



One of the biggest problems with IDSes is that they frequently have trouble keeping up with the growth of the networks they are supposed to be protecting. Upon initial installation, the IDS might be perfectly suited to the network topology, but open up the network to another LAN, create a WAN or allow for remote access, and the IDS can start to struggle. Performance begins to degrade, and administrators can possibly lose control. And that is when the security breaches start. The biggest problem facing IDSes is the speed of network traffic. As Ethernet networks embrace gigabit speeds, even real-time products operating at the MAC level of the protocol stack may find themselves breathless. Some products start to falter, and at this point problems occur – the dedicated hacker can simply overwhelm the IDS sensors and walk straight in.

Over the last five years, Top Layer has made quite a name for itself with its security hardware and software, and its latest foray in the security market is a product that is carving out a niche all of its own. *IDS Balancer* is an appliance that addresses the concerns of administrators faced with networks growing like Topsy – it manages multiple IDSes across large networks.

IDS Balancer 3500 Appliance



Version: 1.1 (software)
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FOR A unique proposition that future-proofs your network and your investment in IDS products.

AGAINST Nothing.

VERDICT By discovering a niche, Top Layer has ensured its position as market leader – and by offering a method of improving the performance of existing IDSes, Top Layer has to be applauded.


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|-----------------------|--------------|
| Features | ★★★★★ |
| Ease of use | ★★★★★ |
| Performance | ★★★★★ |
| Documentation | ★★★★☆ |
| Support | ★★★★☆ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |
| Overall Rating | ★★★★★ |

A unique proposition that future-proofs your network and your investment in IDS products.

By monitoring the flow of traffic across your network, *IDS Balancer* balances that flow across the network or server sensors to ensure that they aren't overloaded. It does this by assigning the sensors to monitor links; the sensors can be grouped together and their traffic flow regulated. It can also be used to aggregate traffic flows and pass them through IDS sensors – ideal if you have a segmented LAN or a distributed WAN. For those of you worried about performance overheads, this isn't a concern; *IDS Balancer* is attached to the network through a dedicated uplink, which means that there is no impact.

The device itself is a well-designed, rack-mountable unit in ubiquitous black; installation takes some consideration, but given what the product is designed to do, this isn't that daunting. Whether you are using a single flavor of IDS, or a mixture of different products, the results are the same: optimization of intrusion detection. Management is handled by a very usable web-based GUI that takes you through configuration and management with no headaches.

There is no lack of documentation, from a getting started guide to extensive online help. *IDS Balancer* isn't a difficult product to install, but it does require extensive configuration – understandable, considering what it is designed to do – and Top Layer has made sure that administrators are helped through the process every step of the way.

Given the nature of networks to grow and grow, *IDS Balancer* is a brilliant idea and a boon for any network administrator worried about losing control. Excellent software and robust hardware combine to offer a unique product that enterprises and corporates should seriously think about buying. 

Please turn over for Attack Mitigator™ product review.

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perfecting the art of network security

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