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Security Alert: How Safe Is Your Network?

By Vaclav Vincalek

Internet security stories are dominating the headlines these days, be they large-scale security breaches that cost companies billions of dollars or nuisance viruses that can grind a business to a halt in a matter of minutes.

Yet despite the heightened awareness, many organizations still do not have the appropriate security measures in place to prevent external and internal threats. There are still too many organizations out there that have not recognized the importance of investing in a reliable Internet security system. This is a shame, because a small investment is often all that is needed to prevent a disastrous outcome.

Here's a typical scenario. A company employee inadvertently downloads seemingly innocuous software to his computer and within a matter of minutes, floods the network with traffic and renders it virtually unusable. The whole organization is shut down for hours, perhaps days, while the IT department scrambles to identify infected PCs and figure out how to eradicate the malicious software. The company loses hundreds of thousands of dollars from a simple error in judgment by a now very red-face employee.

How do you choose the right Internet security system for your company when there are so many different options out there?

Internet security systems can range from consumer retail products to high-end solutions but before you invest in anything, there are a few things to consider. First, those inexpensive off-the-shelf offerings may look like a great deal, but most do not offer adequate protection and monitoring for even a simple network.

That being said, you also don't need to invest tens of thousands of dollars to gain a reliable and secure gateway.

When looking for an Internet security system, ask yourself the following:

1. How easy is installation and configuration?
2. Will the system make my network more secure by providing integrated firewall, intrusion protection and VPN functionality?
3. Can I manage and filter employee Web access to ensure compliance and improve productivity?
4. What about email security - will my administrator be able to clean all email traffic in real-time from viruses, spam and phishing attacks?
5. Is this system going to have to be upgraded or replaced when my company expands?

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