

## VNUNet – How Secure Are You?

By Clive Longbottom, Service Director, Quocirca Ltd

I've been spending a little time with some of the big hosting companies lately, and of course, they have been keen to ensure that I am aware of all the technological capabilities that they can provide to their customers.

However, I have to say that it is not the technology that has been impressing me the most. Sure, seeing well-laid out servers with neat wiring and with all that storage lined up is good, but I can see pretty much the same when I look at any reasonably large data centre in a private organisation.

No, what has really been impressing me is the physical security side of what is on offer. I have tended to find that, although many companies have reasonable technical security in place, it is when we look at the physical security that everything goes to pot.

For example, when we look at companies such as Savvis or Global Switch we see data centres with full CCTV coverage at the perimeter as a reasonable start.

OK, we know that many organisations will also have such coverage. But, infra-red beams that set off silent alarms when broken alerting security to possible intruders?

Flower beds that act as crash barriers to stop vehicles from trying to ram-raid through into the building? Pretty heavy stuff, but probably necessary in today's climate.

Once inside, it gets better. As well as standard air-lock style entry systems allowing only one person through at a time, biometrics are in use and not just fingerprints.

As we all know from watching Arnold Schwarzenegger movies you can always cut off someone's finger to get in. No. Here, the palm print must also have a pulse.

How about tailgating? In general, we are all very nice people and hold the doors open for people

following behind us. Not in these buildings. People must use their swipe cards to get through the most basic of doors where security is not such a big issue (biometrics are used for the more secure areas).

The door needs to shut before the next person can come through, not just as a general security issue, but to track the movement of people within the building. Employees cannot get out through a door into an enclosed room unless they came in through it first.

If an employee is trying to get in at a time when they should not be on site, the swipe will not work unless specific allowance has been made.

Ceiling spaces are also covered by infra-red beams to stop people from crawling from one area to another.

The main data centre areas for Savvis have no external walls. There are corridors all the way around stopping electronic surveillance via the vibrations on windows, or through camera surveillance to pick up information such as usernames and passwords. For Global Switch, this is an option, but is there for the taking.

Also, the sub floor is shaped. It is not a security issue, but it does mean that should a flood occur, the water will flow to a central area and can be more easily drained off.

Once we move away from the basic physical security, we have the standard 'extras' offered by most hosting companies, including multiple data connections from different suppliers coming in and out of the data centre at different places.

Multiple power sources, with full power management and cleansing along with sufficient power back up to keep everything running, are tested on a regular basis.



## Comment Article



Fully monitored systems with pre-emptive support are able to pick on possible problems before they get serious.

There is plenty more that these companies can offer in the same vein. However, the main thing is how you should compare your internal capabilities against these companies' offerings, and look at how well such focused solutions can lead to better business continuity and information safety.

OK, there are downsides. During the heydays of the application service providers (the mid to late 1990s), many organisations were badly bitten when the hosting company they chose went bust.

But now we are looking at a far more stable market, and there are more options to rapidly move from one hosting company to another.

There are still some issues around length of contract, but more and more hosting companies are accepting that flexibility is key, and that they must be more responsive to requests for short-term agreements (at added cost, of course).

However, going to a hosted service should be because it is better for the business, rather than because the cost looks good. For many organisations, hosting has been turned down owing to perceptions of loss of control of the systems.

At Quocirca, we recommend that you look at how much it would cost to replicate a hosting company's capabilities, and see whether you can afford not to use one.

## About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, Dell, T-Mobile, Vodafone, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at  
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