

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY:
BT GROUP

BT saves more than £15 million and improves customer services with comprehensive Identity & Access Management.



Customer Profile

Industry: Telecommunications
Company: BT Group
Revenue: £20.2 billion (FY06/07)
Employees: 106,000

Business Impact Summary

Business:

BT provides networked IT, telecommunications and broadband services to customers around the globe. In the UK alone, the company serves more than 18 million customers with 28 million exchange lines and 11.2 million broadband connections.

Challenge:

To enable future growth and ensure its services remain competitive, BT needs to build close relationships with its customers and suppliers. With the Web already playing a key role in customer service delivery and collaboration, BT needed to provide secure access to its online resources.

Solution:

BT has developed a reusable authentication capability for staff, customers and suppliers. Using CA's Identity & Access Management solution, BT has centralised user authentication and authorisation to key external and internal Web applications, with the CA solution performing 36 million transactions per day.

Result:

By enabling simplified sign-on for all of BT's user communities, the reusable authentication capability has helped save £4.5 million per annum since 2004. BT is also able to enhance the customer experience and its competitive advantage by using the solution to increase speed to market for new applications and extend self-service options.

Business

Helping customers thrive in a changing world

BT Group provides communications solutions to customers in Europe, the Americas and Asia Pacific. The Group consists of four customer-facing lines of business: BT Retail, BT Wholesale, Openreach and BT Global Services.

The company's principal activities include providing networked IT, telecommunications and broadband services for both residential and business customers. In the UK, BT serves more than 18 million customers with 28 million exchange lines and 11.2 million broadband connections.

BT is dedicated to helping customers improve their lives and businesses with products and services that are tailored to their current and future needs. To understand the challenges and lifestyles of its customers, BT needs to be able to build close and long-term relationships.

By establishing a customer-centric strategy, BT aims to maximise the potential of its traditional business while also pursuing profitable growth through the adoption of new-wave services, such as broadband and mobility.

“Customers expect us to get security right and don't want to worry about issues such as identity theft. Any problems with identity and information management could be very damaging to our reputation as one of the UK's most trusted brands.”

Robert Temple
Chief Security Architect, BT

Challenge

Building long-term and profitable relationships

With its customers and operations spread across 170 countries, building and maintaining relationships is a considerable challenge. The company's four portals, including BT.com, play a key role in bridging the gap between the company and its customers, with more than eight million individuals regularly using the websites to access a range of self-service options from viewing bills and setting up direct debits to managing email accounts and placing orders.

With BT.com and the other portals offering a gateway to personal information, it is essential that only authorised customers gain access to their own records. Robert Temple, Chief Security Architect for BT, comments, “Customers expect us to get security right and don't want to worry about issues such as identity theft. Any problems with identity and information management could be very damaging to our reputation as one of the UK's most trusted brands.”

Ensuring secure access to its customer portals is just one piece of the company's identity management puzzle. The communications giant also needs to provide staff and suppliers with easy access to key data and establish a scalable and flexible identity management model to support next-generation services.

Delivering user-centric and cost-effective services

To enable the delivery of its new services, BT has embarked on a radical transformation programme: the 21st Century Network (21CN). As Temple explains, “21CN is not only about taking cost out of our business but also about deploying new services — the majority of which will be user-centric. We therefore need to be able to easily identify, authenticate and authorise users and to operate a profile-driven architecture.”

Simplification is a key pillar of 21CN and is central to BT's identity management strategy. "Although we have a very clear target architecture, nevertheless we have a very large legacy environment, with lots of different components that need to interoperate," comments Temple. "As part of 21CN, we wanted to devise a standards-based access and identity management architecture that would enable us to talk across all of the platforms as we move towards rationalisation."

Solution

Establishing a reusable authentication capability

Deploying an Identity & Access Management solution that was founded on open and international standards was fundamental for BT. The company uses a variety of applications and platforms and needed a solution that was compatible and flexible, so it could be reused with maximum effect.

CA SiteMinder WAM was among a number of Identity & Access Management solutions already being used across the Group. Following an extensive benchmarking exercise, BT decided to standardise on the CA solution, which now forms the backbone of BT's reusable authentication capability for staff, suppliers and customers.

Prior to this reusable authentication approach, BT staff had to remember multiple passwords — a problem exacerbated by the company's diverse IT environment. "By using CA SiteMinder WAM, we have been able to decrease the number of internal passwords by enabling simplified sign-on, which has helped to increase efficiency and reduce the volume of password resets," comments Temple. In addition, BT has eliminated the need for 80 point solutions that were being used for user authentication.

BT has also extended its CA SiteMinder WAM deployment with identity federation to enable its users to access applications and data hosted by some of the company's suppliers. "Setting up federated identities was very simple using CA SiteMinder WAM," comments Temple. "Although there are still cultural and legal challenges surrounding federation, we now have a flexible and scalable model that we will eventually be able to extend to thousands of suppliers and other partners."

More than 120,000 BT employees and external partners can now access applications, such as staff surveys and personal development records, using this federated approach.

A secure online environment for customers

Identities are also fundamental for ensuring the security of the customer portals and the personal data provided there. Every individual that registers with BT.com and the other customer websites is given a unique identity, which is authenticated and authorised using CA SiteMinder WAM.

The secure access process is entirely seamless to the customer and happens in real-time. As Alec Cartwright, a Lead Architect at BT explains, "When a user attempts to access their online account, they are challenged for their credentials — a password and username. The user is authenticated against one of four central databases and then granted authorised access to their account and relevant services."

BT staff have also been equipped with federated identities that enable them to access applications and data hosted by some of the company's suppliers.

“We have been able to make things simpler, cheaper and better for ourselves and our customers. We also have the foundations we need for selling identity management to our customers as a proposition.”

Robert Temple
Chief Security Architect, BT

Even though CA SiteMinder WAM performs this process 36 million times a day, user authentication takes only a matter of seconds. At present BT mainly uses passwords for internal and external user authentication, although the CA solution also supports other methods, such as biometrics, smartcards and USB tokens, which the communications giant plans to take advantage of in the future.

Result

Decreased cost, increased competitive advantage

By ensuring its portals and millions of customer records are protected, the company will be able to continue to reap the cost benefits of a self-service model. As Temple confirms, “Simplicity is essential in the consumer and small business space. By developing a secure and effective access model for our portals, we envisage much greater use of self-care, which not only helps improve customer relationships but also meets our other objective of reducing the cost base.”

Cost reduction is fundamental to the 21CN initiative, with BT predicting financial savings of £1 billion by 2008/9. The decrease in password-reset requests from staff has already saved £4.5 million per annum.

Identity federation will also help the company deliver on its cost control promises by improving efficiency and productivity. “With federation we can share information more easily with our suppliers, with the boundaries between organisations and systems becoming invisible for staff,” comments Temple. “By establishing a standards-based reusable authentication capability, we have been able to reduce complexity and further our vision for 21CN.”

In addition to aiding cost control and efficiency, BT’s reusable authentication capability has helped to:

- Enhance the customer experience
- Boost competitive advantage
- Increase business agility

For example, developers now have access to ‘ready-made’ user authentication and authorisation services that can be applied across the Group for new application launches. This speeds up the development cycle and enables BT to get new customer services to market quicker. Any future acquisitions could also be integrated more quickly.

“We have been able to make things simpler, cheaper and better for ourselves and our customers. We also have the foundations we need for selling identity and access management as a managed service to our customers as a product proposition,” comments Temple.

To learn more and see how CA software solutions enable other organizations to unify and simplify IT management for better business results, visit ca.com/customers.