

Who benefits from multifunction IT security appliances? Is an all-in-one box better than specialized devices? Peter Stephenson looks at the pros and cons.

This month, we looked at 10 multifunction security appliances. As we tested, some important questions came to mind. First, who benefits from these products? Would they suit small businesses better, or large, dispersed organizations? Also, how critical is the appliance as a

single point of failure in the overall architecture of the network? Finally, how do these appliances impact a corporate defense-in-depth strategy?

The bottom line is that these appliances do not, regardless of initial appearance, represent a panacea. These products are all

over the place in usefulness and desirability. This really is a case of "buyer beware." However, we had some clear winners, and we believe that the use of multifunction appliances can be appropriate and that there are good products available to satisfy varying needs.



## CounterACT



**Supplier** ForeScout Technologies  
**Price** CT100 Appliance: \$13,995  
**Contact** www.forescout.com

This product has a simple and straightforward set-up and initial configuration, and generally, we found it easy to work with. Understanding the console takes some reading of the documentation. ForeScout uses many non-traditional icons and the interface can be confusing to start with, but the console user guide is very helpful in explaining how to use the interface.

CounterACT is a very different type of multifunction appliance from others in this category. It is a multifunction device, but the functionality serves purposes different from typical universal threat managers.

It does include a firewall, VPN, and IPS, but is designed more for managing user, network and device compliance. This product brings features such as identity

management, device validation, vulnerability scanning and network policy and compliance control all in a single device.

The ForeScout appliance is both well-integrated and well-organized. With a capability to integrate seamlessly with all devices on a network and provide its own unique set of features and tools, we found this product to perform very well.

Although the management of the device can be challenging, it is a good product for appliance and policy management and network compliance.

ForeScout provides many different pieces of documentation for the CounterACT appliance. There is a quick installation guide that illustrates setting up hardware, installing the operating system on the appliance, basic configuration, and setting up the console.

Other forms of documentation come as PDF documents on the CD, and include user guides for the console and other installation manuals. The documentation is clear and has useful charts explaining buttons and icons in the console.

ForeScout also offers plenty of support options, but none of it is free. Support for this product is only offered through annual maintenance and support agreements, which must be set up with ForeScout representatives.

While its cost is a bit high, the device offers a different aspect of multifunction protection. The appliance price includes an unlimited license and necessary plug-ins for implementation.

The only other cost involved with CounterACT is for support, so for medium-sized and larger companies, this device represents a good investment.

SC MAGAZINE RATING	
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★☆
Performance	★★★★☆
Documentation	★★★★★
Support	★★★★☆
Value for money	★★★★☆
<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	<b>★★★★☆</b>
<b>For</b> Device and network compliance device with added security features.	
<b>Against</b> Extra support cost via required support contracts.	
<b>Verdict</b> A strong product with lots of features that put it above the average multifunction security appliance.	

Device and network compliance device with added security features.

Peter Stephenson



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