Stephen Rowlands
Sales Director, Distology

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.

Learn more at www.okta.com