

# From the Editor



BY PHIL BECKER

**Y**ou hold in your hands the premiere issue of the Digital ID World print magazine. First, let me thank you for taking the time to read it, and try to enroll you to pass it around to anyone you know who might be interested in a better understanding of digital identity. It's one of those facts of life that the more rapidly we build our readership, the better we will be able to deliver the context, perspective, and detailed digital identity articles you want to see.

## Are We There Yet?

Because this issue was being put together at the same time we were preparing for our October Digital ID World conference, I have been talking about identity with many people – both vendors and IT professionals. One question that came up often in those conversations is “A digital identity print magazine? Is it really time for that yet?” Obviously I think the answer is yes, or you wouldn't be holding this issue. But I'd like to take a minute to explore why someone like me would come out of retirement and put his time and money into a venture like Digital ID World.

I have been in the computer industry for over 35 years. My first decade was as a software and hardware engineer in aerospace, my second as an entrepreneur starting businesses built on technology I developed. Since then I have continued being an entrepreneur but also branched out to found and build the ISPCON tradeshow in the early 1990s. I was also CTO, CEO and Chairman of a publicly traded company I founded and grew from my kitchen table to the NASDAQ National Market, and from which I retired in early 2000. This background has let me see and feel how most computer technology cycles unfold, and let me appreciate what they look like from many different vantage points.

## What is Going On?

Today a classic technology change wave cycle is taking place. The technology cycle can be roughly summarized as innovation, development, enhancement, maturation, boom, commoditization, overbuild, and severe downturn. The most recent boom and commoditization phase occurred in the late 1990s. It was accelerated by the Y2K fears which forced procurements and deployments to be “pulled forward” from 2000-2003 into 1998-1999. This made the boom steeper and deepened the downturn. This distortion of the normal cycle also meant that a lot of networked technology was deployed before its nature and implications could be fully understood.

Specifically, the rapid networking and Internet enabling of everything has had significant side effects that were not generally anticipated. The technology did not anticipate the results of deployment at scale, and the forced nature of its rollout didn't allow time to build complete understanding and integrate it into the infrastructure. Rather, problems have appeared – primarily as security, management and integration issues – and people have been reactively spending money on “solutions” for years now with both vendors and customers rarely fully understanding the big picture that they were operating in.

In addition to creating frustration and personnel overload, this reactive approach means that the people and businesses involved rarely gain the business advantages that the same level of technology effort and expense could have brought them. Meanwhile, State and Federal legislatures are making decisions on our behalf without sufficient understanding of the implications of their efforts, or what is really occurring. It is an expensive education that is taking place, but for all it is costing it often teaches the wrong lessons.

**The change has everyone off balance. Vendors can't explain their products and users don't understand the cause of their problems.**

## A Time of Innovation

As always happens after a cycle downturn, however, innovation is flourishing as a new cycle begins. From the problems and overly simplistic approaches of the boom times comes deeper awareness and new understanding. But because the new cycle is based on new concepts, that innovation and understanding do not have a forum to be easily seen, or to learn fully what is needed to meet potential customers' needs. I watch hard working people in great companies and small startups delivering solutions no one can understand why they need until five years later when the school of hard knocks has shown them the bigger picture. And I see the lack of a common way to talk about the issues involved, so when small companies do develop breakthrough methods and products they cannot find a way to talk about what they have done that lets anyone else understand their value proposition.

## A Forum is Needed

The Digital ID World conferences have clearly demonstrated the value of letting people interact who normally do not talk to each other. In each instance, the overall picture of digital identity became much clearer for those who attended, their thinking enhanced by those they interacted with. But as exciting and valuable as the conferences are, only a few hundred people can directly access and benefit from them. What Digital ID World magazine will do is to broaden the identity conversation and provide a much larger forum for the exchange of ideas and the presentation of the benefits that occur when you see that "Identity is Center."

It is a critical time for computing technology. New companies are being born with tremendous ideas that can create value never before imagined and existing companies are modifying their offerings to better match them to the stated needs of their customers. But in

this cycle, unlike those that have gone before, technology cannot easily grow in isolated deployments until it is perfected, matured and fully understood. The global networking of computing has forever changed that.

Today, technology must grow up much more rapidly than in the past. It must understand the real and complex needs of its customers much sooner in its life cycle than previous technologies had to. In turn, those customers must learn to better understand the implications of the much bigger and more interconnected picture of networked computing as well. In this next cycle business processes will become part of computing and computing part of business processes in ways they never have before. Understanding digital identity is the key to success in that transformation.

## What is Digital ID World Magazine?

Each issue of Digital ID World magazine will bridge the many silos of technology and business to present the components of digital identity and its central, organizing nature for this next wave of computing. The goal, always, is to provide our readers access to the bigger picture of identity that is otherwise often difficult to see.

How will we accomplish that you ask? First, each issue will have a feature topic, which for this issue is how digital identity is refocusing Information Technology. In addition to the feature topic, each issue will present stories of identity deployments with the mission of letting you see what those who went through them learned about how identity can organize and integrate networked applications. In this issue we have five such deployment stories, each one showing the power of understanding the big picture of identity in the framework of a different

problem and solution, and the implications of various technology choices.

A change wave cycle in technology affects vendors large and small, often creating new leadership in the process. Digital ID World will also cover this aspect of things. We have two stories in this issue about how major vendors are being affected by their focus on digital identity. We also cover the technology itself, again with an eye towards illustrating the larger picture of identity. This issue provides an overview of the NGSCB trusted computing project, Biometrics, and RFID technologies.

Digital identity differs from most technology in that it crosses the boundary between machine and human control. Thus it is destined to be the focus of many regulations and laws about privacy and data integrity. We provide an overview of the current state of major identity legislation and the effects compliance will have on technology.

And when any technology is relatively new, it is appropriate to have columnists advance the conversation and provide templates to help you think about the issues. In this regard our Context & Perspective section features both fact and informed opinion about digital identity.

The digital identity conversation works best as an interactive venture, so let me know what you think of our efforts with this premier issue. Especially let me know what you would like to see more of, less of, or covered in a different manner. You can send those thoughts to me via email at [editor@digitalidworld.com](mailto:editor@digitalidworld.com). And as I said at the outset, the faster our readership grows, the more capability we will have to cover this next central concept of computing. So please pass this magazine on to anyone you think should be reading it. I'll work hard to make sure they thank you for letting them know we're here. ■

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