

How Much Does Your PAM Software Really Cost?

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| How Much Does Your PAM Software Really Cost?

Do you know the real cost of Privileged Access Management (PAM) software? Before you reach for your calculator, make sure you factor in all the variables. Consider what it costs to get up and running and to maintain and grow your solution over time.

In addition to software license fees, additional services and hidden costs add up. Ask the right questions and get all the information to budget before buying.

Factors to include in your PAM cost calculations

Software and support costs

Find out if you need to purchase multiple products and add-ons to accomplish core PAM tasks. Or, can you quickly turn on new features without installing new software?

Buying multiple products is more expensive than a modular approach

Unlike a multi-product purchase, buying a modular, platform-based PAM solution like Delinea PAM typically saves on software licenses alone.

To compare apples to apples when pricing solutions, list all use cases you want to address. Gartner recommends prioritizing the following when purchasing PAM.¹

- **Track and secure every privileged account:** discover accounts and privileges in Active Directory, on workstations, and servers hosted on-premise or the cloud. Vault all shared privileged accounts and strictly control their use.
- **Govern and control access:** manage the lifecycle of privileged accounts and permissions to ensure you have complete visibility and control. Enforce least privilege with just-in-time workflows for temporary access to align with a zero trust framework and establishing zero standing privileges.
- **Record and audit privileged activity:** capture all privileged action along with where, when, and who approved access. Couple this with proxy and host-level session recording plus behavioral analytics to quickly identify suspicious activity and enforce MFA in real-time.
- **Operationalize privileged tasks:** instead of replicating code, put shared capabilities like MFA into a foundational SaaS platform and automate repeatable tasks. Make PAM more invisible with automation, removing friction for teams such as DevOps and avoiding human error.

Advanced planning increases cost efficiency

Consider what you need to start and what you'll need to build a mature PAM program. Your costs will increase if you need to buy more tools or return to the vendor for costly professional services to unlock functionality to grow. Leverage a PAM maturity model² to help you navigate all the moving parts and plan your PAM program sensibly over time.

Infrastructure costs

The bigger the infrastructure footprint, the more expensive it is to set up and maintain

Some PAM vendors ask you to build a massive infrastructure footprint to support their software, including dedicated servers, jump hosts, and numerous components. A complex architecture with many special purpose resources and moving parts is more expensive to build and maintain than a dynamic architecture with resources designed to take on different roles as needed.

Does the PAM vendor give you the choice of on-premise or cloud-hosted and vendor-operated PAM-as-a-service?

If on-premise, check if your vendor requires a physical or virtual server for every component of the PAM solution (vault, password rotation, web access, session monitoring and proxying, SSH key management, server protection, privilege elevation, session recording, behavioral analytics, etc.)

If cloud-hosted, is the solution cloud-native or simply a lift-and-shift into virtual machines, dragging along all that complexity?

If you have distributed network segments in your IT environment or host servers in multiple cloud providers, ask if you will need to replicate the full PAM stack in each one and if you'll need to license additional components to support your network topology.

There may be hidden costs not itemized in the initial price quote – things like fast starts that only get your implementation so far, requiring follow-on consulting. Or additional PAM or third-party licenses and professional services, such as remote terminal services, when you need to scale out.

In a hybrid cloud model, ask if the PAM provider can leverage on-premise directories such as Active Directory and OpenLDAP without complex integrations and trust models or replicating directories to each virtual cloud. Does the solution also support modern cloud directories such as Azure AD, Okta, and Ping and federated access such as SAML for vendor access?

What about MFA, which is required by a growing list of laws and regulations and demanded by cybersecurity insurers? Is MFA built into the PAM platform to reduce complexity and centralize policy management? Can you bring your authenticators? Are MFA policies enforced everywhere – at the vault, workstation, and server – when logging in, accessing secrets, and elevating permissions?

If your deployment requires high availability and disaster recovery, ensure you don't have any architectural components representing a single point of failure. Find out if you'll need to purchase additional components and maintain them to reinforce all functionality. To help guarantee break-glass access to secrets, ensure the PAM product has built-in automatic replication to another on-premise or cloud-hosted vault instance.

Delinea solutions are built on a modern SaaS platform to ensure PAM keeps pace with your evolving cloud migration and data transformation goals. This Delinea Platform leverages the cloud economy to ensure you get the performance, elastic scalability, and availability you need for continuous protection against data breaches and ransomware attacks.

