

# SECURITY AND AGILITY

WHY BUSINESS IS BETTER  
IN THE CLOUD

Browse the headlines to see how companies are embracing ever-improving technology and connectivity to deliver breakthrough products, services and business models. Today's technology operates not only inside companies, but also beyond corporate boundaries, interacting with global networks of vendors, suppliers, customers and other stakeholders. Business is lightning fast, vastly more collaborative and decidedly mobile. To remain competitive in so disruptive a climate, organizations can no longer remain tethered to yesterday's tightly controlled internal IT environment.

Businesses today are in hot pursuit of agility: employees need access to data and applications; partners need portals; and customers need a seamless, data-rich experience. Nonetheless, data must be protected. So how can business units/end-users and their IT departments strike a balance between today's essential, agile, technology needs and the need for enhanced security?



## ENTER THE CLOUD |

The cloud represents a profound architectural shift in IT technology, perhaps even greater than the evolution from mainframe to desktop/laptop and now handheld device. In the pre-cloud paradigm, companies barely managed to capably share data, applications and productivity tools on site, let alone provide access to a mobile workforce.

In-house IT-security teams had to continually balance the value of access to data, customized applications and common productivity tools against tight control. The result: IT existed more as a gatekeeper than an enabler. From a security perspective, the approach may have gotten the job done, but any security gains came at the cost of collaboration and organizational effectiveness.




## THE CLOUD TAKES OFF |

Just a few short years ago, cloud architecture was the latest thing: compelling in concept, but suspect in practical application. Companies were intrigued by the cloud but worried about a wide range of issues. The maturity and longevity of newly minted vendors came to mind, as did more critical issues like reliability and security. Many experimented with the cloud, but few, if any, up-and-running businesses were ready to cast off their legacy systems for this latest potential fad.

Fast-forward to 2014, when *Technology Business*

*Research* reported that spending for public cloud services hit \$80 billion the prior year and was expected to more than double to \$167 billion by 2020. Even more recently, *State of the Hybrid Cloud*, a 2015 report from data management-focused Veritas Technologies, shows that public cloud “workloads” are growing at 18% annually, compared with only 7% for the private variety. In general, “the cloud is no longer something to consider,” says Eric Berg, chief product officer at access and identity-focused OKTA, “it’s something to embrace, adopt and harness—or get left behind.”



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—Eric Berg  
Chief Product Officer,  
OKTA

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## THE CLOUD ENHANCES SECURITY |

Cloud has always presented a compelling business case. Not only does it reduce the fixed costs of IT spending, it also introduces potential advantages such as flexibility and scalability. Still, the concern most frequently and vocally expressed is security: how can something enabling so much access and interoperability be secure? More and more businesses are adopting a broader, more cloud-configured IT footprint though. “What they’re actually learning,” says Berg, “is that cloud enhances security.”

Think about the threats within a vastly distributed and yet interconnected business environment. Employees, customers and partners want anywhere/anytime/any device access to essential information/data, applications and tools. No doubt, an interconnected, collaborative, data-rich and real-time technology backbone provides the fast lane to the most disruptively effective business models. But at the same time, says Berg, “so much interactivity and access also leads to an exponential increase in security challenges, vulnerabilities and risks.”

Now think about the advantages offered within the cloud versus a traditional IT approach. Individual companies acting on their own behalf face talent constraints—just how many security engineers can any one company afford to employ? By contrast, for cloud providers, security is a core requirement for their service offerings, meaning they will invest whatever is needed to deliver world-class results.

Companies acting on their own are often hampered by legacy architecture. The business model of a cloud provider, by contrast, is dependent on delivering the latest and most resilient threat technologies available. Individual companies also tend to operate a single instance of any given application. Cloud providers, meanwhile, tend to deploy redundant architectures, allowing them to rapidly respond to and neutralize threats across a wide range of customer installations. Cloud providers, in fact, build extensive security infrastructure so that even the slightest indication of misuse is detected and handled by 24/7 on-call teams.

Another key advantage: rather than running on legacy architecture built even before the era of the

Internet, best-in-class cloud providers have built their platforms from the ground up. Lacking the security weaknesses inherent in other systems, cloud platforms are in fact designed to withstand daily probes from the Internet. This is a security-agility model that can react to threats far faster than most traditional enterprise security teams.

Best-of-breed cloud providers go still further with features such as two-factor log-in authentication, perhaps requiring visual confirmation of a user's identity or sending them an access code via text. And once securely identified, the most effective environments enable that user to visit any authorized application, productivity tool, portal or data set needed.

Finally, because cloud providers observe threat vectors across an entire spectrum of customers, they are at the cutting edge of security practices at all times. Overall, says Berg, no single company "can afford the investments and staff costs needed to deliver similar levels of security." All told, security is actually enhanced when working with a cloud provider.



## THE CLOUD COMBINES SECURITY WITH AGILITY |

The evidence shows that cloud providers offer an optimized blend of security and agility. Using the cloud, IT teams achieve optimum security, while end-users—be they internal teams or external partners, customers or other stakeholders—are free to share approved data and applications. The end

game, says Berg, "is security amid collaboration, interoperability and productivity for whatever technology you're using." Properly configured, says Berg, "the cloud can deliver."

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