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The digital transformation of

okta

What can an identity management company teach you about the future of work?

Welcome to the era of:

Game Changers

Identity Management Game Changer
Keeps Global Workforce Connected

As evidenced by recent high-profile cases involving tech giants like Facebook, data privacy and user identity issues are dominating the news this year. Identity management startup Okta is right in the middle of the action.

"Okta makes it easier to connect people to technology. We've constructed a cloud-based service that leverages identity information to provide access to critical business and personal information anytime, anywhere and from any device," explained Mark Settle, Okta's CIO. "We pioneered the concept of treating identity as an independent service that can be employed in a wide variety of business situations, instead of treating it as a utility function replicated in multiple systems and applications."

Okta's New Approach to Information Security

According to Settle, historical approaches to security management were based upon a "castle-and-moat" mentality that relied on network-centric perimeter defenses to protect information assets. This model is becoming increasingly irrelevant in a digitally transformed world where employees and customers simply assume that they should be able to connect to any application in whatever way they choose.

"We employ a variety of multifactor authentication (MFA) mechanisms and step-up policies to help our customers protect their internal IT infrastructure, their product development environments, and their commercial platforms. These procedures balance security risk with end-user convenience. Identity-based MFA strategies have become a critical component of the digital transformation initiatives being pursued by most Okta customers."

"At Okta, we've adopted a more modern approach to information security that is device-centric instead of network-centric. It relies upon modern techniques for authenticating user identity," Settle explained.

Global Growth Creates Challenges

Over the past two years, Okta has opened sales and engineering offices in Seattle, Toronto, Washington D.C., London, and Sydney. The rapid expansion of global operations has created challenges for Settle.

"We've put a lot of effort into what we call Day One provisioning," he explained. "We want any new employee— whether they're a full-time employee or a contractor—to have access to the equipment and systems they need to perform their job on their first day of employment. To be more specific, we want new employees to walk out of their Day One orientation session with the ability to go directly to their assigned desks and go to work."

Settle reports that Okta uses Workday as the "master source of truth" regarding the employment status and job responsibilities of specific individuals. This information is used to determine the application access privileges they need to do their jobs. Access rights are provisioned automatically via Okta's commercial cloud services.

One operational metric that he keeps an eye on is the number of tickets that new employees submit to the corporate service desk during their first 90 days of employment. "We currently average less than one ticket per new hire, clearly indicating that we are onboarding new employees effectively," he noted.

Collaboration Tools Drive Productivity

Global growth has prompted Okta to take a more calculated and intentional approach to the internal use of collaboration tools for videoconferencing, internal messaging, and file sharing. Furthermore, it's expanded its use of Jira and Confluence to manage product development activities within the software engineering group. "We've standardized on these tools in the interests of streamlining communication and promoting more effective collaboration across our enterprise," Settle added.

Settle knows that a significant amount of routine work is performed through informal collaboration efforts involving employees from different departments. These activities aren't large or complex enough to qualify as full-blown projects. Furthermore, they may not last long enough to merit a lot of detailed planning. But they nevertheless need some type of lightweight coordination tool to keep virtual team members informed about progress and next steps. Settle reported that Okta has had significant internal success with Smartsheet and Trello to manage these types of cross-functional activities.

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New Ways to Communicate With Customers

Looking forward, Settle has several initiatives underway to help the company do a better job of mastering selected data types across multiple SaaS applications to improve data quality. The company is also taking steps to expand end-user self-service capabilities, particularly for members of the customer success team who closely monitor the adoption of Okta services by new customers.

The value of this integration for meaningful product development is clear: Settle believes that this implementation will dramatically improve Okta's ability to link feedback from multiple sources and drive product development plans in directions that satisfy the broadest possible cross-section of customer needs.

"Receptive will provide us with a platform for collecting and managing this feedback and prioritizing next steps in product development."

"We're also pretty excited about a new tool called Receptive," he said. "We plan to use it to merge product-related feedback from customers as well as the product-related feedback we receive from Okta employees who work directly with our customers. This will be game changing since product management is a balancing act in which we try to integrate and prioritize feedback from our professional services group, our customer support organization, our customer success managers, and online customer communities."

NAME:
Mark Settle

COMPANY:
Okta

TITLE:
Chief Information Officer

INDUSTRY:
IT Security

EMPLOYEE COUNT:
1,200

HOW HE CHANGED THE GAME:
Helping make Okta a pioneer and the market leader in cloud-based identity management platforms

Visionary leaders are changing the game for the modern workforce.

Welcome to the era of:

Game
Change*rs*

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