

ANOMALIX WHITE PAPER

Building An Effective IAM Program



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Identity Access Management (IAM) creates a secure gateway to access and transmit sensitive data. IAM brings enormous value to organizations by reducing inherent information safety risks, boosting productivity, streamlining business partner communications, enabling digital transformation, and meeting the challenges of a distributed workforce.

Creating an effective IAM program that provides value remains a challenge. From a strategic standpoint, IAM must clearly align with business objectives and stakeholder interests to gain support. Technology can also be challenging as IT professionals integrate legacy systems with advanced applications, striving to achieve a balance that meets current requirements yet is scalable for future needs.

Solving these challenges may seem daunting, but if approached with clear intent and executive support, IT professionals can build an effective IAM program that brings exceptional value to the organization.

Vision

IAM programs guard an organization's most valuable asset, data. Keeping proprietary, financial, customer, personnel, and operational data safe is paramount and can only be achieved by restricting and monitoring user access. An effective IAM program not only maintains the integrity of technical architecture, but more important the reputation of the company who owns it. Persevering and enhancing the brand is top of mind for all C-level executives.

Building such a program starts with obtaining support for the program. Company stakeholders must first understand the value the project offers before they will support it. The results must be tangible, providing a benefit that usually relates to mitigating risk and avoiding undue costs associated with inadequate security measures. Executive stakeholders must be able to explain the project as they put their political capital to work to promote the project. Understanding and communicating the value of the project, and how it relates to their individual interests, is vital.

An IAM program should have a clear vision that aligns with enterprise level strategic goals and objectives. One the prime reasons for project failure is an unclear objective, so tying an IAM project value to specific business objectives will provide proof of value. One common goal on the minds of most corporations is to "improve the customer experience". What better way to reach this goal than to provide an atmosphere of security and trust where customer data is highly secure? Companies are facing the challenge of providing ease of use without compromising security. IAM enables both.

Tech projects don't live in a vacuum. They must meet today's needs and tomorrow's contingencies. That's why an effective IAM program will address today's in-

frastructure issues but also meet tomorrow's challenges. Understanding current and/or legacy technology is the starting point for establishing an IAM program. Implementing too much technology may confuse users and be a large expense to the company. Employing too little tech may not make you scale for future expansion.

Finally, it is imperative to understand the role of the user and why they need to access data. Role mapping plays a vital part in an effective IAM program but requires that IT understand not only how they access data, but the business purposes for which they do so. Making access too cumbersome for users prevents employees, suppliers, and business partners from adding value to the company. Role mapping outlines not only the how, but the why users need specific data.

Solutions

Create and update the IAM business case to attract interest – and funding

It may take several years to identify, propose, and implement high-profile projects, including IAM programs that may span multiple business units. Recent studies show the CEO/President is the decision maker in 38% of IT decisions. [Ensuring that there are consistent, detailed results on project progress for long-term funding is essential given the scrutiny that IT decisions have in the organization.](#)

Stakeholders need to stay informed of project progress and have proof that it works. Risk management and cost avoidance are the two key benefits of IAM programs. Proof that the project is meeting these goals will maintain a project's viability.

Incorporate the IAM program into the IT Vision

An enterprise-wide strategic vision sets the tone for the entire company. Likewise, an IT-specific vision establishes a roadmap that includes a tangible scope with specific objectives.

IAM projects must clearly outline the existing architecture and include a roadmap of current and future applications. It all starts with mapping those systems, who the users are, and what their access privileges should be. Once determined, systems that monitor compliance and measure effectiveness are essential.

Establish a framework for decision-making

IAM solutions continue to evolve in today's market. How do you know which solution is right for the organization? There are three issues to consider: current legacy systems, the budget, and potential future business scenarios.

Documenting how existing systems show meet business objectives, mitigate risk, and avoid unnecessary costs associated with breaches is an initial step.

This analysis will show current gaps and the risk potential. The higher the risk potential, the more likely it can become a priority.

