

Band of network management gold

The CyShape CA200 appliance from Cynetix Group provides detailed monitoring of LAN and WAN traffic, and enables administrators to dictate how network resources are allocated

>BANDWIDTH MANAGEMENT APPLIANCE

Dave Mitchell

High-capacity wide area network (WAN) links do not come cheap, which is why many enterprises look to bandwidth management appliances to ensure they are making the most productive use of their internet connections. The CyShape CA200 from Cynetix Group is one such device, and is designed to slot neatly into the network where it can monitor all internet traffic and apply restrictions.

Based on a 1U rack server chassis, the CyShape CA200 has an MSI MS-6580 motherboard that features a Pentium 4 1.8GHz processor and 512MB of fast PC2700 SDRAM memory.

Storage is handled by a single 80GB Maxtor IDE hard disk, while a pair of Intel PRO/100 S Server adapters look after the network connection.

The appliance runs the Linux-based AstroFlowGuard application from NetSoft, which comes preinstalled. For administrators that want to use their own hardware, Cynetix can supply the software separately as a bootable ISO CD-ROM image. Licensing is based purely on the size of the internet trunk: the price of the review system includes support for WAN connections up to 2Mbit/s in capacity.

Installation is remarkably straightforward as Cynetix pre-configures the unit for a company's network before delivery. Physically, there is not a lot to do as the CA200 functions as a transparent bridge that slots between the LAN and WAN.

The system is designed to operate as a headless unit but administrators can connect a monitor and keyboard to access basic configuration settings locally. Those concerned about reliability can implement a failover mode comprising primary and secondary servers running in parallel.

Remote management access is performed through a well-designed browser interface that opens with a complete run-down of the system status, detailing which modules are active.

After providing the CA200 with details



The CyShape CA200 comes with the Linux-based AstroFlowGuard application from NetSoft preinstalled. Its web-based interface can display a range of graphics and charts for all traffic types

of all internal network and available WAN bandwidth, administrators can get right down to traffic management.

This involves the use of different classes that determine the amount of bandwidth in kbit/s or Mbit/s for inbound and outbound traffic. Schedules can be used to determine when each class is active and administrators can decide whether the specified bandwidth is to be guaranteed.

Selected classes then need to be applied to different combinations of protocols and ports, which is where the application controls come into play.

To control the flow of email, for example, an administrator would need to create classes that contained bandwidth requirements for inbound and outbound traffic and apply the TCP protocol plus SMTP and POP3 port definitions. The appliance comes with 247 predefined port definitions for common applications, but custom definitions can easily be added.

Administrators can give applications priority over others by simply assigning them a class that is higher up the classes list, which is processed in strict order from the top down.

Once those classes are in place, the appliance monitors all traffic and will throttle back any non-critical applications such as music downloads to ensure that classes with guaranteed bandwidth requirements receive their allotted amount.

Administrators can restrict some applications so they cannot take over the entire WAN connection and stop others completely by giving particular port numbers a negligible amount of bandwidth.

The appliance has excellent reporting capabilities, with the web interface providing a range of graphs and charts for all traffic types. The CA200 can even provide basic network analysis, including details on individual conversations between stations on the LAN. **NTW**

FINDINGS

Cynetix CyShape CA200

The CyShape CA200 appliance is extremely easy to install and the simple concept of applying traffic classes to different ports and protocols makes it extremely versatile.

✓ Classes allow precise bandwidth management; can be customised to suit any environment and application; functions as a transparent bridge for easy installation; good reporting tools

✗ Although very detailed, the documentation could be better laid out

Price As reviewed, £1,400 + VAT

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