
Imprivata: Bridging Physical and Logical Identity

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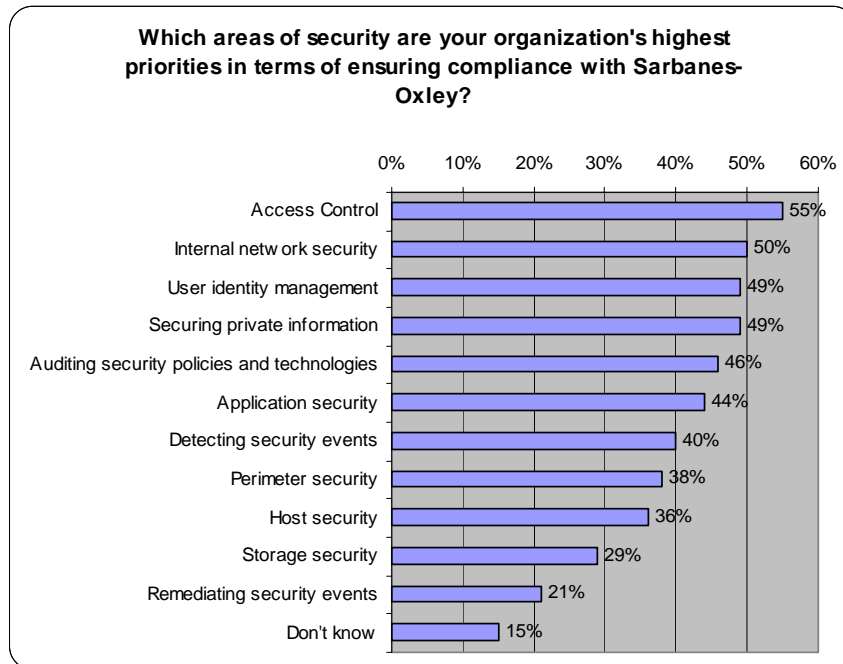
Abstract: Business requirements are driving the need for Identity and Access Management (IAM) solutions but many companies remain leery of IAM projects because of their reputations of custom integration, high cost and frequent failure. Thankfully, new solutions may make IAM a lot easier. Imprivata already offers a spiffy identity appliance for authentication and Single Sign-On. The company recently increased its value by integrating physical and logical security information. This can help bolster security, ease user provisioning/de-provisioning and streamline the compliance audit process.

Overview

In the past, Identity and Access Management (IAM) was focused on IT operations and thus was a topic for CIOs and IT administrators, but this is no longer the case. Beyond the IT benefits, executive managers now recognize that identity management is needed to drive a growing number of business initiatives. Why the radical transformation? Identity management has become an integral component of:

- **Regulatory compliance.** To comply with government and industry regulations like HIPAA, PCI, and Sarbanes-Oxley, organizations must follow strict rules for managing user accounts and report on user access to specific systems and data. This greatly augments the need for IAM. The proof? ESG Research indicates that access control and user identity were identified as two of the top three IT priorities as they relate to Sarbanes-Oxley compliance (see Figure One).
- **B2B relationships.** To enhance business processes, many companies are extending internal system access to outside constituencies like business partners, suppliers and customers. To make these connections auditable and secure, identity management **MUST** be part of these efforts.
- **Layered Security.** In terms of information security, identity management is an essential part of authentication, access control and forensic investigations. Large companies recognize that these safeguards must be added in a layered security approach alongside existing firewalls, desktop security software and network controls.
- **Business automation.** To strip cost out of business process, large firms want to provide users with self-service web-based tools and applications. These systems need identity management in order to customize access controls for users and groups and enforce business rules.

Figure One: IT Priorities for Sarbanes-Oxley Compliance



Real business requirements have certainly driven growth and activity in the IAM space. Over the past few years, ESG has seen precipitous increases in IAM implementations, project sizes and industry M&A activity.

IAM Technology Complexity Remains a Bottleneck

Many organizations have known about the value of IAM for years but still shied away from IAM implementation. Why? Technology solutions tended to be high priced and complex while IAM projects often took years to implement and were known to have high failure rates. With these limitations, IAM benefits were outweighed by the combination of high risk and high cost -- business and technology managers were unwilling to “bet the farm” on IAM.

