



One Fewer Excuse for Deploying Policy (aka NAC)

by Stephen Hultquist on April 25, 2008

While most network staff give a nod to the general idea of policy-based networking, there have been a number of hurdles to its adoption, not the least of which is a need to understand the current state of the endpoints on the network.

Without knowing what is happening with the endpoints, it's virtually impossible to know the implications of implementing policies. Answers to questions like, "How many non-compliant systems do we have?" "What kinds of non-Windows endpoints do we have?" and "What kinds of non-compliance issues are the most prevalent?" are exceedingly difficult to gather manually.

Enter Great Bay Software's Beacon Endpoint Profiler.

The Beacon (as I [reported after testing it in February 2007](#)) scans your network and profiles the endpoints, giving you a clear picture of the environment you're actually facing.

Great Bay hasn't been resting since then, and is announcing at Interop their new capabilities -- in concert with their announcement of their expanded relationship with Juniper -- to handle up to 100,000 endpoints with a single Beacon.

This capability to scan networks this large is a clear indication of the progress that policy-based network deployments are making. During my conversation with Great Bay President Steve Pettit yesterday, we discussed the progress that many enterprises are making in moving their pilot systems into enterprise-wide deployments, and the advantages to those enterprises who use automated tools in the planning and design process.

The return on investment for these kinds of tools is exceptional. For example, gathering information on 50,000 endpoints manually is unimaginable. Using an automated system to collect the information and provide reports specifically targeted at the implications for policy deployment is the clear answer.

As it becomes clearer that the role of the infrastructure is not simply to pass traffic, but rather to protect both itself from attack and the endpoints from each other, deployment of policy-based infrastructures is a requirement. Tools like the Beacon Endpoint Profiler are keys to making this transition as friction-free as possible for end users.

After all, their productivity is the [purpose of IT](#).