

The Business Value of Okta Customer Identity and Access Management

RESEARCH BY:









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BUSINESS VALUE HIGHLIGHTS



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314%

three-year ROI

11 months

to payback

\$5.4 million

average annual benefits per organization

\$166,300

average annual benefits per application

\$4.3 million

average annual productivity improvements

\$1.3 million

average annual net revenue

\$147,400

average annual IT cost savings

43% less

customer support tickets per week

21% reduction

in security risk

Executive Summary

Customer identity and access management (CIAM) refers to a set of solutions intended to securely manage end-user identities and their access to various digital properties, including apps, portals, and websites. While traditional identity and access management (IAM) is focused on managing identity and access for workforce users such as employees and partners, CIAM centers on external users, such as consumers, suppliers, and other constituents. CIAM covers not only the sign-up and registration experience but also credential and data privacy management and the log-in process throughout the entire customer journey, all while integrating with key business technologies, such as CRM and marketing platforms. Okta CIAM solutions help organizations overcome the challenge of developing this complex digital identity layer by providing prebuilt, customizable, and extensible authentication and authorization components and application programming interfaces (APIs) that can be quickly and easily embedded into any customer-facing application.

IDC conducted research that explores the value and benefits for organizations using Okta CIAM to securely manage their customer identities and digital access experiences, including account log-ins, registration, credential management, and authorization. Overall, IDC calculates that study participants achieved a total annual benefit of \$5.4 million per organization including a 314% three-year ROI by:

- Reducing identity-related management and development costs by automating and streamlining complex administrative processes into a centralized, intuitive, and easy-to-use service
- Increasing revenue from digital customer interactions by providing secure, seamless, and personalized access experiences that drive higher customer conversions, trust, and loyalty
- Improving business and operational efficiencies via productivity enhancements for various teams including IT, engineering, security, compliance, customer support, and marketing
- Mitigating overall security risks for customers by protecting and safeguarding identities and personal data



Situation Overview

This IDC Business Value analysis examines the experiences of seven companies using Okta CIAM. The results speak to the many benefits associated with the platform even if not all before-and-after metrics were available. CIAM experiences are nascent in nature and many organizations implemented CIAM solutions without looking back, yet most can see the savings and opportunities going forward.

The Business Value of Okta CIAM

Study Demographics

IDC conducted seven interviews with organizations that were using the solution. Interviewed managers all had experience with and knowledge about the impact of its use and were asked a variety of quantitative and qualitative questions ranging from IT and security operations to development practices and business costs and revenue. Additional details regarding the organizations are shown in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1
Firmographics

	Average	Median	Range	
Number of employees	59,279	9,000	450–300,000	
Number of IT staff	984	700	90–2,300	
Number of customers/external users	9,843,714	1,500,000	1,000–50,000,000	
Total organizational revenue	\$12.3 Billion	\$1 Billion	\$73 Million to \$60 Billion	
Countries	United States (5), Australia, and UAE			
Industries	Transportation (3), professional services, retail, banking, and software			

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022



Choice and Use of Okta CIAM

The organizations that IDC interviewed described their use of Okta CIAM and explained their reasons for selecting it. In general, they expressed the need to have a single, scalable, mature service that was feature-rich to ease the challenge and complexity of securing customer identities and data. Study participants also shared a common set of solution requirements, citing the following reasons for selecting Okta as their preferred identity provider:

- ▶ Robust, sophisticated security features and capabilities: "The biggest benefit of Okta is not having to worry about securing the credentials of our users because that's now Okta's responsibility."
- ▶ Customer-centric user experience: "My organization started using Okta in 2017 for the seamless customer experience (CX), end to end, irrespective of its analog touch point that the customer comes to us with. A critical aspect is the security of maintaining a secure customer log-in."
- Simple deployment and administration: "We selected Okta for simplicity in terms of configuration. Particularly, single sign-on (SSO) because a few clicks get you there if it's already a first-class citizen within the Okta integration network. It's very easy to create a SAML-based integration compared with ADFS or some other products."
- Mature, integrated customer identity solution: "We selected Okta for the maturity of the platform, especially when it comes to the customer-facing side; their presence; and their integration with third-party providers' single sign-on. Before, it was a little clunky for us. We had multiple authentications ... migrating it all down to the same platform. That's where Okta came in with the sign-in registrations, single sign-on, password reset, and OTP."
- Scalable, cloud-ready service: "We selected Okta because it was cloud ready. It was an API-first platform and pretty scalable. It had some of the very specific security needs we were looking for in terms of easy-to-implement two-factor authentication, dynamic threat detection, and so forth."
- ▶ **Reliable, redundant platform:** "The reason we chose Okta was to get off prem. As we move more toward cloud-based applications for redundancy, we want our authentication to be off prem."
- Invisible partner that enables the business: "Technology is best when it works in the background and doesn't overpower the user. That's why we like Okta."

