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Early Adoption of Appliance Benefits Payment Company

Prolifics' Expertise Helps Client Upgrade from Server

CLIENT | CHALLENGE | ACTION | RESULTS

▸ Our Client

Our client is a global technology company (GTC) in the payments industry. The company's principal business is to process credit card transactions and payments safely and accurately in the 4-party model, composed of the card holder, the card-issuing bank, the merchant, and the merchant's bank. Our client must be able to authorize a transaction – approve a card tap, chip or swipe – from any one of millions of acceptance locations, against hundreds of thousands of processing and fraud prevention rules in a matter of milliseconds.

Prolifics has worked extensively with GTC in the past, including upgrading its Decision Management Platform (DMP) and related programs. Prolifics handled the volume, complexity and time sensitivity of this extended project without the slightest interruption in the performance of GTC's mission critical functions. It was because of these successes that GTC engaged our Security, Identity & Access Management practice.

▶ Challenge

GTC engaged Prolifics for two interconnected reasons. The first was more of a general consulting and conversational role.

Robert Adachi is Prolifics' Head of Security, Identity & Access Management practice. "GTC wanted some impartial advice and opinions on suggested new ways of doing things," said Adachi. "They wanted their tech provider to listen and understand how and why they were doing things a certain way now. By design, GTC has a strict separation of duties of who does what, when and how. It requires much more coordination than it would at other companies. Sometimes, something that would take maybe a day somewhere else might take a week or more at GTC.

"But as you learn more you realize why it has to be done this way. Can you imagine the havoc that somebody could do within a company as large, processing as many transactions, as GTC? It would be catastrophic if something were done inappropriately. But GTC has a lot of checkpoints and it's incredible what they have done.

"They have developed and deployed some incredible technologies and controls and procedures on how to protect everyone involved, especially the banks that are issuing the cards. So, they were looking for a company that had the expertise to help with that."

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Challenge (cont.)

The second reason connects to the first. IBM Security Access Manager is a complete authorization and network security policy management solution. It provides authentication, authorization, data security, and centralized resource management capabilities, end-to-end, over geographically dispersed intranets and extranets. For employees signing into their GTC applications and systems, GTC utilized a recent version of IBM Security Access Manager.

When IBM issued version nine of Access Manager, it wasn't a simple matter of running an install and an upgrade. IBM rearchitected the entire platform and was no longer going to support earlier versions – companies would have to migrate to the new version. A major change was that while older versions ran on a company's servers, the new version would run as an appliance. As opposed to software running on the company servers, an appliance combines the hardware and software as an integrated, often pre-configured, "turn-key" product. Customers have very little, if no, leeway to change the software, internal operating system, or hardware of the stand-alone appliance.

"Given the very specific ways GTC does things, this type of change caused them some real angst," said Adachi. "While some things in the migration to the new IBM version could be converted, most of the more complicated aspects would need to be completely reconfigured. At times GTC really thought, 'Did we make the right choice in doing this or should we have just gone to a different platform?' We helped convinced GTC that yes, there's some really good features that you want to utilize, and let's discuss new ways of deploying this to make it a little bit easier to maintain. GTC continued with IBM. We told GTC, 'We'll get through this; we're going to work with you to get through this. And we did.'"
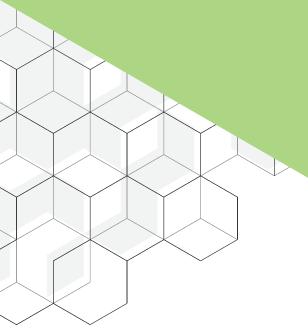
▸ Action

Rama Yenumula is Security Advisor at Prolifics. He and his team were the driving force behind the IBM Access Manager version nine implementation at GTC. He relates the issues and Prolifics activities as follows:

GTC knew that this new product was coming from IBM. They wanted to use it, but they didn't know how to start. They were looking for a provider who could do a proof of concept and help them understand. They knew our tech expertise from our upgrade of their Decision Management Platform (DMP). We were able to tell GTC that, as an IBM Premier Partner, we had early access to the beta version of the new appliance, which we got to know way before others. Given our early adopter status of and our past DMP success, GTC gave us this new work.

