

Uniting diverse brands under a single identity management solution

Case Study



okta

Journey snapshot

Unifying islands of identity

Since its inception in 1976, Dublin-based DCC has enjoyed decades of growth to become a public company and a constituent of the FTSE 100. Over the years, DCC has expanded through a series of mergers and acquisitions to bring new brands under its banner, but with that growth came a challenge: how to unite its diverse teams under a single secure identity, while still respecting each business's unique history, skills and pool of talent.

Finding the right solution

DCC first looked to Okta in 2018 as a solution to its security challenges, primarily as a user-friendly way of protecting email communications. Since that time, the relationship between DCC and Okta has grown to become a partnership that empowers growth and innovation, far beyond the scope of what was originally envisaged at the outset of the project.

Adapting to COVID-19 challenges

Like many businesses, DCC has had to adapt to the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, through its relationship with Okta, DCC has been able to rise to the occasion, enabling productivity to continue by automating processes.

Integrating external apps with Okta

DCC soon realised the potential for Okta, beyond a simple security suite, and has integrated a wide variety of applications that are key to the business's success. Among them are DocuSign, 0365, Salesforce, SANS, Qlik and Qualtrics.

Empowering future growth

DCC's business model is based around growth through mergers and acquisitions, and Okta is making this process easier to manage than ever before. The approach that DCC now takes, means that it can seamlessly scale up its operations, and the lessons the company has learned are automated and improved upon with each new acquisition.



10,500 users protected by MFA.



10,500 users given a single identity with Universal Directory.



920 users provisioned with Lifecycle Management.



11,000 hours of employee time saved annually.



127,000 hours saved a year of employee time or £3.7 million of fully loaded average wages.

“When we bring new businesses online, they’re amazed at how easy it is. They assume it’ll take days, or that we’ll have to do it at 3 a.m. When we tell them that we just need an hour of their time, during business hours, it’s a surprise.”

Robyn Keogh

Technical Solutions Advisor at DCC

Did you know that liquified petroleum gas (LPG) has kept the Olympic torch burning in almost every Games since 1972? If your answer is ‘no,’ that’s not surprising (but kudos to the engineering-curious who answered ‘well, of course’). Much like the barbecues that LPG is better-known for fueling, most of us are content to let tools, even those with ceremonial significance, do their jobs without giving much thought to how they work.

Flogas is a leading LPG provider that’s part of the wider DCC family of brands, a group that also includes healthcare, technology, and oil companies. Much of the work done by this Dublin-headquartered public company similarly goes on behind the scenes. “Whatever the brand, we’re always working to make the customer’s life easier,” says Robyn Keogh, Technical Solutions Advisor at DCC. “A lot of what we do probably goes unnoticed but, in a way, that’s the point. We’re here to facilitate a great customer experience and, when we’re doing it right, it shouldn’t attract attention.”



Uniting brands under a single identity

Given this mission, it's not surprising that DCC isn't a household name. One place where its initials are familiar, however, is London's Square Mile, where DCC's steely performance since it floated on the stock exchange in 1994 has made it a favourite with investors. Since its inception in 1976, DCC has enjoyed decades of growth to become one of Ireland's best-performing companies. Over the years, it has expanded through a series of mergers and acquisitions to bring new brands under its banner.

With that growth came a logistical challenge: how to unite its diverse portfolio under a single technological identity, while respecting each business's unique skills, talents and local expertise, as well as affording them control of their day-to-day activities. That's where Okta comes in. "When we bring new businesses online, they're always amazed at how easy it is," says Robyn. "They assume it'll take days, or that we have to do it at 3 a.m. in the morning. When we come back and tell them that we just need an hour of their time, during business hours, and they'll be up and running, they're shocked."