Table 2 (next page) provides a snapshot of Okta CIAM use across interviewed organizations. In general, these companies were able to leverage the service to support a variety of customer-facing digital experiences. As shown, there was an average of 8,135,000 customers supported using 30 external websites and 33 customer applications.



TABLE 2
Organizational Usage of Okta CIAM

	Average	Median
Branches/sites	566	85
Customers supported	8,135,000	1,500,000
External-facing websites	30	26
Customer applications	33	28

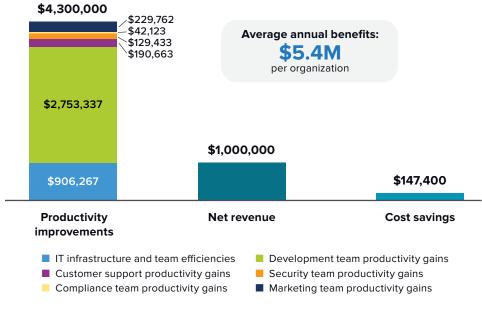
Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Business Value and Quantified Benefits of Okta CIAM

IDC's analysis and calculations show that investments in Okta CIAM created significant value for interviewed organizations. Overall, as shown in **Figure 1**, IDC calculates that interviewed organizations achieve annual benefits worth \$5.4M per organization based on the combined benefits of productivity improvements, increased revenue, and cost savings. **Figure 1** is averaged over a three year period and is inclusive of deployment time. Additional details regarding this figure can be found in the appendix. **Figure 2** (next page) shows average annual benefits per customer-facing application.

FIGURE 1
Average Annual Benefits per Organization

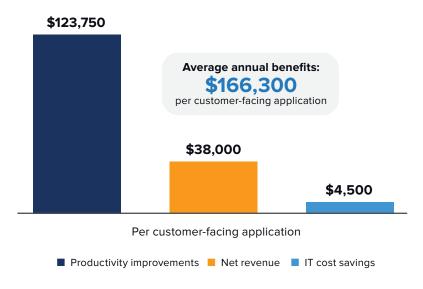
(\$ annual benefits)



n = 7, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022



FIGURE 2
Average Annual Benefits per Customer-Facing Application



Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Productivity Improvements

IDC evaluated how adoption and use of Okta CIAM impacted operational efficiencies and productivity improvements across organizations, beginning with IT and infrastructure teams responsible for ongoing identity service maintenance and management. Companies reported that Okta CIAM's cloud-based, centralized, and intuitive platform helped IT teams spend less time managing and supporting the service itself and freed up time for innovation to support more strategic business initiatives. As one study participant noted: "Our infrastructure teams are able to do better things and build out the capabilities and features for customers rather than worrying about system uptime or support."

IT and Infrastructure Team Efficiencies

IDC quantified these benefits as shown in **Table 3** (next page). Companies saw a 33% improvement in IT and infrastructure team efficiencies with Okta. This amounted to an annual business benefit of \$1,183,310 for each organization.

Further supporting the efficiency shown in **Table 3** (next page), one company stated: "From a capability perspective, if we didn't have Okta, the size of the team that we have just wouldn't be able to keep up with all the integration demands. If we were managing it on premises, including all the infrastructure, we would need up to five more people."



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TABLE 3
IT and Infrastructure Team Efficiencies

	Before Okta CIAM	With Okta CIAM	Difference	Benefit
Staff required for equivalent workload (FTEs)	48	36	12	33%
Value of staff time per year	\$4.8M	\$3.6M	\$1.2M	33%

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Developer Productivity Gains

IDC then looked at productivity gains for development teams. Okta CIAM provides robust APIs with easy-to-use software development kits (SDKs) and developer toolkits built on open standards that span a wide array of modern programming languages, empowering engineering teams to quickly and seamlessly build identity into any application while leveraging the deployment and development methods of their choice. As a result, study participants reported the ability to deliver applications with a faster time to market because of the integrated nature of Okta and the ability to use out-of-the-box components and no-code configuration options, all of which served to optimize development life cycles.

