# Is Your Next-Generation Firewall Plug-and-Play Ready?

## Quick-to-deploy protection for remote locations

Remote configuration and control capabilities have given rise to the practice of plug-and-play deployments. Why send expensive network and security staff to remote locations when you can just ship the equipment and launch it from your central network operations center? That capability can be especially productive when deploying and managing firewalls, intrusion prevention systems (IPS), and next-generation firewalls (NGFWs) to multiple locations.

When done right, an NGFW with plug-and-play capabilities can typically be up and running within a few minutes, compared to the days or weeks it may take to deploy a remote device through traditional means. Initial configuration and setup can be automated, requiring no human intervention.

While plug-and-play deployments can be beneficial for companies of any size, the technology can be especially valuable for large enterprises with large roll-outs and hundreds of remote locations. This is clearly illustrated by comparing the time, effort, and resources required to install and manage a traditional remote device with an NGFW equipped with plug-and-play technology.

### Traditional Remote Firewall

The old-school method of deploying a remote firewall appliance would include multiple steps, including a great deal of coordination between IT staff and field personnel. One of the most expensive components would be the on-site visit. Depending on the location, the IT administrator could spend anywhere from several hours to an entire day traveling to and from the site. Actual implementation would involve physical installation, initial configuration, connection to the central site, and final policy configuration of the device. This scenario could take days.

If a problem were to occur with the remote device, a hands-on IT administrator would again be required. He or she would need to physically travel to the remote location to perform upgrades, updates, and maintenance as needed.

Companies with a limited number of distant sites might be able to get away with the old-school methods. A company with four distant sites, for instance, could dedicate four IT administrators and four days to the task of remote site installation and setup. A company with eight distant sites could still dedicate those same four IT administrators to the task, but it would now take eight days to complete the process.

Fast forward to the large enterprise that has 500 remote sites. It would be surprising if any IT staff or days on the calendar were left to get any technical work done other than distant site firewall installation and setup. To be exact, an enterprise with 500 distant sites would need to dedicate those four IT staff members to the task for a total of four years. And that's without calculating the need for remote NGFW maintenance, updates, and upgrades.

### Plug-and-Play NGFW

The plug-and-play method of deploying your remote NGFW is much easier, quicker, and not apt to require four years' worth of effort, even with 500 or more remote locations. The device is shipped to the location where any on-site employee can unpack it and plug in the power and network cables.

Next, the NGFW executes a series of steps normally handled by an on-site technician, but that now can be automated. Typically, the device would initially reach out for preliminary configuration settings, preferably from a cloud-based host. Next, it calls your network operations center for the most up-to-date security policies, upgrades, and updates. This eliminates the additional transit time for shipping to the main site, programming it, and then shipping it to the remote site. The installation cloud tells the

NGFW where to go to find its central host and provides it with a one-time password so that the communications channel is secure.

## Money and Resource Savings

One of the most significant benefits of the plug-and-play capability is the amount of money and other resources it can save. Time, travel expenses, manpower, and other related costs are no longer part of the equation. Delays due to the complexity of coordination between different organizations are eliminated. Instead of spending time and energy setting up, updating, and maintaining NGFWs at remote locations, your IT staff can instead focus on their core duties and key initiatives.

## Simplicity and Reduction of Human Error

The sheer simplicity of plug-and-play devices is another major benefit. Traditional installations, configurations, and deployments are often complex and take months to achieve. The installation of plug-and-play NGFWs is simple enough for on-site employees to perform— the only action required is plugging in the power cord and network cables. Such simplicity not only reduces the need for expensive labor, but also decreases the risk of human error.

Due to its ease of use and hands-off functionality, plug-and-play devices are suitable for a wide range of environments. These include multilocation businesses, healthcare facilities, municipal services, convenience stores, and even ATMs or unattended locations.

## Central Management

Choosing a plug-and-play NGFW that can be integrated into a central management system increases the benefits even further. In addition to the power of automatic updates and upgrades, a central management system should give you detailed visibility and easy management of every device that is part of the system. It's even better if it resides on a single console, allowing authorized administrators to monitor, control, and review device performance.

From a single pane of glass management console, your NGFW central management should allow you to fine-tune and maintain all your NGFW devices, including rule optimization, analysis tools, shared changes, and hierarchical policy management. You also enjoy the situational awareness that has become vital for today's network security.

## Additional Capabilities

Plug-and-play should not mean limited. Make sure you get a fully functional NGFW complete with features such as deep packet inspection, protection against advanced evasion techniques (AETs), user and application control, URL filtering, and virus and spam protection.

Although plug-and-play technology is still a fairly recent development, it is a powerful one that can make a major impact. Its simplicity, ease of use, and notable benefits are perhaps enhanced by the significant savings in terms of money, manpower, and other resources.

## About the Author

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