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We all know that the regular faithful firewall our computers have can filter-out traffic depending on the protocols and ports. For instance, a firewall can block or allow port 80 for the HTTP traffic or the port 443 for the traffic of HTTPS. Now, the new firewalls can filter-out traffic according to the types of application or traffic that is traversing from these ports. One could choose to allow or block specific traffic, application, sites or even services. To make it simple, newer firewalls are like the regular firewall and QoS or Quality of Service functionalities rolled in one.

Many of cyber security experts and digital computer forensics professional call this type of fire wall as the next generation firewall or the NGFW, but these firewalls are generally a solution to many cyber threats. These next-gen firewalls can be also called a UTM or a Unified Threat Management tool, sometimes they offer not just the traditional job of firewalls, but they also have other functions like antivirus, anti-spam or Intrusion Prevention System or IPS.

Since NGFWs are much better in filtering traffic, they can help not only in security but also with the control of the bandwidth. NGFWs are smarter than their regular counterparts and they can provide a deeper inspection on the system, thus they are more capable of halting malicious activities. Having the ability to filter contents and provide better QoS functions, prioritize applications can receive more bandwidth. Because of the better quality service and security of NGFWs, they are in-demand in the security market.

The Features of NGFWs

NGFWs have the same standard features of regular firewalls. They have the same firewall functionalities as their predecessors like port or protocol inspection, NAT or Network Address Translation and VPN or Virtual Private Network. But what sets NGFWs apart from their counterpart is the ability to identify and filter traffic depending on the applications it has; this capability will prevent any malicious applications or activities to evade the NGFWs and invade the system. SSH and SSL encrypted files can be even inspected, the new-gen firewalls can decrypt encrypted files and see if they are safe applications to be allowed in the system. Thus, this will provide additional protection against malicious applications or activities that try to mask themselves with encryption so that they can evade the firewall.

Since these next-gen firewalls are more intelligent and have the capabilities to inspect further traffic, they can also perform certain tasks like intrusion detection and also prevention. Some have IPS functionalities so one will not need any stand-alone IPS. NGFWs also have directory integration or support, which makes them capable of managing the authorized application depending upon the users or the user group. Finally, NGFWs can provide protection against possible phishing, viral, worm and other malware threats that are roaming wild in the Web.

NGFWs Differ

One has to bear in mind that each NGFW have different approaches that could positively affect user's systems. The ability to detect specific application may vary, some could support thousands of applications, and others could support hundreds. Furthermore, each of them has different ways to identify unknown applications entering their system and also their application awareness varies too.

NGFWs Providers

There are many known names in cyber security and information system that provide excellent NGFWs and here are some of them:

Palo Alto Networks

Palo Alto is one of the software companies that released a firewall that is application aware. Their technology also includes App-ID, Content-ID, and User-ID. App-ID can classify different kinds of application whether known or unknown ones that are traversing in any port or protocol. User-ID supports users and group policies in any enterprise directories found on the market that are in conjunction with different network with User-ID agent. Content-ID provides content inspection, filtering and also IPS functionality.

Juniper Networks

Juniper's AppSecure adds NGFW capabilities to their existing SRX Services Gateway. Their NGFW is aware with many types of application and can provide traffic control as well as policy enforcement. It also has certain components that provide additional protection against attacks and malicious activities on the Web.

Barracuda Networks

Barracuda Networks' NG firewall is a combination of NGFW and also VPN. It features controls in the application, intrusion prevention, Internet filtering, antivirus, anti-spam and also control to the network access.

WatchGuard

A company that offers solution for many enterprises; whether it is small or medium businesses. Their NGFW has application control, IPS, VPN, anti-spam, antivirus and filtering capabilities.

Sometimes it is not enough to have a regular firewall or undergo certain trainings like computer forensic course or computer forensic training against cyber threats. We may need to have NGFWs.

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