Common services like session recording, MFA, directory brokering, and behavioral analytics are shared through the platform instead of duplicated. This approach reduces complexity and allows you to scale to manage hundreds of thousands of privileged credentials, secrets, workstations, and servers.

For basic PAM deployments, Delinea's footprint is often substantially less than the requirements of other more complex PAM vendors. For a PAM deployment with high availability and disaster recovery, the Delinea footprint is also consistently lower than what other leading PAM vendors require, reducing the number and cost of components to license and maintain. Legacy PAM vaults designed for the data center struggle with distributed hybrid IT infrastructures. They often require a full replica of the PAM stack and architecture to accomplish high availability but may still leave a single point of failure. Delinea's modern hub and spoke architecture gives you maximum flexibility and control, scaling to support growth.

Professional services costs

Complex implementations are costly and time-consuming

Some vendors rely heavily on professional services at every stage of your deployment and beyond. Confirm how long implementation is expected to take to implement *all* your MVP use cases and whether the project scope is limited in the quote (for example, a “quick start.”) As you scale out down the road, you’ll need to budget for additional vendor Professional Services and third-party licenses such as remote access servers.

Be wary of “cloud washing,” where PAM vendors take the easy road, lifting and shifting their PAM stack into virtual instances in the cloud. Legacy architectural baggage remains in the form of architectural complexity, inability to handle hybrid cloud use cases, single-tenancy, and high maintenance costs that will ultimately put your business at risk.

According to Forrester Research,³ implementations managed by some vendors can be expensive, with complex installations, long deployment times, and substantial infrastructure requirements. Every day your PAM system is not fully deployed and operational increases your risk and potential liability.

Be wary of PAM vendors taking a shortcut to the cloud, lifting-and-shifting legacy PAM products into virtual machines (AKA cloud washing). This veneer masks complexity and doesn’t fully leverage cloud-native services or the cloud economy. Cloud-native means multi-tenant, resilient, and elastic. You don’t have to spin up new infrastructure since it automatically grows and shrinks as required. It’s available everywhere, consumed as a SaaS.

Updates to “black-box” software are more expensive

If your vendor has proprietary “black-box” appliances and components, you’ll need to pay their services team for every update, including new functionality and security patches required to stay compliant and secure. With closed-off components, your IT and security teams have no visibility or direct management to ensure they align with your security policies. This can complicate the investigation and analysis during an incident, resulting in costly delays and effort overhead.

You’ll save maintenance costs if you’re in control and can make updates and install patches yourself. Delinea offers the choice of PAM-as-a-service or self-managed on-premise. It relies on off-the-shelf components, such as Microsoft SQL databases, instead of proprietary technologies.

Customizations can be pricey if you pay for every small change

If you have any unconventional devices or systems in your environment or have any planned, you’ll likely require custom scripting to accomplish automated password changes. Ask if you can create pre-made templates yourself or need to pay a vendor to build each one.

With Delinea, you’re in control. Built-in extensibility means you can script custom integrations quickly and easily using tools like PowerShell. We provide direct access to scripts, templates, and a GitHub library for working examples you can use to get a jump start.

Supporting technology costs

Hidden costs, such as additional licenses, add up

Complex, outdated PAM solution architectures often require additional licenses for supporting tools.

Consider license fees and the cost of maintaining all related components over time.

For example, some vendors use older technology, such as jump hosts, for session recording, requiring a separate Microsoft RDS license for each user. More components mean more opportunities for failure. In contrast, Delinea uses proxying to accomplish session recording, a more secure and cost-effective solution. For more sensitive endpoints that require extra visibility and security, host-level session recording provides forensic-level detail at the process level that can’t be bypassed.

Without built-in reporting, you'll need to budget for additional systems

To measure progress and demonstrate compliance with auditors, you must be able to create and share reports. You should be able to immediately report on your system health, user activity, and priority issues.

Auditing and Reporting can sometimes be a very manual, time-consuming process, taking time away from already overburdened IT and security teams. Many traditional PAM vendors typically include fewer than 15 reports and charge for creating additional reports. Some vendors require professional services to customize reports or purchase

external reporting or data visualization software. Even if they provide some degree of centralized reporting, it adds to the complexity and operational overhead without a SaaS platform.

