Network Computing

For IT By IT

04.28.2005 I WWW.NWC.COM

11TH ANNUAL WELL-CONNECTED AWARDS

2005 Network Computing WELL-CONNECTED AWARDS

By Bruce Boardman

Another year of intense testing in our Real-World Labs® has culminated in our 11th Well-Connected Awards contest for outstanding networking products and services. From the outside, our labs may look like a twisted mess of Cat 5E cable, CD-ROM crystals, discarded Dunkin' Donuts cups and papers bearing the rants of tech editors who banged away on equipment well into the wee hours. But this seeming chaos has yielded clear product choices based on comprehensive testing and thorough analysis.

For every product we tested, we dug below the surface and explored how well it fit into the organization's infrastructure and the overall IT business. We kept a constant eye on integration and security, and literally scraped our knuckles on the nuts and bolts holding the hardware together.

Storage Security

2005 Network Computing WELL-CONNECTED AWARDS
W I N N E R

WINNER: Assurency SecureData 1.5. Kasten Chase, (800) 263-1448, Ext. 3339, (905) 212-2861.
www.kastenchase.com

The storage security solutions we examined in our Green Bay, Wis., Real-World Labs® covered database encryption, block- and file-level encryption, and access control. Assurency SecureData offered the most options for protecting your data—from FC to iSCSI, encrypted on the disk, access control and authentication, with an add-on solution that provides for secure IM, e-mail and file sharing over the Internet. Performance of encryption functionality showed minimal impact in our IOMeter testing.

Review from NWC, 4/14/05 "Storage Security Products"
Kasten Chase Assurency SecureData

Kasten Chase's SecureData appliance plugs into an Ethernet network and uses a set of cryptographic accelerator cards to decrypt data and retrieve keys from the appliance. These cards must be installed on each host that requires access to secured data, a negative compared with rival systems that do not require contact with each individual server. However, unlike all the other hardware we tested, this configuration gave us full data security from the Fibre Channel or IP connection leaving our servers to the storage device being addressed.

Once data has reached the requesting server (when applications receive the data from the FC or IP driver, to be exact), it is no longer encrypted. That does mean that applications are still a risk, but it also means that sniffing the IP network or spoofing the WWN will gain an attacker only a stream of encrypted matter. The other positive of Kasten Chase's approach is that the encryption/decryption occurs on the host in a dedicated card. That relieves one possible bottleneck, the encryption device, but limits OS support to Solaris, Windows and Linux, with AIX in development.

To perform encryption and delve into the device's functionality, we used Kasten Chase's Server Encryption Driver, which let us encrypt, rekey and "zeroize" disks (wipe all data information from them) through a Windows UI. Kasten Chase's interface let us select the LUNs to be encrypted, then set them encrypting in the background while users continued working normally; the same held true for rekeying the data (re-encrypting the data with a new key)--we were able to work with the data, albeit with some slowdowns, while it was being encrypted.

Kasten Chase also demonstrated for us its Assurency CipherShare, which provides an encrypted groupware environment that includes IM, e-mail and file sharing and uses the SecureData Appliance to manage keys and certificates. Although we didn't delve into its depths, we did see CipherShare running in production on a wireless laptop over the Internet, and performance appeared good.

Assurency SecureData appliance, $27,950; Assurency ACA-800 CryptoAccelerator, $2,450; Assurency Server Encryption Driver, $1,950. Kasten Chase, (800) 263-1448 Ext. 3339, (905) 212-2861. www.kastenchase.com