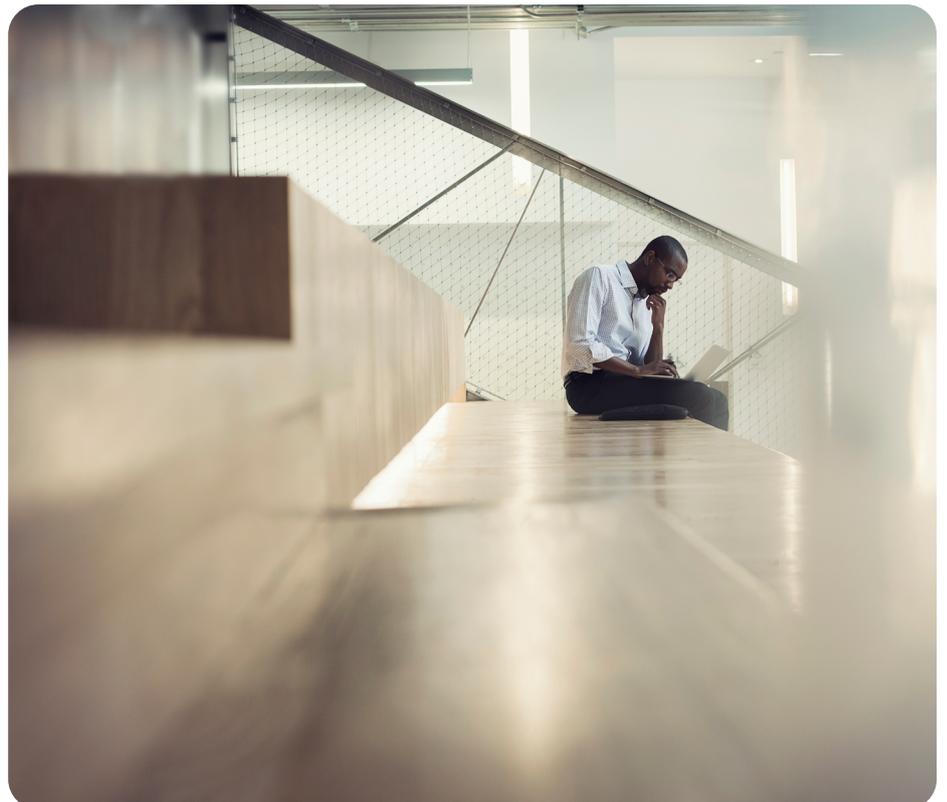
Delivering flawless security protection

Security was a key component of the unified technological identity that DCC was hoping to forge when it first approached Okta. Having tested a number of solutions on the market, Okta came out on top – particularly when it came to user experience. DCC was especially interested in multifactor authentication (MFA), an added layer of security used to verify an end user's identity when signing into an application. MFA allows system admins to configure settings at an organisational and application level. If both levels are enabled, end users are prompted to confirm their credentials with factors, both when signing in to Okta and when accessing an application. Instead of integrating a point-MFA solution into every single app in 47 different tenants, DCC chose Okta to deploy it once centrally. Robyn says that, prior to Okta, DCC didn't have an overall view of security from head office. "We started with one user in 2018 and have since moved from business to business," she adds. "Now, with around 10,500 users protected by MFA, we're taking the lessons we've learned along the way and we're applying them as we onboard new applications, acquisitions and employees."

Initially, DCC hoped to protect email exchanges, but its use of MFA – combined with the use of single sign-on (SSO) to protect less frequently used applications – has since grown to form the backbone of the company's security infrastructure.

DCC is currently applying MFA on an application by application basis, but may look to expand its use – as well as more widespread introduction of Adaptive MFA, which further automates security responses – in the future. Okta's MFA is currently only deployed for 900 users and is saving 11,000 hours of employee time each year, or £381,000 of fully loaded average wage cost, and is targeted to be rolled out company wide. When fully rolled out, MFA is expected to take a typical scenario across DCC of three different MFA challenges a day via a traditional factor and reduce it down to just one a day with Okta Push, saving as much as 127,000 hours a year of employee productivity time or £3.7 million of fully loaded average wage cost.

Robyn adds: “The great thing is that we're able to be so granular about how we deploy MFA and we can deploy different policies according to the risk associated with a particular app, or the kind of data it holds. As our use of MFA gets bigger, we may look at blanket use and having that option is amazing.”



Enabling seamless flexible working

A flexible approach to security is vital for DCC, whose employees are used to working outside the office. “The nature of many of our businesses means that people have worked in multiple sites for some time,” says Robyn. “By adopting Okta, we’ve made the move from place to place a seamless experience, whether they’re at home, in the office or out on a job.” While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this ‘new normal’ way of working to the forefront of the public’s imagination, necessity placed DCC in a strong position to survive and thrive through this period of change. Robyn adds: “Without Okta, we wouldn’t have been prepared for COVID-19 and I certainly don’t think we’d have been comfortable opening up our systems to the kinds of vulnerability that can result from remote working, had we not already been on this journey.”

Creating a new joined up approach

Okta’s Universal Directory allows brands within DCC to maintain their individual islands of identity, while providing centralised oversight at head office. “Okta is the first platform we’ve used to standardise our approach to IT across the business. It means that we’re all speaking a common language, we can pass on learnings quickly and efficiently, and we’re able to roll out new applications effectively, while still enabling our brands to run their businesses autonomously,” says Robyn.

