

# Firewall Product Functional Summaries: What Went Wrong?

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## The Problem:

- Many firewall vendors
- Many different ideas of what constitutes a “firewall”
- Many different design decisions go into a firewall
- Many marketing issues in positioning a firewall

*... Customer community is confused and becoming fragmented*

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## ...Circa 1992:

- Ranum publishes draft of “thinking about firewalls”
- Attempt to define some common terms
  - “bastion host”
  - “screening router”
  - ...etc
- Current market circa 1995 too large and technology moving too fast for limited terminology proposed by Ranum
- Firewall vendors seek to differentiate products

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## The Orange Book:

- Specification of desirable properties “top down”
  - Stifles innovation
  - Stifles market differentiation (by definition)
- Huge impact on time to market for products
- Relates to non-networked mainframe environment not networked workstations and PCs
- Not relevant to firewalls
- Commercial firewalls not for classified computing

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## A Cooperative Approach

- Firewall product functional summaries
  - Develop a common format for describing how one's firewall works
  - Document developed by vendor and published in standard summary format
  - Plenty of room within format to differentiate product
  - Use a common non-value-based vocabulary
- Functional summary format developed with
  - Input from vendors
  - Input from standards/security organizations
  - Input from customers

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## Everyone Wins

- Vendors:
  - Directed marketing opportunity taking advantage of common language
  - Saves time spent educating customers
  - Clear opportunity to differentiate product
  - Builds customer confidence in vendor openness
- Customers:
  - Can comparison shop
  - Can (hopefully) understand design principles of vendors' offerings
  - Informed consumer is happy consumer

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## What's in a Summary?

- Overview: statement of purpose
- Executive summary: product brief description
- Vendor information: contact information
- Product overview
- Product security architecture
- Product features and mechanisms
- Product default operations

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## What's in a Summary? *(cont)*

- Product audit/event reporting and summaries
- Product operational assumptions
- Product operational/management requirements and interface
- Product interoperability considerations
- Product testing methodology
- Established glossary with vendor defined terms added if necessary
- References to additional documents
- Appendices

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## Initial Effort: Planned

- Draft format completed by Ranum, May 1995
- Presented for comment to vendor community by NCSA, June 1995
- Presented for comment to user community (*firewalls@greatcircle.com*), June 1995
- Presented for comment to NIST, NSA, CERT, COAST, June 1995
- Final draft published August, 1995

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## Initial Effort: What Happened

- *firewall-standards@greatcircle.com* created by Brent Chapman for mjr
- Initial subscribers join up; many of the usual gang from the firewalls mailing list
- Large amounts of cross-posting and irrelevant side-discussions (led by the usual gang from the firewalls mailing list)
- Most of the discussion centers around performance of firewalls (a repeat of the monthly discussion from the firewalls list)

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## Initial Effort: The Vendors

- At NCSA meeting many vendors represented seem to think it is a good idea
- But then nobody does anything about it
  - Late breaking news: *One* vendor provides input

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## Initial Effort: The Press

- A few articles (mostly written by mjr) run about firewall summaries
- Lukewarm response at best

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## Initial Effort: The Analysts

- Some success at last!
- It appears that the summary draft contains a lot of useful talking points about firewalls
- These are useful for analysts, venture capitalists, and consultants
- So perhaps the effort was not a complete waste

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## What Now?

- New firewall vendors still appearing
- 36 at last count
- The situation may get worse

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## How Do You Buy F/Ws?

- Raise your hands:
  - Cost =
  - Reputation of vendor =
  - Features =
  - Consulting/Integration =
  - Performance =
  - Other
    - =
    - =
    - =
    - =

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## Fooled You!

- I left “security” off the previous list of criteria
- Did you notice?

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## Can We Do Anything?

- Educate the press?
- Educate industry analysts?
- Educate resellers?
- Educate eachother?

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## Conclusions

- People who already have firewalls no longer care to push marketing issues
- People who do *not* already have firewalls are often helpless
- Marketing tactics are getting dirty
- Estimates are firewalls are a \$40million - \$60million/year industry
- The firewall market is not yet ready to grow up
- It is *past* time to grow up

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