Commenting on these capabilities, one study participant noted: "The advantage of having Okta is mostly for application development or any of the project teams where we do not have a lot of time to go to market. This is because it's acquired and easy to integrate with the platform." Another commented: "Okta CIAM cuts down the development timeline significantly because developers don't have to handle authentication separately. It's handled for them behind the scenes."

Table 4 quantifies these benefits. As shown, after adoption, interviewed companies saw a 23% improvement in development team productivity. This was the equivalent of 36 additional FTEs and resulted in an annual business value of \$3,595,030 for each organization.

TABLE 4

Developer Productivity Gains

	Before Okta CIAM	With Okta CIAM	Difference	Benefit
Equivalent productivity level (FTEs)	119	155	36	23%
Value of staff time per year	\$11.8M	\$15.4M	\$3.6M	23%

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022



Customer Support Productivity Gains

Interviewed companies reported that with Okta features such as self-service end-user capabilities for account and credential management and SSO across digital channels, customer support teams saw a significant reduction in calls and tickets from customers dealing with credential-related access issues or account security incidents. Specifically, support teams saw a 43% reduction in total customer support tickets or calls per week with Okta. As one study participant noted: "Our support team is the same as before, but they spend less time on supporting users who can't log in or users reporting security issues. Okta is world class when it comes to the features and capabilities."

Table 5 shows that interviewed companies experienced a 33% improvement in customer support team productivity with Okta. This amounted to an annual business value of \$248,950 for each organization.

TABLE 5
Customer Support Productivity Gains

	Before Okta CIAM	With Okta CIAM	Difference	Benefit
Equivalent productivity level (FTEs)	5	8	3	33%
Value of staff time per year	\$505,440	\$754,390	\$248,950	33%

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Security Team Productivity Gains

Interviewed organizations also indicated that their security teams were able to work both more productively and more proactively due to sophisticated and advanced security features provided by Okta. These not only helped better protect end-user accounts and identities but also enabled security teams to gain enhanced visibility into incidents and the end-user threat landscape. As noted by one organization: "A lot is taken off resources to manage the platforms. In the past, security teams would have to work overtime to keep up with the challenges posed by a cyberthreat." Organizations also cited features such as Adaptive MFA and Threatlnsight, which aggregates data about sign-in activity across 15,000+ Okta customers to analyze and detect potentially malicious IP addresses and to prevent credential-based attacks, with real-time data that can be integrated into the customer's SIEM via an API. As a result, study participants perceived a security risk reduction of 21% across their organizations. Commenting on this benefit, one company noted: "The security team is getting more efficient and they're spending less time worrying about issues. They are able to be more proactive on other things."



Table 6 quantifies these benefits. As shown, interviewed companies saw a 13% overall improvement in security team productivity with Okta. This amounted to an annual business value of \$169,000 for each organization.

TABLE 6
Security Team Productivity Gains

	Before Okta CIAM	With Okta CIAM	Difference	Benefit
Equivalent productivity level (FTEs)	11	13	2	13%
Value of staff time per year	\$1.1M	\$1.3M	\$169,000	13%

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Compliance Team Productivity Gains

As shown in **Table 7**, interviewed companies noted that with Okta, compliance teams were able to significantly streamline audit and compliance reporting activities across their organizations due to increased visibility into user access, deep integrations with a variety of systems, and out-of-the-box reporting capabilities. Overall, compliance teams were able to work with the productivity of one additional FTE, a 10% improvement in compliance team productivity with Okta. This amounted to an annual productivity-based business value of \$55,000 for each organization.

TABLE 7
Compliance Team Productivity Gains

	Before Okta CIAM	With Okta CIAM	Difference	Benefit
Equivalent productivity level (FTEs)	5	6	1	10%
Value of staff time per year	\$495,000	\$550,000	\$55,000	10%

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Real-Time Marketing Productivity Gains

IDC found that marketing teams benefited from investments in Okta CIAM, which allowed them to gain a unified and more complete view of their customers by leveraging Okta as a single source of truth for end-user data. Marketing teams were able to leverage insights gleaned from this data to more effectively and efficiently target customers with relevant and tailored suggestions, campaigns, and offerings. Commenting on this benefit, one study participant noted: "We want to give customers a premium experience. Okta gives us the ability to understand the customer better. It has become a lot easier for us to target products and services to do that."



