Q: What are the most pressing challenges for IAM leaders in 2018?
A: Regulatory risks are driving identity and access management (IAM) investments. The regulatory climate is getting more intense, with the real impact of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) still unknown. Another key driver is digital business. As organizations become more digital, they’re exposed to more and new threats and risks. Privacy, security and risk management are all moving up the list of priorities. Overall, the scope of IAM is increasing as consumer IAM and fraud prevention fall under the purview of traditional IAM programs. Cloud, mobile, social and the Internet of Things are still having an impact as well.

Q: The divide between workforce IAM and consumer IAM seems to be narrowing. What’s driving that convergence?
A: Industries on the vanguard, such as financial services, are seeing workforce and consumer IAM programs converge. IAM must become more agile and quicker to meet the changing needs of the business. It’s looking beyond big, slow, expensive implementations to more cloud solutions that can be deployed more easily with a better time-to-value ratio. We’re seeing a consumerization trend. Consumer IAM tactics can be applied to workforce IAM to provide business benefits more rapidly. It’s about developing the IAM speed and agility necessary to drive business growth.

Q: There’s major hype around AI and analytics. What’s real and useful for IAM now? What’s the future potential?
A: A healthy skepticism to balance the artificial intelligence (AI) hype is probably justified, but that doesn’t mean some benefits aren’t real. Regulatory bloat has led to bloat in administrative procedures, for example. AI and analytics on the administration side can help manage that down by automating certain functions. Another area with real potential is fraud prevention. Cloud providers of access management solutions are offering adaptive authentication that can access both positive and negative signals of trust to look for “normal” patterns for a particular user or type of user. Beyond passwords or multifactor authentication, the system itself can pick up signals to better evaluate trust. Meanwhile, robotic process automation (RPA) will lead to more workplace fraud. Current rates of workplace fraud are at around 5%.

RPA could raise that to 6% or 7%, a significant increase. IAM will need to find ways to deal with that.

Q: Everyone is moving to cloud in one form or another, dealing with multiple clouds and hybrid cloud. What’s the impact for IAM?
A: The elephant in the room is cloud. It’s a complicated situation. You have on-premises IAM and applications, cloud solutions for access management, and increasingly, infrastructure and operations in the cloud. It all needs to be able to interact and to be carefully governed. Cloud-based access management is not well-suited for accessing on-premises applications, among other issues. Platform as a service (PaaS), identity and access management as a service (IDaaS), cloud-based identity governance and administration (IGA) — all require more IAM services. The more IAM services you’re offering, the stronger the governance around those services needs to be. Ultimately, this is a business problem with complex underlying technology issues.

Q: Where is IAM headed next? Should I be preparing for a blockchain revolution?
A: The future of IAM is agile and smart. IAM needs to find ways to adapt quickly and enable the rise of DevOps and API-driven apps. As digital technologies become the dominant drivers of growth, business success depends on IAM. IAM leaders who can create strategies to keep up with changing business needs will be in a position to deliver real business value. For technologies, AI and analytics will definitely play a role in improving efficiency. As to blockchain, the impact on IAM is still evolving. We’ll discuss how to prepare for blockchain and other emerging technologies at the upcoming summit, where we’ll cover the breadth of today’s IAM challenges and solutions.

Advance your IAM strategy to support changing business needs. Visit gartner.com/us/iam to learn more about the year’s premier gathering of IAM leaders.