

MAKING SECURITY YOUR TOP PRIORITY

By Jason Walsh

As internet use becomes more and more of a mainstay of office work, many companies are finding that a one-size-fits-all firewall is no longer appropriate. Employees' managed desktops are becoming increasingly sophisticated, but the real difficulties come into play with web access.

Beyond network access control, firewalls are increasingly capable of advanced functionality.

"The word 'firewall' can be misused," said Michael Conway, director of Renaissance Contingency Services. "People are getting into a web-based firewall – a firewall on web traffic itself."

Typically, businesses regarded the web as a double-edged sword, but it could also be a security threat.

"Productivity isn't the real issue," Conway said. "People interact with the world through the web, and there can be accidental and malicious damage. The web opened a gateway that isn't filtered. Most malware threats are now web-based."

Conway said that malware attacks were be-

coming increasingly sophisticated. "Spam can drive you, not only to a fake site, but also to a legitimate site that has been hacked."

This highlights a serious threat. Productivity management software that blocks access to social networks such as Facebook and instant messaging services will do nothing to protect the network from people visiting legitimate websites that

have been compromised.

"A lot of people think they have protection but they don't. Old-style productivity filtering doesn't cut it," said Conway.

"People are reasonably aware that there are threats out there, but a lot have a false sense of security. This is all about money and organised crime. They are targeting specific sites. This is

serious money," he said.

A key issue is keeping up to date with the threat, and this means upgrading hardware and software on a planned basis.

"Firewalls need to be taken out after three years and replaced. In the past people put in 'the firewall'. With the changing nature of the threat, this isn't good enough any more," said Conway.



Michael Conway, director, Renaissance Contingency Services: malware attacks are becoming increasingly sophisticated

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