

Fortinet eyes Malaysia as regional tech support base

BY CHARLES F. MOREIRA

FORTINET Inc, a provider of hardware-based end-to-end network security solutions, is eyeing Malaysia as a site for its regional technical assistance centre to serve its customers throughout South-East Asia and India.

"Malaysia is our largest market in South-East Asia and has sufficiently available people with the right technical and linguistic skills in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mandarin, Cantonese and even Japanese," its Asia Pacific vice-president and general manager F. Matthew Young told *In.Tech* last week.

Fortinet has been selling its solutions here through its local distributor SiS Malaysia Sdn Bhd, and it already has about 200 Malaysian customers including Telekom Malaysia Bhd and the UEM Group.

SiS Malaysia currently provides the first line of technical support, backed up by Fortinet's Kuala Lumpur office, which has five staff.

The company also has offices in Singapore, Jakarta, Bangkok, Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo and Melbourne. Altogether, it has 75 staff throughout Asia Pacific, and 440 staff worldwide.

Without giving actual figures, Young claimed that Fortinet's global revenues grew by more than 10 times in 2003 over 2002, and expects a fourfold growth in 2004 over 2003.

The company has shipped 35,000 "FortiGate" units since the product first rolled out in the second quarter of 2002.

"Our Asia Pacific revenue in the first quarter of 2004 was greater than half our revenue last year," said Young, "and our worldwide market opportunity is worth US\$9.1bil (RM34.6bil)."

Mainly hardware-based

Fortinet's hardware-based FortiGate line-up includes firewall, virtual private network (VPN), intrusion detection, intrusion prevention, content filtering, antispam and antivirus solutions.

All this is implemented using ASICs (application-specific integrated circuits) in one box. Virus definitions are automatically downloaded as they are released and stored in FortiGate's Flash memory.

"Our customers get all these functions at no additional charge, and our boxes impose no licensing limits on the number of concurrent users — the only limits are those imposed by the equipment and the network's bandwidth capacity," said Young.

However, service providers using FortiGate products could charge customers for switching on their various features.

The company offers 13 hardware-based FortiGate models for various customer segments like the SOHO (small office home office), WiFi service providers, enterprises, telcos and Internet service providers.

Young claimed that Fortinet's ASIC-based solutions are five to 10 times faster than equivalent software-based solutions.

Unlike software solutions which require customers upgrade regularly, Fortinet's lat-

est models are still compatible with its first models.

Symantec Corp's software-based network and application layer security solutions are Fortinet's nearest competitor in end-to-end security solutions, Young said.

However, with US prices starting at US\$500 (RM1,900) for its FortiGate FG50A SOHO/small business model and rising into hundreds of thousands of dollars for its carrier-grade units, FortiGate solutions aren't meant for home use.

Software-based solution

Fortinet has ventured into the software space as well with its *FortiClient 1.0* VPN client software security solution, which was launched in the United States in April, and is now also available in Asia.

An evaluation version can be downloaded from Fortinet's website at www.fortinet.com.

FortiClient 1.2, due to be launched in July, will include personal firewall, antivirus client, registry startup monitor and centralised VPN policy management features. Due in the fourth quarter, *FortiClient 2.0* will include centralised host policy enforcement, host intrusion detection and personal firewall enhancements.

FortiClient runs under several Microsoft Windows platforms including NT4 with Service Pack 6, 2000, XP Home and Professional, Server 2003 and Small Business Server 2003.

"However, these are also aimed at business users, though we may come out with *FortiClient* versions for the consumer market later," said Young.