Table 8 shows these impacts. After adoption, interviewed companies saw a 10% productivity boost for marketing departments. This amounted to the equivalent of adding four FTEs and resulted in an annual productivity-based business value of \$300,000 for each organization.

TABLE 8
Real-Time Marketing Productivity Gains

	Before Okta CIAM	With Okta CIAM	Difference	Benefit
Total productivity level (FTEs)	39	43	4	10%
Value of staff time per year	\$2.7M	\$3.0M	\$300,000	10%

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Increased Revenue

IDC found that the deployment of Okta had a direct and measurable impact on the revenue of interviewed companies, by enabling organizations to achieve the following:

Increased customer conversions, trust, and loyalty. The move to Okta enabled organizations to convert customers to known users, paying patrons, and loyal consumers more frequently by offering a convenient and effortless sign-up experience across digital touch points while keeping them safely and securely logged in. Common end-user identity-related frustrations were eliminated, which allowed organizations to optimize for conversions. Several organizations noted that increased customer trust was improved through the use of multifactor authentication and other advanced security features. Over time and with consistent application, these enhanced capabilities improved customer satisfaction and directly translated into increased revenue.

"When the customer comes back to our digital channels, we can safely and securely keep them logged in. Historically, sometimes we were not able to do it, and it wouldn't have been in a secure manner. With the Okta solution, we have better conversion rates with respect to our loyalty members."

"Okta CIAM has increased the trust of customers. With all these different capabilities that we have, our customers trust us more through the multifactor authentication and other methods that we allow for their identity to be verified before they log in."

Improved customer experiences. End users benefited from a range of log-in and registration methods that allowed them to tailor the access experience according to their individual preferences, such as social log-in options and multifactor authentication. Some organizations cited the ability to provide consistent and unified access and single sign-on across brands and sites as a key CX differentiator.

"We are trying to consolidate all of the experiences so that people see our company no matter where and how they log in, they're going to see and feel the same experience. We expect to offer MFA to our customers, but that's not realized yet. We expect the development of new applications that we build to serve our customers to be faster because Okta has a great API base, and you do almost everything there."



- ▶ **Better visibility into the customer profile.** Interviewed organizations were able to centralize end-user profile and attribute data by leveraging Okta as a single source of truth. This improved visibility into customer preferences and behaviors and enabled a deeper understanding of the end user.
 - "Compared with our old system, I will say that we have much better visibility in terms of what is happening with end users, and how we react to it and support them."
- Growth and innovation of digital revenue streams. Study participants explained that Okta enabled them to generate new revenue streams and API-driven business models by securing access to APIs. One customer was able to find a quick and creative way to offer customer trials by leveraging Okta SSO.

"We had a recent use case with our team that spins up trials for customers. The trials allowed customers to try out our product in a cloud-hosted environment. The team wanted a way for the users who signed up for the trial to get SSO out of the gate, and that was something we were able to turn around quickly with Okta. More trials can translate into more sales."

IDC quantified both top-line and bottom-line impact after adoption of Okta CIAM. **Table 9** shows significant improvements in revenue and operating profit, with \$8,750,000 in higher average annual revenue for each organization. IDC's financial model applies a 15% operating margin assumption, resulting in annual net revenue gain of an average of more than \$1.3 million per interviewed organization.

TABLE 9
Increased Revenue

	Per Organization	Per Customer-Facing Application
Total revenue gain per year	\$8.7M	\$269,230
Operating margin	15%	15%
Net revenue gain per year	\$1.3M	\$40,390

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

IT Cost Savings

In addition to productivity and revenue benefits, IDC also noted that organizations were able to demonstrate savings in IT infrastructure-related costs. They were able to do so by decreasing their spend on licensing. In fact, as shown in **Table 10** (next page), organizations were able to decrease IT costs on average by \$192,500 per year.



