

Multinational advertising company creates a more connected future



Challenge

To serve clients better by bringing businesses and people closer together.

Solution

Technology transformation underpinned by a unique company-wide user identity for every employee managed through the Okta platform.

Results

Simplified global compliance, reduced application cost and complexity, and a foundation for continued transformation.

We recommended solving the issue of employee identity first, to give the company closer control over the applications each user could access as quickly as possible, and lay the groundwork for implementing a 'zero trust' network security model.

A large multinational advertising and PR company wants its clients to have seamless access to the full range of services available from its constituent businesses. To support that aim, it's co-locating businesses in new purpose-built shared offices, and working with Xalient to bring its people together through technology.

Transforming a federation into a close-knit entity

A long-running programme of acquisition has helped the company remain a leader in the rapidly evolving world of advertising and PR. By constantly bringing new skills and talent on board, the company has been a driving force in the industry's ongoing development.

To deliver optimum value to its clients, collaboration across the group is a strategic imperative. But as is often the case when growth takes place through acquisition, the company and its employees must contend with IT and networking infrastructures that aren't fully integrated. Even at recently opened shared offices, businesses have continued to run their own infrastructure, applications and cloud software tenancies; and employees have retained user IDs specific to whichever business they work for. So it's proved difficult for people from different parts of the company to collaborate effectively, and to share data, applications and other resources.

Fortunately, the group has a vision to transform its technology and resolve those issues by using the cloud as its IT infrastructure, shifting all of its networking to the internet, and giving each employee a unique company-level identity.

Identity: the starting point for transformation

The company initially met with Xalient to discuss the benefits of using software-defined networking (SD-WAN) in place of its legacy networking environment. Through a consultancy engagement, Xalient gained insight into the company's business goals and its network-related ambitions in the context of its technology transformation strategy.

Based on those learnings — and given the need for urgent action — Xalient recommended solving the issue of employee identity before exploring SD-WAN, in order to:

- Give the company easier and closer control over the applications and resources each user could access
- Lay the groundwork for implementing a ‘zero trust’ network security model
- Help the company to efficiently consolidate multiple Office 365 tenancies, which were proving a barrier to effective collaboration across businesses

With the support of the company’s CISO and CTO, Xalient switched its consultancy focus to how best to provision each employee with a unique company-level identity. Xalient proposed Okta’s identity and access management solution for its flexibility and its ability to manage each user identity’s access to any permitted application or resource, whether hosted in the cloud or in a data centre.

Gartner subsequently recognised Okta as a Leader in the ‘Magic Quadrant for Access Management, August 2019’ for the third year in a row¹, supporting Xalient’s recommendation of the platform for this multinational corporation.

Okta also allows all of the company’s Office 365 tenancies to be collapsed into one — delivering cost savings and facilitating cross-business collaboration. The company had looked separately at creating a single Microsoft identity for each user, but had been put off by the prospect of an expensive multi-year project to achieve that. Despite having the Microsoft licences, they realised there would still be a huge cost to deploying and managing the MS solution.

“ We’ve deployed an identity and access management system for our multinational customer that helps to break down barriers between their businesses, and underpins their wide-ranging technology transformation vision. ”

Sherry Vaswani
Founder and CEO, Xalient



Consistent compliance made simpler

It took less than a month for Xalient to migrate all of the company’s user identities to the Okta platform — an impressive performance that helped to build trust in Xalient’s ability to deliver on their promise. Some user identities were duplicates, configured in the past to enable individuals to work across business boundaries. Using the Okta platform, Xalient ensured a single unique identity for each employee.

Now each user can access their authorised applications and resources, with no need for application-specific logins or IDs. Once a user logs on to their computer with their Okta-managed identity, a portal provides links to all the applications and resources they’re allowed to access.

From the company’s point of view, having all applications linked to a single identity source makes licensing compliance simpler and more consistent globally. Cost and risk are significantly reduced, as it’s easy to assign the correct application licences to new joiners’ identities; while deactivating a leaver’s identity automatically removes their application access. In addition, Okta allows all of the company’s Office 365 tenancies to be collapsed into one — delivering cost savings and facilitating cross-business collaboration.

Building for the future

Okta is federated to the company’s existing Active Directory services but, in the future, a global HR system will drive identity. This will automatically add users to the scalable Okta platform and provision their access rights based on their job roles. At that point, the company will be able to retire Active Directory and do away with the associated hardware and admin overhead.

Xalient continues working with the company on strategies to manage and secure its internet-based connectivity, and on architecting its campus networks and unified communications solutions. Xalient is also helping the company to develop its ‘zero trust’ networking strategy, for which the Okta-driven unique user identity solution will act as the foundational building block.

¹ Gartner, Magic Quadrant for Access Management, Michael Kelley, Abhyuday Data, Henrique Teixeira, 12 August 2019. Quoted here: <https://www.okta.com/resources/access-management-leader-gartner-magic-quadrant/>



About Xalient

Xalient is an independent, ‘born in the cloud’ consulting and managed services organisation focused on WAN transformation. We design, build and manage global networks, using software-defined networking, communication, identity management and security solutions for large organisations.

To find out more about Xalient and how we help transform and secure networks for some of the world’s top brands, visit us at www.xalient.com or email hello@xalient.com