

Identity: The nexus between people and technology

A modern identity and access management solution provides benefits – better security, lower costs and an improved user experience – that make it an essential part of an agency’s digital transformation strategy.

Many agencies are moving productivity tools to cloud-based systems in order to help employees attain agencies’ missions. Cloud solutions are also improving delivery of services and interactions with customers.

The goal is to deliver customer service “commensurate with the services they get in their personal lives,” said Ted Girard, vice president, Public Sector, at Okta.

More than 70 percent of users who log into a system and have a bad experience will leave the site, a troubling statistic “that is driving modern identity services,” he said.

It’s not enough, though, for agencies to simply modernize applications and infrastructure; they need to modernize their identity and access management service as well.

Legacy identity management systems weren’t built to handle the demands of IT’s modern era. Managing legacy infrastructures and legacy systems is three times more complex and costlier than managing a modern infrastructure.

Traditionally, identity was contained as part of the stack within the perimeter of an organization’s data center, “but that’s not what the new world looks like,” Girard said.

Agency applications today can

be inside or outside the data center; users operate across multiple platforms; and agencies want to interface with everybody in a secure and easy way.

With cloud computing and the availability of multiple platforms and user devices, agencies are faced with how best to securely manage users and connect them to services and applications they need at the right time.

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– TED GIRARD, VICE PRESIDENT,
PUBLIC SECTOR, OKTA

“So at the central point, identity really needs to be an independent and neutral platform that supports connecting everyone to everything,” Girard said. That is impossible if an agency’s identity is tied to a particular application stack in their data center.

Agencies need to have an identity vendor “that takes you out of the integration business,” he said.

Several shifts happening in the industry underscore the need for a modern identity solution. First, people need to be connected to technology and “in order to do that,

integration is everything.” Second, people – not the walls of the data center – are becoming the boundary. And finally, every organization is becoming a technology organization that interacts digitally with customers.

“Identity is the lynchpin,” Girard said. “We are the nexus point between technology and people.”

Security is top of mind for agency executives. A modern identity solution can improve security, reduce risk and provide a 360-degree view of users. If agencies have a handle on who the person is, the device they use, and what access rights they should have, they can lock down their security.

“Identity is no longer part of an application stack that gives access; it’s an important security parameter,” Girard said, noting that four out of five breaches are by people logging onto a system with a user name and password.

Identity also defines the user experience, he added, as agencies communicate with others outside the organization.

Agencies are modernizing identity solutions in part because they are at increased risk for breaches. They are eager to innovate quickly, protect their brand and improve the user experience.

Identity today requires a different approach. “When you’re going through your modernization efforts, you have to think about modernizing identity along with it,” Girard said.