

FEATURE

UNIFIED THREAT MANAGEMENT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CHANNEL

By Ian Kilpatrick, chairman of Wick Hill Group, specialists in secure infrastructure solutions

Summary of feature

- * Growth in popularity of UTMs. Should you choose UTMs or individual security solutions?
- * What is a UTM?
- * Examples of UTMs from WatchGuard and Check Point
- * Benefits of UTMs.
- * Channel opportunities

Unified threat management systems (UTMs) have been growing in popularity for the last few years and many companies are now wondering whether individual point security solutions or a UTM, which incorporates several solutions, is the best answer.

UTMs were designed to provide a range of security solutions in a single appliance, reducing costs and simplifying the whole process of security systems management and installation.

There are plenty of opportunities and healthy margins for the channel in selling UTMs. The volume is mainly in the SMB space, moving into the mid-tier and low-enterprise, which covers about 80% of the market. However, there is also quite clear growth in the higher end. For resellers with a security background, or interested in the value-add opportunities, UTMs present a fairly easy learning curve.

The minimum requirement for a UTM, according to IDC, is a firewall, VPN, antivirus and intrusion detection/prevention. UTMs have, however, evolved from this to incorporate additional capabilities which can include URL filtering, spam blocking and spyware protection, as well as centralised management, monitoring, and logging capabilities.

Solutions provided by WatchGuard and Check Point give an idea of what's on offer. WatchGuard's SOHO Edge series of UTMs, for example, combines stateful firewall, VPN, zero day protection, anti-virus, anti-spyware, anti-spam, intrusion prevention, and URL filtering.

Check Point's UTM-1 appliance for the mid-market is very comprehensive providing a firewall, intrusion prevention, anti-virus, anti-spyware, VoIP security, web application firewall, instant messaging (IM) and peer-to-peer (P2P) blocking, and web filtering.

While the widest deployment of UTMs has been in SMBs, larger companies are also using them, as they too have begun to appreciate the benefits of less expenditure and easier centralised administration. Large companies are typically using UTMs to centrally secure branch and remote offices; or alongside their existing gateway firewall for the additional UTM functionality.

Cost is a key issue in the growth of UTMs, with common thought being that a UTM device can cost less than a quarter of the price of equivalent point solutions. UTMs' significant cost savings come from lower pricing than buying and implementing the components separately, simplified and reduced installation, plus fewer ongoing management costs such as training, maintenance and upgrades. And of course, UTMs have only one dedicated platform to support.

Management is an important issue. For smaller companies with limited or no specialised knowledge of IT security, UTM's provide an easier solution and for the channel there are significant opportunities for a variety of management services.

In the future, UTM technology is likely to expand in functionality from IDC's original definition of a UTM device. The core functions will stay but other security aspects will become important and will need to be incorporated. For the coming year, increased security, additional features and performance will differentiate the winning UTM suppliers from the many losers.

UTM's provide a range of opportunities for the channel. These include installation and consultancy services, product sales (obviously), management services (from low-key remote monitoring to full 24x7) and significant ongoing renewal revenues. It's a great time to add UTM to your portfolio or review your existing solutions.

ENDS

Bio of Ian Kilpatrick

Ian Kilpatrick is chairman of value added distributor Wick Hill Group plc, specialists in secure infrastructure solutions. Kilpatrick has been involved with the Group for more than 30 years. Wick Hill is an international organisation supplying most of the Time Top 1000 companies through a network of accredited resellers.

Kilpatrick has an in-depth experience of computing with a strong vision of the future in IT. He looks at computing from a business point-of-view and his approach reflects his philosophy that business benefits and ease-of-use are key factors in IT. He has had numerous articles published in the UK and overseas press, as well as being a regular speaker at IT exhibitions.

About Wick Hill

Established in 1976, VAD (value added distributor) Wick Hill specialises in secure infrastructure solutions. The company's portfolio covers security, performance, access, services and management. Wick Hill sources and delivers best-of-breed, easy-to-use solutions through its channel partners, providing customer support, implementation, technical services and authorised training courses.

For further press information, please contact Annabelle Brown on 0191 252 8548, email abpublicrelations@btinternet.com. For reader queries, please contact Wick Hill on 01483 227600, www.wickhill.com