

Finding a Balance between Security and Convenience

It's true. When deploying a Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) solution there is a balancing of security, convenience and cost that the bank must consider. It is a given that with any security implementation there is some degree of customer inconvenience, but the question is to what degree does your organization want to inconvenience the customer?

Several challenges arise in answering this question. These challenges can be mitigated early on in the implementation process. One of the most important keys for achieving balance between security and convenience is the creation of the right team of individuals within your organization to carry out the implementation. Not necessarily the best IT resources in the bank, but rather the right mix of IT resources, operations, business and risk management personnel. This team should be responsible for formulating the bank's strategy and position on the balance between security, convenience and cost. In evaluating the convenience and cost issues, consider both the external customer and the internal bank staff.

A bank should determine how much interaction between the customer and the new security system is acceptable. There are a variety of MFA solutions, some visible, some transparent. It is important to know the differences of the systems and how they affect convenience during implementation and in daily operations. If you deploy a transparent, risk-based authentication solution, you will have a solution that does not change the customer experience and requires a limited registration. With this type of solution, you minimize customer interaction both at the front end as well as in daily operations. However, if you deploy a highly-visible solution such as those that require your customers to participate at every login, you are not only requiring them to go through a lengthy registration, but you are requiring that they go through an extended login process every time that they access their accounts online.

Next, the bank should consider internal convenience. The new solution will pose challenges to the existing staff to address issues that might arise such as increased call center volume. In addition, all customer-facing personnel need to be educated on the system. You want to choose a solution that is convenient and friendly so your customer-facing personnel can project a good understanding in a confident manner.

Knowing the cost of a new security system is important, but the true cost of the solution is misunderstood. The cost of deploying a new security solution is not the only cost. Often forgotten in the cost equation is the cost of operating the systems. For instance, many of the more visible solutions have been proven to increase call center volumes – and costs – and require more employees from a support perspective. Bottom line is, while any solution will require some support for customers, banks must look at the overall costs beyond vendor pricing, and weigh the effects any one solution may have upon both employees and the bank's entire customer base.

A final consideration, especially in light of the increasing sophistication and number of attacks, is the longevity of a solution. What happens should a bank discover that the highly visible solution they have deployed is no longer effective? The costs – both tangible in terms of dollars spent educating customers about the solution and intangible in terms of eroded customer confidence – are high. If your solution doesn't scale to meet the demands of your current customer base, and does not provide you with analytic and forensic tools to understand – and stay ahead of – online criminals, then the balance between security and convenience will be the least of your organization's worries, which is not the intended outcome for any security deployment.



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