

The Green Channel to IT Security: Virtualising UTM

Any reseller in their right mind wants to take advantage of today's green initiatives, but whilst every vendor is greening itself up to the eyeballs, how do you quantify how green one solution is over another? By Paul Judd, regional director of UK and Ireland, Fortinet.

One compelling route for adding value with businesses efficiency and green IT lies in the security arena.

Security is a heavyweight when it comes to datacentre space. Throwing its punches in the form of IPS, anti-virus, firewall and a plethora of other functions, an entire security infrastructure consisting of a number of separate hardware appliances, together results in a cumbersome, often slow and inarguably non-green solution.

We've seen the broader virtualisation trend emerge as a welcome antidote to datacentre excess, but as a brand new development within this we have 'virtualised security' to contribute to the efficiency drives, green targets and overall cost reduction initiatives that run throughout all organisations today.

Virtualised security has its logical roots set firmly within Unified Threat Management (UTM) development. The desire for businesses to reduce the complexity and sheer size of many security infrastructures is one of the reasons why UTM solutions have been cemented by IDC as the fastest growing sector of the security industry today.

UTM has always been about doing more with less, and whilst not always considered overtly green, there is little doubt that replacing a multitude of boxes out in the field with a high-performance platform is certainly efficient.

Better security effectiveness, higher cost savings, easier management and optimum space/power consumption are the driving forces behind both virtualisation and UTM, and so in combination its benefits are multiplied.

Numerous security players have

been trying to get in on the act, by enabling their individual security functions to be virtualised. It's all very laudable, but limited for the end-user and the channel.

Instead, virtualising UTM i.e. integrated security functions such as IPS, AV, antispam, firewall, content filtering etc. and the switching functions that operate in tandem, represents a far more powerful proposition not only for an end-users environmental efficiency, and security protection, but also to introduce increased revenue opportunities for the channel.

The early adopters of virtualised UTM have been the organisations with the biggest networks and the biggest traffic demands. HEAnet, the service provider operating Ireland's research and education network, is charged with providing numerous security functions for over 800,000 users and has accomplished this feat with a solution that occupies just two datacentre racks.

UTM is increasingly popular amongst larger enterprises, as they begin to seek the economical, performance and efficiency benefits of multi-threat security. Channel players can take full advantage of this trend with virtualised UTM, by developing Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP) capabilities.

Many resellers already providing UTM solutions for customers have witnessed an increased demand to turn these security functions into services. Those channel players that have already answered to the call of the MSSP, have been raking in the benefits of virtualised UTM for almost 18 months now.

Those seeking to meet this need for security services, often delivered on a



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'per seat, per month' basis have found a simple route to this recurring revenue opportunity by investing in a high-end UTM infrastructure themselves.

Rather than spending vast sums of money and time building distinct security architectures for each service offering (managed firewall, managed IPS, managed AV etc.), the use of centralised UTM architecture is a near perfect method for dramatically reducing capital and operating costs, as well as providing the most flexible services possible to customers.

We all know virtualisation is green and so is UTM, so for a reseller, combining these two initiatives is an absolute blessing for the end-user as they look to keep up with the floodgate of environmental corporate initiatives.

However, more than keeping up with customer demand for green IT, virtualised UTM can provide sumptuous revenue opportunities for the channel, as managed security services open up the prospect for maximum value-add with minimum effort.