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Firewalls

Technology Report

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Executive Summary

Corporate networks are facing serious threats from hackers with a variety of motivations and agendas such as industrial espionage, political "hactivism", terrorism, or just for the "fun" of it. Even home computers and networks are not immune from such attacks and they are frequently used as a launching pad for more "attractive" targets. Unauthorized access to networks can result in substantial business losses arising from theft, destruction, or corruption of corporate data, or from damage to the network. Consequently, network security is key to business integrity and, in some cases, business survival.

Firewalls represent the first line of defense against network attacks, and represent the network equivalent of a strong perimeter defense. A properly configured firewall can be one of the most useful defensive weapons, in a network administrator's arsenal, to ensure the integrity of a corporate network.

In this report, we will discuss the importance of firewalls, how firewalls work, and how they are used. We will describe the different types of firewalls, how they are deployed in a network, the protection they offer, and their relationship to other network components. We will then discuss how to select, deploy, administer, and maintain a firewall solution. We will also examine some of the vulnerabilities and limitations of firewalls and discuss issues related to selecting a firewall. The common attacks on networks are listed in an appendix.

The goal of this report is to help make the decision maker conversant with firewall technology to facilitate and help in making decisions relating to firewalls and network security.

Contents

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