What’s changed? First, IAM is no longer a luxury - business needs, regulatory compliance mandates, and security requirements make IAM a “gotta have.” Fortunately, pressing user needs have led to a whole new crop of IAM solutions from suppliers. What’s different about these new products? Today’s IAM solutions now incorporate web-based standards, canned integration and appliance form-factors. These IAM offerings:

- **Integrate seamlessly with existing applications.** Instead of requiring custom integration, many IAM solutions use software intelligence to plug right into the infrastructure. For example, some Single Sign-On (SSO) tools intercept passwords between users and applications, store them locally and then act as an SSO proxy for users henceforth. This transparency makes today’s IAM solutions a refreshing change from the custom coding nightmares of the past.
- **Fit into existing business processes.** Early IAM suites forced firms into business process changes. Often times, this created turf wars between IT and business professionals and led to project failures. Today’s more transparent solutions provide tools for business process automation to boost productivity but do not force companies into immediate radical changes. In this way, business project changes can be phased in over time once IAM is in place and initial project goals are achieved.
- **Interoperate.** Early IAM suites were proprietary all-or-nothing endeavors. Today’s more open solutions can piece together multiple best-of-breed tools over time. In this way, IAM projects are more manageable while users have additional choices - and more time - to build an end-to-end IAM infrastructure.
- **Streamline deployment projects.** Perhaps the biggest change is in deployment cycles. Rather than the multi-million dollar projects of the past, IAM can be added to networks and deliver ROI within a few months time.

The Imprivata OneSign IAM Appliance

There are lots of IAM choices but ESG believes that Imprivata is especially noteworthy. Imprivata's value is in delivering comprehensive IAM functionality as a network appliance. When designed correctly, an IAM appliance can reduce traditional IAM implementation, integration, and time-to-value cycles.

As a small company, Imprivata recognizes that it is not in a position to deliver soup-to-nuts IAM functionality. Rather, it delivers solutions in two IAM areas:

- **Authentication.** Imprivata can be used to authenticate remote users (as a RADIUS proxy or server) and can also replace basic user name/password authentication with more secure 2-factor authentication options. Imprivata supports a number of technical options, including security token, smart card and biometric options.
- **SSO.** As previously described, the Imprivata appliance sit in between users and applications, acting as a user broker for access. Of course, this frees users from the onerous task of remembering multiple passwords but it also helps to ease operations as well. Password change management can become an efficient self-service task while costly password-related help desk calls all but disappear.

To offer its customers additional IAM functionality, Imprivata partners with established industry leaders. For example, Imprivata works with Microsoft Active Directory, Novell, Oracle and Sun on directory integration. Imprivata provides an industry standard SPML interface for user provisioning partnering with, Courion and Fischer International. Finally, OneSign provides seamless integration for 2-factor authentication including one-time password tokens, biometrics, smart cards and others. Imprivata works with multiple authentication companies including Ensure Technologies, HID, RF Ideas, Upek, and, Vasco.

In September, 2006, Imprivata expanded its identity purview. The company will now integrate its identity appliance with physical security solutions from leading vendors such as Lenel, S2 and Tyco. It is important to note that Imprivata's intent is not to replace existing physical security management tools or force organization changes between IT and physical security. Rather, Imprivata's focus is on the integration of physical and logical identity and access data. This view across physical and logical domains can provide immediate benefits for:

- **Granular access controls.** Imprivata aggregates information about building access, LAN activity and VPN access. This information can be combined to build and enforce security access policies. For example, Imprivata can help companies build policies that only allow contractors to log onto the network in specific buildings only.
- **Locking out users.** Terminated users are often asked to return their security IDs but de-provisioning network accounts can take weeks or months at a time. By merging physical and network access controls, Imprivata can simultaneously lock a user from any type of access. This is especially useful for retail companies with high employee turnover and engineering firms with lots of high value intellectual property.
- **Preparing for compliance audits.** Government regulations like Sarbanes-Oxley require audit information about both physical and electronic access to specific systems and data. Imprivata's solution can now provide reporting and auditing from a single source.

The Bottom Line

Business demands are driving IAM implementation and more turnkey IAM solutions. No, we haven't reached the "set it and forget it" level with IAM and probably never will but new appliance-based solutions are easing IAM implementation while adding more immediate ROI.

In this context, Imprivata stands out. The company's IAM appliance delivers rapid deployment, SSO functionality and strong authentication choices. The company's newest product extends this value by aggregating physical and logical identity and access data. To continue its success, Imprivata must continue to expand its product functionality, attract additional partners and execute on its engineering schedules and market requirements. If it can follow this path, it may become a brand name in IAM in the future.

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