

Cleartrace Avoids Months of Engineering Toil by Choosing Frontegg

About Cleartrace

Cleartrace is an energy data and carbon platform providing companies with the digital infrastructure to reduce risk, enable decision-making to mitigate environmental risk, prove their climate achievements and create new market opportunities within the evolving energy landscape. Serving both energy suppliers and corporate energy buyers, Cleartrace's customers include JPMorgan Chase, Brookfield Renewable, and Iron Mountain among others.

A No Frills Homegrown Solution

When first getting started as a business, Cleartrace originally built a custom authentication system with a founding team of three engineers and a sales rep. The tool was simple... an application database on the backend and around 200 lines of node.js sitting in front of it. The result was a standard authentication process:

1. Enter a username and Password
2. Some Bcrypt
3. Return a JWT

In order to add users, an engineer would need to run a simple script and put the users in a database.

This simple tool just worked, so it went mostly untouched except for security updates. No one was worried about additional identity features.

It was simple...until someone without an engineering background needed to use it.

Non-Technical Users...Using a Technical Custom Tool

"This was built when we were originally three engineers and a sales guy. Why would you build a UI for controlling identity? But as we added customers and complexity grew, things turned into a bit of a mess" - Brad, Senior Director of Technology, Cleartrace

Jessica, Director of Customer Success, did not have a technical background. She and her team couldn't run scripts to add users, so they needed to enlist engineering. Suddenly authentication and identity management became a bottleneck to Cleartrace's growth.

As Cleartrace brought in larger customers the homegrown authentication solution required constant troubleshooting.

"We would run into issues that we didn't know how to handle in customer success. We would basically drop everything and loop in our support engineers to help us troubleshoot what was

going on. It sucked a lot of time from other people.” Jessica, Director of Customer Success, Cleartrace

A common issue experienced by the customer success team was trouble adding users. The team would give a demo to a client and attempt to provision access to that new user only to find they were unable to do so. It could take up to two days before a user was able to access their account.

“The tool that we built internally worked for simple scenarios. However, it was often challenging with larger customers if they wanted to add a bunch of users at one time.. We were not able to meet the needs and demands of some of our larger clients with the existing solution.” - Jessica, Director of Customer Success, Cleartrace

Pivotal Juncture: Do We Have Enterprise Capabilities or Not

As Cleartrace brought in larger clients with more complex needs, identity became a blocker for servicing customers and scaling without adding headcount.

“We saw large customers assessing our identity management capabilities. In order for our big customers to go live in production, they had to have things like SSO, MFA, audit logs, and a way to interface with user management.” Brad, Senior Director of Technology, Cleartrace

The Cleartrace team realized that the company needed to invest in its identity management capabilities, and there were two options on the table. Build it. Or buy it.

The team estimated that in order to build an updated identity tool they would need to assign two engineers for three months to the project. This proposed identity update would be a bare minimum solution to meet the requirements of these larger customers. However, it was likely to not meet the needs of the customer success team.

“The initial project plan didn’t include the whole scope of everything the customer success team needed. It would have made their lives a bit easier, but engineers would still be needed to add new features to the identity tool after the initial project.” - Brad, Senior Director of Technology, Cleartrace

In hindsight, in order for Jessica’s team to reach the level of functionality the customer success team needed, it would have taken an additional four months of effort when resources were committed to other priorities. The team decided that engineering’s time was best spent on higher priority items.

Frontegg Unblocks Identity

When Cleartrace decided to use Frontegg for a modern identity platform, the engineering team spent roughly six weeks configuring their applications to prepare for the Frontegg migration.

When the applications were ready, Brad expected the user migration to be a nightmare. He instead found that Frontegg offered a simple user migration path.

“The initial migration of existing user accounts to Frontegg was really quick, we finished in a day. I had budgeted two weeks for the migration and had even stood up backup instances of our previous solution in case something went wrong, but I didn’t need any of it.”

Frontegg gives Cleatrace modern identity and is constantly adding new features to help support Cleatrace’s customers.

“Without Frontegg we wouldn’t have had the capacity to deliver new authentication features to Jessica’s team. We have huge projects coming up and likely wouldn’t get to all of the success team’s requests. We don’t have to sit in a room and debate which identity capabilities we can afford to spend time on. Frontegg has taken a huge burden off of us.” - Brad, Senior Director of Technology, Cleatrace

Frontegg has empowered Jessica to provide advanced identity features to her customers. Instead of needing to approach the engineering team, Jessica is able to work directly with Frontegg support to enable features for her clients.

“Personally there’s been many times that I asked Frontegg to deliver things for our clients. It has overall been a massive improvement. As a customer manager who has to go in and invite new users it’s been amazing.” Jessica, Director of Customer Success, Cleatrace