DCC has grown through acquisitions, and typically acquires 10 companies a year of varying sizes and levels of complexity. Before Okta, M&A integration was too challenging and time intensive to consider, leading to DCC group having 47 different siloed tenants. Each of these siloes ran their own infrastructure, applications and ways of working. Global address lists, or simply rolling out a new app, became almost impossible tasks. When integrated, small-scale acquisitions functioned like onboarding large batches of new starter employees into DCC.

This took roughly 1,000 new employees from M&A about 500 hours across a year of IT time to be entered into DCC directories. This is followed by a further 5,000 hours of IT time to provision to DCC’s core 10 apps, whilst taking almost 12 weeks overall to accomplish per acquisition. As a result, DCC wanted to streamline its operations, standardise processes and eliminate inefficiencies.

Okta accomplished the integration of existing tenants and directories from previously acquired companies, as well as new ones, with ease.

DCC was able to solve not only their existing multi-tenancy challenges but also successfully onboard and integrate new acquisitions M&As in market leading time. “I need an hour of your time to deploy okta and then you’ll have a tenant up and running. Once they’ve got that up and running, I’ll show them the whole catalogue of what Okta has pre-built. When I first looked it was 3,000 apps within Okta’s App Integration Network. Now it’s over 7,000. If you don’t see an app in there, it doesn’t mean you can’t integrate, you can, it’s not difficult at all,” says Robyn.

Due to this new joined up approach, DCC was able to accomplish audit related work from one central place, instead of from each business, saving two full time employees worth of time and cost. This also means DCC can, for example, organise IT security training for employees across its four divisions, with 47 tenants, without needing to contact each company individually to check for new starters. It also enables it – with the help of Lifecycle Management, another feature Robyn hopes to implement more widely in the future – to provide and revoke access to applications in a timely fashion, when employees join or leave the business.



Improving productivity with application integration

As DCC's exploration of Okta's capabilities has increased, so too has its integration with the company's existing infrastructure. Far from the original vision for a security suite, DCC has realised the potential Okta holds for transforming businesses and Okta now has a far wider role than DCC first envisaged. Over the years, DCC has integrated a wide variety of applications with Okta that are key to the business's success. Among them are DocuSign, 0365, Salesforce, SANS and Qlik. "Security is still our key core focus," says Robyn, "but we've grown to realise that there's so much more to Okta than that. Today, we have a full network of different integrated applications that our businesses can use." Most recently, in October 2020, DCC completed integration with employee engagement tool Qualtrics.

Integrating apps centrally into Okta once, as opposed to 47 times across 47 tenants beforehand, saved DCC a lot of time and Okta's Integration Network meant that most of these integrations didn't even have to be built as they were already there. Before, it might have taken as much as a week to integrate a new app into a single tenant. Okta's approach means that employees get the apps they need to be productive much faster.

In recent weeks, DCC has rolled out a group-wide survey to all 14,000 employees across all brands, to find out how they feel about their work and the culture at DCC.

It's a process that Robyn believes would have been impossible to achieve before DCC adopted Okta. Okta enabled Robyn to ensure the security of the data recorded in the survey using MFA, and to easily push the survey out to each of the company's employees. "We're still waiting for the results," says Robyn, "but it'll be interesting to hear what people at all levels of the company have to say. Hopefully, we'll get some nice insights that we can action across different areas of the business."

Powering future growth and innovation

Okta has become more than a software suite for DCC. It is now a valued partner that helps steer the company's plans for the future. "Okta allows us to continue innovating, and has been a valuable partner in this journey, which is great," says Robyn. Returning full circle to the origins of how DCC was formed and has since grown, it seems inevitable that new acquisitions will continue to provide the lifeblood of the company for years to come. And Okta will continue to play a crucial role in this respect, making it increasingly easier for Robyn and her colleagues to adapt to the needs of this ever-changing organisation. "Okta takes the hassle out of new acquisitions for us," she adds. "The big thing that we're seeing is that we can keep each business running autonomously, they're still in control. That makes our approach almost infinitely scalable, and the lessons we've learned can be easily repeated and improved upon with each new acquisition. That's fantastic."

About Okta

Okta is the World's Identity Company. We free everyone to safely use any technology—anywhere, on any device or app. Our Workforce and Customer Identity Clouds enable secure yet flexible access, authentication, and automation that transforms how people move through the digital world and puts Identity at the heart of business security and growth.



Case Study



Uniting diverse brands
under a single identity
management solution

okta

EMEA Headquarters
20 Farringdon Road
London EC1M 3HE, UK
info_emea@okta.com
+44 203 389 8779