Microsoft

Modernize your customer and partner relationships

Microsoft Azure Active Directory External Identities for the business decision maker

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Digital transformation is changing the way you work

The nature of business is rapidly evolving. Marketers increasingly rely on a holistic view of their customers, operations leaders engage external partners, and human resources must learn to communicate with a blended workforce.

According to Microsoft research powered by Pulse in February 2020, 98 percent of executives agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "deepening collaboration and engagement with customers and business partners is the best way to increase my company's profitability" for the future.

Every relationship in the modern business environment is becoming digital—not only between your employees, but with customers and partners too. At an organizational level, you have the opportunity and imperative to digitally transform to improve productivity as well as drive deeper customer relationships and competitive growth.

Enabling seamless identity experiences throughout the digital journey for all users outside your organization is central to unlocking greater productivity, deeper brand engagement and loyalty, and better business-to-business collaboration.

Collaboration beyond your organizational boundaries is more critical than ever.

- Every relationship today is digital.
- Relationships with customers and partners evolve over time.
- Consumers are increasingly aware of security risks.
- Your workforce is no longer just full-time employees. It may include vendors, gig workers, and employees of subsidiaries, distributors, suppliers, and others.
- Organizations are demanding richer data and relationship insights.

The future of collaboration

Organizations are finding their competitive edge not just by making their full-time employee workforce more productive, but by enabling their blended workforce to succeed.

According to the Harvard Business Review, an emerging force of disruption includes the "delivery of work through complex partner ecosystems (involving multiple industries, geographies, and organizations of different sizes), rather than within a single organization."[1]

The complexity of business operations is reflected by the explosion of apps, devices, and users outside the corporate network. Your business leaders need to be able to empower any collaborative partner—including distributors, suppliers, vendors, and others—with secure and seamless access to the resources they need while protecting your organization's assets with built-in compliance, scale, and intelligent security. Additionally:

- Users increasingly expect customized, branded experiences that reflect the business relationship.
- External business partners may include the largest organizations with sophisticated IT departments, but may also include smaller operators, individual contractors, and others.
- Business partners have unique 'life cycles' in their interactions with your organization. Subsidiaries who are constant partners may require longer-term access to resources, in contrast to seasonal or part-time contractors.

Security and compliance are top of mind for every organization and individual. When collaborating with external users or business partners, 79 percent of executives identified security as their most important consideration.

[1] Joseph Fuller, Judith Wallenstein, Manjari Raman, and Alice de Chalendar. "Your Workforce Is More Adaptable Than You Think." *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2019/05/your-workforce-is-more-adaptable-than-you-think

The future of the customer experience

Digital relationships are dependent on trust, making the security of both external users and partner organizations critical to your brand.

C-suite executives recognize that end customers' expectations are higher than ever. It's becoming even more important to create secure, frictionless, and customizable experiences for all types of customers—consumers, patients, students, and citizens. To maintain a consistent brand experience, consider that:

- Customers want a cohesive omnichannel experience that allows them to use the same identity and account at any entry point.
- Customers want to be able to use their own identities, including common social IDs. Turning anonymous users into known users requires a low-friction sign-in experience without the need to memorize new credentials.
- Brand trust is more fragile than ever—95 percent of executives believe that customers will disengage after experiencing a privacy or security breach.

Meanwhile, a world-class customer experience depends on the ability to access a single view of the user with a unified customer profile of disparate profile data sources, including identity attributes. Creating a flexible user-centric experience gives your team the insights needed to adapt to user engagement trends and behavior.

Does your identity and access management support your business goals?

Questions to consider as you work with your CIO and CISO:

- Do I have control to localize, customize, and brand all authentication touchpoints?
- How seamless is sign-up and sign-in for the external partners I collaborate with?
- Can customers and partners use their preferred social credentials?
- Does the solution reduce security and privacy risks for external users while protecting our apps and data?
- How do we remain compliant with GDPR and other regulations?

Protect your apps, your customers, and your brand.

The Microsoft approach

Digital relationships are built on a strong identity foundation.

At Microsoft, we believe a strong identity foundation is one in which our customers can manage all their identities from the cloud, connect all their apps, ensure strong identity governance, and take advantage of our industry-leading security capabilities.

