

How to choose the right physical identity and access management (PIAM) system

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A centralized physical identity and access management (PIAM) system makes life easier for everyone in your organization. But choosing the right PIAM system is not an easy task. This guide provides you with the 10 fundamental high-level questions and the 13 nitty-gritty detailed questions you need to make the right choice.

All organizations protect their facilities with some kind of physical access control. And most organizations have many different solutions from different vendors, for example, different physical access control systems (PACS), a different vendor for access cards, a human resources (HR) system from yet a different vendor, and so on. The process of making sure that the right people have access to the right facilities is often handled manually.

This means that the organization has no holistic view, and the manual process often fails. Access cards get lost, people join and leave the organization, employees change roles and companies are merged – without a centralized support system it is difficult to ensure that the identities and credentials reflect the actual reality.

The solution to this problem is to put a centralized physical identity and access management (PIAM) layer on top of all of the different systems. The PIAM system fetches information from, for example, the HR system or Microsoft's catalogue service Active Directory, applies your

entitlement rules to the user information, issues the relevant credentials, and updates all physical access control systems accordingly. When all major processes for issuing, changing and revoking identities and their credentials are handled in one centralized system it is also possible to ensure traceability and auditability, which is required by the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

But choosing the right PIAM system is not an easy task. First, you have to ask yourself 10 fundamental high-level questions:

1. How can I implement best practices and standardize my security organization?
2. How do I lower my liability and maximize asset protection?
3. How do I future-proof my entire security investment?
4. How can I leverage my existing security infrastructure on a global scale?
5. How do I optimize my resources, technologies and security operations?

6. How can I reduce the number of manual processes? The reason you want a reduction is that manual processes are labor intensive and may lead to errors.
7. How can I keep up with regulations?
8. How can I enforce my security policies and rules?
9. How can I easily monitor infractions against my security policies and rules?
10. How can I regularly report and audit my security landscape?
9. Do I want my system to manage all identities, that is, smart cards, soft certificates, virtual smart cards, mobile certificates, etcetera?
10. Which PIAM solutions are easily adaptable to accommodate new processes and changes in your organization?
11. It will be increasingly important to manage the identities of things as well as the identities of people – which PIAM systems will let me do that?
12. Which PIAM systems ensure that the production of access cards and RFID key fobs follows your security policies?
13. Self-service is important due to the cost of lost badges, renewal of photo ID cards, etcetera – which PIAM systems offer self-service, so that the users can handle these kind of issues by themselves in an automated process, whenever and wherever?
14. Which PIAM systems help me comply with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)?

Then it is time to get down to these 13 nitty-gritty detailed questions:

1. What physical access control systems do I use, and which PIAM systems support those?
2. Which PIAM systems handle contractors and visitors as well as employees?
3. Do we need to do some kind of manual sign off to ensure the trustworthiness of the identity before issuing ID cards, and if so, which PIAM systems can enforce this?
4. Do I want to add visual identification to my cards, and if so, which PIAM systems can help me issue photo ID badges?
5. Which PIAM systems ensure that all data about the individuals are real-time synchronized?
6. Over time, mobile identities will be equally secure as smart cards but easier to manage and use – which PIAM systems will let me use mobile identities later on?
7. Which PIAM systems give me traceability for all actions in regards to authorization and access management?
8. There are many benefits to handling physical and digital identity and access management in the same system – which PIAM systems will let me do that if I choose to, either straight away or later on?

When you have identified which PIAM systems fulfill your needs, you also need to consider the PIAM system vendor's future capabilities of providing you with a solution that you can grow with.

Business digitization, accelerating threats, regulatory upheaval and disruptive technology make it nearly impossible to predict what will happen in two years' time. In this new world, where the landscape is evolving quicker than ever, one can no longer just buy a product and happily use it for several years, with the vendor making only small improvements to the product. You need a trusted partner who can guide you through the ever changing landscape, making sure the solution you use keeps up with the new possibilities and challenges.

So, which vendor can you put your trust in?

About Nexus Group

Swedish-owned Nexus Group is an innovative and rapidly growing product company, developing identity and security solutions. Our technology helps organizations digitize their operations in a secure way by enabling e-commerce and online banking, managing physical and digital access, securing access control, provisioning access cards, enabling e-services in the public sector, and protecting communication between things.

The very basis of all security, both physical and digital, is the creation, management, and use of identities. We have enabled trusted identities for people, software and devices since 1984, and our technology is today relied upon by a large number of organizations and 100 million end users around the world. We are 300 employees across 15 offices in Europe, India and the US, and we have a global partner network.

Nexus's mission is to contribute to the formation of a secure society, and everything we do is guided by our core values: we care, we innovate, we are committed.

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