TABLE 10 IT Cost Savings

	Per Organization	
License cost savings per year	\$192,500	

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Additional Unquantified Benefits

Interviewed Okta CIAM customers shared a wide range of additional benefits noted by IDC throughout the interview process. They include:

- Accelerated digital transformation initiatives: "Okta absolutely fits into our digital transformation plan because when we get to the point of digital selling and buying, we want our users to be authenticated. We need to know who they are, and all of that is managed by Okta."
- Improved service reliability, performance, and scalability: "Resiliency is a huge business benefit as well as reliability and consistency."
 - "Okta brought in better scalability combined with better performance. Our old system had some performance and reliability issues. Those have been addressed. With COVID-19, we saw a spike. I would say that Okta has done well for us in terms of scaling. We have not seen any scalability issues. For that, we appreciate the partnership."
- Reduced security risks resulting in reputational damage: "Okta gives us a good night's sleep knowing there is going to be limited reputational damage due to someone's account getting hacked."
 - "I like the fact that Okta is quite proactive in terms of ensuring that their platform is secure. They've got the threat insights that if one particular customer is being targeted, all customers get the benefit from that attacker being blocked. The main thing is that they take security very seriously."
 - "We don't have to keep up with the latest security threats because Okta is the front face for all our log-ins, and it is managed by them."
- Continuous innovation: "One of the things we got from Okta is improved innovation.

 They are not just keeping up with but staying ahead of the industry. Okta constantly evolves the platform and updates it to the best possible standards with automatic upgrades."



ROI Summary

Table 11 presents IDC's return on investment (ROI) and analysis for study participants' use of Okta CIAM. As shown, participants achieve three-year discounted benefits worth an average of \$12.5 million per organization (\$385,317 per customer application) through improved productivity, increased revenue, and cost savings. These benefits compare with total three-year discounted costs of \$3.0 million per organization (\$93,130 per customer application). IDC projects that these levels of benefits and investment costs result in an average three-year ROI of 314% and a break-even point in investment occurring in approximately 11 months.

TABLE 11
Three-Year ROI Analysis

	Per Organization	Per Customer Application
Discounted benefits	\$12.5M	\$385,317
Discounted investment	\$3.0M	\$93,130
NPV	\$9,496,100	\$292,190
ROI	314%	314%
Payback (months)	11	11
Discount factor	12%	12%

Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Challenges/Opportunities

Perhaps the biggest challenge to CIAM adoption is waiting for organizations to understand and appreciate the benefits of leveraging a cloud-based CIAM vs. building or maintaining an existing homegrown or on-premises solution. This is a new endeavor for many executives, some of whom are comfortable with existing capabilities but may not recognize the ever increasing challenges and requirements for consumer access and customer experiences.

Budgeting for a CIAM solution is another challenge as this can be a completely new expense, especially for smaller organizations. As this study has shown, the returns on investment can be significant, but despite this, the investment can be larger than budgeted for some organizations that do not consider the benefits of customer identity. Many times, C-suite and business-line executives have to be involved in CIAM decisions to allocate the incremental funding required.



Conclusion

Despite varying degrees of operational experience and depths of feature adoptions, the collective theme of business value IDC discovered was one of an expanded trust relationship. There's trust that the service is reliable and secure and is supported by a professional organization; trust that Okta is an industry leader and an established player with many references and success stories; trust that customers will enjoy a superior end-user experience embellished with opportunities to deepen digital customer relationships; and trust that platform innovation will continue and complementary features and functionalities will be developed. This broad-based type of identity vendor appreciation is rare.

The business benefits are otherwise evident with 74% of the returns coming from productivity and efficiency improvements broken across multiple teams:

- 1. 33% improvement in IT and infrastructure team efficiencies equal to 12 FTEs (\$1,183,310)
- 2. 23% improvement in developer team productivity equal to 36 FTEs (\$3,595,030)
- 3. 33% improvement in customer support team productivity equal to 2.5 FTEs (\$248,950)
- 4. 13% improvement in security team productivity equal to 2 FTEs (\$169,000)
- 5. 10% improvement in compliance team reporting activities equal to 1 FTE (\$55,000)
- 6. 10% productivity boost for marketing departments equal to 4 FTEs (\$300,000)

And those are just the efficiencies realized after adopting Okta CIAM. In addition, there is an incremental \$38,000 net revenue improvement per customer-facing application (study participants had 33 applications on average) due to higher customer conversion rates, improved customer experiences, deeper visibility and understanding of customer profiles, and so forth, and that's only the tip of the ROI iceberg. As organizations improve their abilities to track and measure business successes, IDC believes the value recognized will contribute an order of magnitude more returns to an organization's bottom line.