Simplify employee, customer, and partner identity management with Microsoft Azure Active Directory (Azure AD). As the world's most trusted identity service, Azure AD has over 254 million monthly active users and an average of 30 billion authentication requests per day—more than any other identity provider on the market. With a single identity solution, you're equipped to harness the power of your digital relationships with the flexibility to build your solution your way.

Your organization can use the foundation of Azure AD's customer and partner identity capabilities to offer seamless and secure experiences to all of your external users. This lets you enable experiences for different types of users with different needs while meeting scalability, security, and compliance requirements.

We also recognize that the increasingly complex business landscape will require new, intelligent ways of fulfilling your business needs and addressing dynamic security risks. Our vision for Azure AD reflects our understanding of the future of business, in which organizations will create new business value by eliminating siloes and deepening relationships across boundaries. Just as these relationships evolve, organizations will benefit from an identity approach that offers a spectrum of customization options alongside the ability to remain secure and scale for future growth.

Security

While connecting and collaborating are key, digital relationships are dependent on trust, making the security of both the user and the organization critical to the brand.

In 2020, 40 percent of executives reported experiencing a security incident with an external-facing app that they built internally. The good news, however, is that 95 percent of executives strongly agree that with "intelligent reporting and analytics to detect and prevent user/sign-in risks, our company will be able to protect our brand and customer trust."

With the Microsoft intelligent security stack, Azure AD is the most trusted and compliant platform that allows you to securely engage with your customers and partners. Organizations can take advantage of our industry-leading security capabilities by enabling strong authentication, conditional access, and identity protection.

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Modern customer interactions

Organizations manage complex partnerships. Across every industry, the expectations for external interactions are evolving.

Eliminating friction in the end-user experience is a top priority for organizations engaging consumers, customers, or citizens. Users expect a seamless, custom experience that fits their needs. Overall, the experience you provide should drive the most interest and interaction from your users.

Collaborating with external users doesn't need to be a security risk. With the right solution, it can instead be an opportunity to reach your users in a more thoughtful and streamlined way. Below are perspectives from across diverse industries. While their mission statements may differ, they all are looking into the future of improving customer interactions with their brand.

Education
London Business School

World-renowned higher education institution London Business School uses Azure AD to better engage with their partners and provide a superior experience. With self-service password reset, users can view their own identities, log in, and authenticate without intervention from the school's IT team. End users can also use their own identities, passwords, and more to authenticate with the school's system.

Learn more: Leading business school strengthens partnerships with identity and access management service

Media and entertainment
Hearst

Based in New York City, Hearst Communications unites its scores of media and information businesses into a centralized digital enterprise with the help of the Microsoft Enterprise Mobility + Security (EMS) suite with Azure AD. Now Hearst can use Azure AD to give users in acquired business units quick access to Hearst network resources.

Learn more: Eight things this media giant likes about Microsoft Enterprise Mobility + Security and Azure Active Directory

Healthcare
Nuffield Health

Nuffield Health, one of the United Kingdom's leading not-for-profit healthcare organizations, set out to find a customer identity and access management system that could handle stitching together various portals with different member identities into a single, unified system. Today, Nuffield Health uses Azure AD B2C to manage its customer identity system.

Learn more: Top UK healthcare provider now offers a secure web portal as user-friendly as its facilities

Energy
Centrica

Centrica PLC is an international energy and services company focused on satisfying the changing needs of its business and consumer customers. With over 30,000 employees, Centrica relies heavily on its partnerships, which require a lot of collaboration. With Azure AD, Centrica IT administrators can create access packages that allow external business partners to self-register and sign up for Centrica resources.

Learn more: Leading energy and services company solves collaboration challenges with Azure Active Directory entitlement management

Next steps

Uncover new business value through deeper collaboration with your partners and a stronger connection with customers.

Engage your IT department to discuss how Microsoft Azure AD can support your business goals today.

- Learn more about Azure AD External Identities.
- To read more stories about how organizations are improving their customer experience, visit customer stories.
- For a deeper dive, check out the Azure AD Customer and Partner Identity Management whitepaper.