Introduction

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Security is a significant concern for any organization. If the organization has to have a presence on or a connection to the Internet, it will also have special needs to protect itself from unwanted intrusion and attacks from malicious and hostile sources.

The growth of the Internet has been accompanied by the growth in the numbers and sophistication of hackers and the tools available to them. As many organizations and home users who have a permanent connection to the Internet can attest, there is no shortage of people who want to scan ports or break into systems. The wide availability of inexpensive, high-bandwidth connections, such as cable modems and ADSL, has resulted in large increases in the number of people who are continuously connected to the Internet, thus increasing their risk for attack.

High-bandwidth connections have also made many forms of hacking a lot easier for more people. The wide availability of software designed to compromise the security of systems connected to the Internet is making the risks even greater. Malicious users do not now have to be particularly talented or knowledgeable to compromise systems that lack strong protection.

It is against this background that the market for firewall products has exploded. Five or ten years ago, there were relatively few players in the firewall market, and most of the products were expensive, some costing tens of thousands of dollars. Today, there are many firewall products on the market. In response to a real need, firewall products are widely used by almost every kind of user connected to the Internet, from home users to large corporations.

Internet Security and Acceleration Server (ISA Server) is Microsoft's latest entry into the firewall market. Its opening debut was impressive: within less than 30 days of its release in late 2000, it had already achieved ICSA Labs Certification for firewalls. For anyone familiar with ISA Server's predecessors, Proxy Server 1.0 and 2.0, they will recognize that ISA Server represents a significant improvement and advance on those products.