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Fortinet Buys the Rest of CoSine

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By Rik Turner



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Network security vendor Fortinet Inc is about to announce that it has acquired the remaining assets of defunct carrier and MSP security developer CoSine Communications Inc whose intellectual property it bought in May 2006.

At that time, Sunnyvale, California-based Fortinet acquired a patents and asset portfolio covering a broad set of technologies and apps for delivering security services through hardware and software platforms, managing subscriber profiles, router virtualization, and management. Of particular interest was its virtual firewall/VPN technology designed to allow its customers to deliver managed security and VPN services from within the WAN cloud.

However, San Jose, California-based CoSine lived on in a much-reduced form and retained a limited right to continue using some of the patented technology sold to Fortinet to support existing customers of its IP service delivery platform.

That situation has not changed with Fortinet's acquisition of the rest of CoSine. "That includes their support organization based in India, so we'll be able to provide support to their existing customer base," said Richard Stiennon, Fortinet's chief marketing officer.

The deal is in line with Fortinet's overall strategy of expanding its addressable market into the service provider market where it wants to enable the kind of "clean pipes" or "clean WAN" services where security is provided in the carrier cloud, which in turn translates into higher revenue for the network operator than merely providing bitpipes.

Fortinet is supporting this strategy with its Secure Network vision, the first actual box from the company that can serve as the CPE for such offerings being the FortiGate-224B.

Stiennon said that while firewalls generally have begun performing some sophisticated Layer-3 routing features that include BGP, RIP, and OSPF, the 224B is the first time Fortinet has ventured into Layer 2, with the addition of a 24-port Ethernet port to its traditional unified threat management appliance technology. Fortinet also bills the 224B as its entry into network access control, and in particular post-admission NAC, rather than the pre-admission compliance checking touted by Cisco with its Network Admission Control offering.

"Now we have a security device that's doing routing and switching, with VLANs, tagging and VoIP," said Stiennon. "We're doing optimization too with our packet shaping technology, and we'll do caching later this year." Disk-based compression, which is another technique widely used in optimization/acceleration, is in Fortinet's thoughts, though perhaps not yet on its roadmap.

In putting all this functionality together in a single gateway device,

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Stiennon acknowledged that Fortinet is moving increasingly into competition with the likes of Cisco with its Integrated Services Router portfolio. "They'll eventually recognize that Fortinet has become a competitor," he said. The one ISR feature Stiennon said Fortinet won't put on a FortiGate is a virtual PBX.

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