Appendix 1

Methodology

IDC's standard Business Value/ROI methodology was utilized for this project. This methodology is based on gathering data from organizations currently using Okta CIAM as the foundation for the model. Based on interviews with organizations using Okta CIAM, IDC performed a three-step process to calculate the ROI and payback period:

- Gathered quantitative benefit information during the interviews using a before-and-after assessment of the impact of using Okta CIAM. In this study, the benefits included employee productivity gains, staff time savings, and reduced costs.
- 2. Created a complete investment (three-year total cost analysis) profile based on the interviews. Investments go beyond the initial and annual costs of using Okta CIAM and can include additional costs related to migrations, planning, consulting, and staff or user training.
- 3. Calculated the ROI and payback period. IDC conducted a depreciated cash flow analysis of the benefits and investments for the organizations' use of Okta CIAM over a three-year period. ROI is the ratio of the net present value (NPV) and the discounted investment. The payback period is the point at which cumulative benefits equal the initial investment.

IDC bases the payback period and ROI calculations on a number of assumptions, which are summarized as follows:

- Time values are multiplied by burdened salary (salary + 28% for benefits and overhead) to quantify efficiency and manager productivity savings. For purposes of this analysis, based on the geographic locations of the interviewed organizations, IDC has used assumptions of an average fully loaded salary of \$100,000 per year for IT staff members and an average fully loaded salary of \$70,000 per year for non-IT staff members. IDC assumes that employees work 1,880 hours per year (47 weeks x 40 hours).
- The net present value of the three-year savings is calculated by subtracting the amount that would have been realized by investing the original sum in an instrument yielding a 12% return to allow for the missed opportunity cost. This accounts for both the assumed cost of money and the assumed rate of return.
- Because IT solutions require a deployment period, the full benefits of the solution are not available during deployment. To capture this reality, IDC prorates the benefits on a monthly basis and then subtracts the deployment time from the first-year savings.

Note: All numbers in this document may not be exact due to rounding.



Benefits Calculation

Category of Value	Average Quantitative Benefit	15% Margin Assumption Applied	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Calculated Average Annual Value
IT infrastructure cost reductions	\$192,500	No	\$57,290	\$192,500	\$192,500	\$147,430
IT infrastructure team efficiencies	33% efficiency, saves 12FTEs	No	\$352,180	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$906,270
Developer productivity gains	23% higher productivity, worth 36 FTEs	No	\$1,069,950	\$3,595,031	\$3,595,031	\$2.75M
Customer support productivity gains	33% higher productivity, worth 2.5 additional FTEs	No	\$74,090	\$248,950	\$248,950	\$190,660
Security team productivity gains	13% efficiency, worth 2 additional FTEs	No	\$50,300	\$169,000	\$169,000	\$130,000
Compliance team productivity gains	35% higher productivity, worth 1 additional FTEs	No	\$16,370	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$ 42,120
Real-time marketing productivity gains	10% higher productivity, worth 4.3 additional FTEs	No	\$89,286	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$ 229,762
Business enablement, increased revenue	\$1.3M in revenue gained per year	Yes	\$390,625	\$1,312,500	\$1,312,500	\$1M
Total annual benefits, use of Okta CIAM						\$5.4M



About the Analysts



Jay Bretzmann
Program Director, Security Products, IDC

Jay Bretzmann is Program Director for IDC Security Products responsible for Identity & Digital Trust and Cloud Security. Jay focuses on identity management, privileged access management, identity governance, B2C identity management, and a multitude of other identity and cloud security topics.

More about Jay Bretzmann



Megan Szurley Senior Research Analyst, Business Value Strategy Practice, IDC

Megan Szurley is a Consulting Manager within IDC's Custom Solutions Division, delivering consultative support across every stage of the business life cycle: business planning and budgeting, sales and marketing, and performance measurement. In her position, Megan partners with IDC analyst teams to support deliverables that focus on thought leadership, business value, custom analytics, buyer behavior and content marketing. These customized deliverables are often derived from primary research and yield content marketing, market models, and customer insights.

More about Megan Szurley



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