

May 20, 2008

## Can Great Bay Software Help Redefine NAC?



NAC is an ever evolving topic in its definition and understanding. For me, NAC remains a curiosity. Our clients crave deploying it, but remain stymied by its ever evolving nature. NAC today is about enforcement, policy, and posture. Adding to the mix of these features is better identity for your users and asset management for your non-computing network attached end points. This last issue is actually becoming a real sore point as more IP enabled devices start to show up on your network. IT managers are brainstorming ways to track, monitor and manage end point devices such as printers, faxes, IP phones, badge readers, HVAC systems, wireless access points, etc. Yet most NAC solutions today don't adequately extend access control to these non-computing endpoints. In fact, many just require you create a white-list and allow these devices to bypass any authentication and access control framework.

Role based identity management is crucial for a well rounded NAC solution, but we'd argue no system is complete without asset tracking and comprehensive endpoint profiling. Enter Great Bay Software, which is addressing these issues and partnering with infrastructure-based NAC vendors such as Cisco and Juniper. If you have deployed NAC from any of these vendors — or even thinking of jumping on NAC bandwagon — then Great Bay Software is an operational lifesaver. Its Beacon Endpoint Profiler enables discovery of network attached endpoints and it includes information about the type and location of the endpoint. As Beacon crawls the network it will actually build a central repository of non-computing endpoints. This "fingerprinting" claims to be extremely accurate and will discover, classify, and allow you to extend policy to all the devices listed above — which can be upwards of 50% of the IP-enabled nodes on your network!. Moreover, Beacon handles all non-EAP devices prior to implementing strong authentication, which means a smooth onramp to port-based security such as 802.1x.

With the release of Sponsored Guest Access solution, Great Bay Software is also entering into the guest user access market. Its SGA solution will enable management, monitoring, and configuration of guest clients, which is a much needed feature for today's NAC solution. Overall, Great Bay Software may not be the most glamorous technology, but we think it will become a de factor standard for successful, large-scale NAC deployments. Yep, we truly believe it's that important.

By [Robert Whiteley](#)