With this new appliance solution came new networking challenges. Everybody at GTC was used to traditional systems and their networking. For example, if you had to do a hard wire to a Windows server, you know that there's a port you can plug in. But if it's an appliance, basically nobody knows how that works. People need to understand the nuances of the different functions or workings of the appliance. It's not like a software that you install and control, you have an appliance where you don't have the control of how it works. You have to use it the way they told you to use it. That's the major challenge.

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GTC wanted to first evaluate if the new appliance offering suited their environment. So, we did a proof of concept (POC) first, where we wanted to prove to them that this new technology is indeed true and it's not a black box that won't work. GTC gave us some use cases that they wanted to see available in the new solution. So, we both agreed on what can be done, and the time, and the available POC environment and things like that. We did the proof of concept and GTC liked it. That also confirmed for them that we do know how to implement the new solution. Because that's also a challenge or confirmation the customer looks for. They know how to do the old version, but they don't know the new version. They need someone who knows how to do it. The proof of concept confirmed that we did know how to run and handle the new offering.

After the proof of concept was completed, we were then given the opportunity to propose the solution for the actual upgrade. We became the resource for implementing this solution for GTC, for things like their Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) and other components. There were enterprise level teams where we had to guide them on how to integrate this solution and migrate the solution. LDAP is talking to the old version, how do we migrate that to talk to this new version? There are applications that are running in the old version, how do we migrate that to the new version? So, we talk to them, explain to them and help them do all that. We coordinate with all the different application owners, the individual component owners, to first help them understand what this new product is, how it works and how it integrates with their components. As a customer, they're seeing it for the first time, this new component and new terminology. Even something as basic as how you log into the system and what commands you type are different and new. So, you need to help them understand all those nuances.
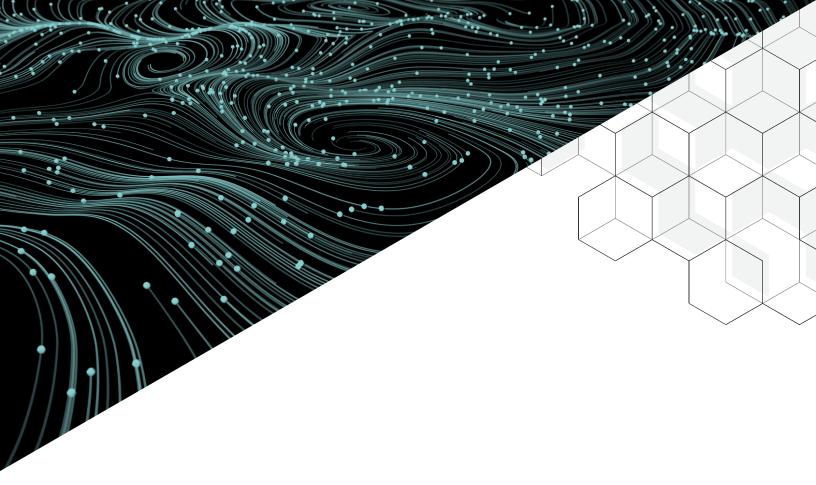
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‣ Results

Prolifics brought this project in on time and on budget, with minimal downtime for GTC.

GTC became an early adopter of the IBM Security Access Manager appliance version. Moving forward for GTC, new versions of the appliance will have a shorter set up time, because they become basically "plug and play." GTC is also realizing performance and capacity (scaling) improvements.

The company also got the advice and opinions on suggested new ways of doing things that they were looking for. Whether or not fully implemented, Prolifics gave GTC the opportunity to stand back and look at their operations, and together ask, "Can we improve on this or not?"

If you'd like to learn more about our Security, Identity & Access Management practice, email us at **solutions@prolifics.com.**

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▶ About Prolifics

Prolifics is a global digital engineering and consulting firm helping clients navigate and accelerate their digital transformation journeys. We deliver relevant outcomes using our systematic approach to rapid, enterprise-grade continuous innovation. We treat our digital deliverables like a customized product – using agile practices to deliver immediate and ongoing increases in value.

We provide consulting, engineering and managed services for all our practice areas — Data & AI, Integration & Applications, Business Automation, DevXOps, Test Automation, and Cybersecurity across multiple industries — at any point our clients need them. Visit **prolifics.com**

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