When considering budget alternatives, using the good, better, best methodology is a helpful guideline. Most people want the best, robust solution that provides the greatest security and user acceptance but is also the most expensive and may not get approved. Next is the better solution, the middle-of-the road option that provides a significant improvement over today's access programs but doesn't drain the entire IT budget. Finally, is the good solution, the one that addresses today's issues and a few of tomorrow's challenges at an affordable price.

Finally, IT professionals need a crystal ball to peer into the future. Is there a market-driven change ahead, like a foreseeable merger, acquisition, or purchase of another company? These what-if scenarios may be the most important factor and affect short- and long-term IAM program success. Significant events may require scalability as the system brings on new users and faces new challenges. While these events cannot be predicted (or disclosed), a foreseeable change will alter the IT roadmap and impact the IAM program.

Get in the mind of the user

If users don't like the system, they won't use it – or worse, they'll find a way around it. IAM projects must continually balance opposing priorities of enhancing data security while making systems accessible. Human behavior is a critical component in data security. The number one reason for many data breaches is inadequate or shared passwords, making it a challenge for IAM programs to achieve clear success.

Incorporating the user in the process by explaining the need for an IAM program, their role in protecting data, and providing clear training and use guidelines will help make IAM programs successful.

Map the Role of the User

IAM is based on clear role maps. Users roles can only be understood by identifying why they need the data they do and what value it brings to the organization. Access helps people do their jobs which ultimately provides value to the organization, whether they are onsite or working remotely across the globe. Users may be internal to the organization or external suppliers and business partners. When, why, and how they need to access data determines the foundation of the IAM program.

An effective IAM program gives access to users by providing permissions to what they need, not more than they need. IAM systems refine and improve access while avoiding scenarios where too much information may be damaging to the user and the organization.

Conclusion

Anomalix has the systems and security expertise to create IAM applications that control access to the right users and reduce potential attacks that can threaten your company's data integrity and reputation.

Anomalix starts with business objectives to identify the [right strategy and road-map](#) for your organization with our advisory services. We design the right solution for you, which may include

[Role Based Access Control](#) (RBAC), an approach used to reduce manual access distribution across the enterprise and help to enforce the least privilege access required to perform job duties. Establishing Joiner, Mover, and Leaver scenarios will reduce risk associated with new hires, inter-company moves, and terminations, improving productivity for both employees and IT professionals.

Keeping data safe within the company is of paramount importance and Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) protocols provide additional levels of security. Using MFA, users are required to provide two or more pieces of evidence (factors) before they are allowed access. Today's MFA protocols are an integral part of an IAM program that enhances data security.

Data Access Governance

With the advent of file sharing solutions like SharePoint, it can be difficult to identify specific users or roles who should have access. Data Access Governance (DAG) solutions allow SharePoint and similar applications to offer convenience and security to authorized users.

Anomalix is a Gartner recognized solutions and services company for Identity and Access Management, protecting and enabling some of the largest brands in the world everyday. Learn more about the products and services we offer.

Where to begin

Understanding the risks associated with the current IAM program will set the stage for a project acceptance. Answering the question, "what is the impact of our current IAM system?" will identify gaps. Data leakage and breaches, lost productivity, and decaying customer trust may all be indications of an ineffective IAM program.

Next, identify stakeholders who have the interest, need, and political capital to support an IAM program. Mitigating risk is a frequent reason for improved IAM programs in addition to avoiding costs associated with overtime or lost productivity – two great reasons that will get the attention of those budget authority.

Finally, align the IAM program with business objectives. Are key customers asking for improved security or certification to assure data privacy and security? Is the company expanding the workforce or regional footprint? Is the company striving to increase market share, but must prove themselves as a trusted and reliable source of information? These are all opportunities to improve and expand the effectiveness of an IAM program.

What are the results

Effective IAM programs reduce risk and improve security while providing users with necessary access. It allows internal users and external organizations to efficiently perform their roles by accessing the appropriate data they need, when they need it.

An effective IAM program is also adaptive. While it addresses today's needs, it also allows an organization to be nimble and adapt to tomorrow's unexpected internal or marketplace changes. Ultimately, IAM allows companies to effectively protect their assets, allow employees to provide value, connect efficiently with external partners, and provide tangible value to customers.



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Third-Party Identity Management in a Decentralized World

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