Building Delinea PAM on a SaaS platform means that events can be centralized, correlated, visualized, and reported. With dozens of built-in reports and ad-hoc querying, you can easily manipulate, customize, and share, as needed, directly within your browser without having to access each product individually. This can save security and IT teams critical time and resources.

Internal operational costs

Getting expert staff in place is challenging

Determine if you'll require a person or a dedicated team to manage your PAM solution. Do you already have one in place, or will you need to hire one?

Consider salary, benefits, training costs, and the time to get the right resource on board. The shortage of skilled cyberexperts can make finding the right resource challenging. Plus, hiring for those skills will be more difficult if your PAM solution is based on outdated technology, or requires specific accreditation from the vendor.

The Delinea Platform ensures a consistent user experience across all PAM products. This reduces the complexity and disparity between PAM products and training time when new Delinea PAM products are licensed. Platform-shared services move PAM into the background. The Platform helps you operationalize PAM by automating predictable and repeatable tasks, which reduces operational overhead and related costs.

For an average deployment, Delinea doesn't need dedicated resources to perform administrative tasks. Other vendors typically need or require three or four due to the complexity of their software. These numbers can grow exponentially in large enterprise deployments.

Ongoing operational burdens can weigh you down

You can estimate the effort it will take to manage your PAM system by implementing a Proof of Concept in your environment. Can you set up the system to kick the tires yourself? Or do you need a vendor's professional services team to set it up before you can even try it out? A Delinea Platform tenant can be provisioned for you to try in minutes.

Once set up, compare vendors by testing the PAM functionality you outlined in Step One. Use a grading system to see how long each step takes and how difficult it is to accomplish your objective.

Delinea is known for usable security. We believe cybersecurity solutions must be easy to use, or they won't be successfully implemented and can leave networks and systems dangerously unprotected. Many vendors will claim "ease-of-use" with their software, be sure to pressure test this claim before making your final decision.

Incident recovery costs

Resilience to data breaches and ransomware attacks is critical

The cost to recover from a ransomware attack can be greater than the ransom. Costs can include third-party forensic analysis, business downtime, regulatory fines, lawsuits, customer turnover, sensitive data disclosure, repeat attacks, brand impact, and shareholder value.

Rapid time-to-production coupled with a modern PAM-as-a-Service will improve your resilience, helping prevent, detect, and contain incidents before they become breaches.

Plan for the future

As we look to the future, it's clear that most IT organizations will be operating in a hybrid model, with infrastructure on-premise and in multiple virtual private clouds spread across several cloud platforms. Planning and investing ahead of the curve are critical to ensure readiness to meet and support this state.

Invest in a future-proof PAM solution that can support the dynamic nature of this hybrid environment. This means looking for a solution that can seamlessly integrate with multiple cloud platforms and on-premise infrastructure. By taking a proactive approach to PAM, you can be better prepared to secure your environment and protect critical assets in the coming years with less complexity, cost, and operational overhead.

1. Gartner, Inc., Evaluation Criteria for Privileged Access Management, May 2022

2. Delinea PAM Maturity Model - <https://delinea.com/solutions/privileged-access-management-maturity-model>

3. Forrester, The Forrester Wave, Privileged Identity Management, 2020

Can you afford to get it wrong?

When PAM is too expensive and complex, it sits on a shelf unused or never gets fully deployed. Compliance goals aren't met, and the risk of cyberattacks increases.

The impact of making the wrong decision will be felt for years. On the other hand, the right decision can increase your competitive advantage and prepare you for the future.

Set up a time to discuss your questions with a PAM expert at Delinea. We'll work with you to outline your costs, so you know exactly what to expect and can plan confidently for the future.

Delinea

Defining the boundaries of access

Delinea is a leading provider of Privileged Access Management (PAM) solutions for the modern, hybrid enterprise. The Delinea Platform seamlessly extends PAM by providing authorization for all identities, controlling access to an organization's most critical hybrid cloud infrastructure and sensitive data to help reduce risk, ensure compliance, and simplify security. Delinea removes complexity and defines the boundaries of access for thousands of customers worldwide. Our customers range from small businesses to the world's largest financial institutions, intelligence agencies, and critical infrastructure companies.

Learn more about Delinea's solutions at delinea.com.

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