

The products are becoming more versatile, more powerful as analysis tools, and more distributed. And that's good news, indeed, says **Peter Stephenson**.

This year there are two noticeable changes in IDS/IPS products. First, the footprint we are seeing is decidedly distributed. Second, the functionality continues to approach universal threat management.

There is another trend that, really, is an outgrowth of the function-

ality trend. There are fewer real IDS/IPS products in the market.

But, there still are very credible IDS/IPS products, and from our perspective, that's a good thing. The use of a distributed IDS/IPS is a step forward for most large enterprises. To date there have been ways to gather data from

multiple sensors, but the emerging architecture of separating the control center from the sensors is a step forward.

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IPS 5500-150E v 5.12



Vendor Top Layer
Price starting at \$35,000
Contact www.toplayer.com

The Top Layer IPS offers good protection features. This product includes what Top Layer calls Three Dimensional Protection. This

device uses the IPS for protection against malicious content, a firewall that uses stateful packet filtering, and protection from denial of service and other rate-based attacks. This product is capable of handling a wide range of threats, including worms, viruses, spyware, P2P applications, file-based remote exploits, trojans, DDoS and exploits of Microsoft vulnerabilities.

We found this product simple to use. Deployment takes just a few minutes and the device is almost completely set-up out of the box. The Java-based webGUI is clean and well organized with an intuitive navigation structure. We

found setting policy to be simple and straightforward as well. Just a few quick clicks of the mouse and the appliance was up and running.

This device performed very well throughout our testing. We found that the simplicity of setting the policy and configuring the rule set really helped in keeping the protected devices safe. Once we configured the policy this box kept all attacks from getting through.

This product comes with excellent documentation. The quick start card states, "IPS protection in less than 30 minutes." We found this to be exactly the case. The steps are well organized and the set-up procedure is easy to follow. Also provided is the configuration and management guide. This guide gives considerable detail on tweaking settings, advanced configuration and setting up logging and reporting. This guide is well written and easy to read and contains many screenshots and topology diagrams.

Top Layer does have a few support resources on their website — including an FAQ section, as well as white papers and case studies — but most of their support is offered via contracts. Support

offered via contract includes many features, but most important are updates and 24x7 tech and emergency phone support.


At a price of roughly \$35,000 this product sits on the higher end of the scale for IPS. However, this device or several devices can also be used with the Top Layer SecureCommand Center, which can manage many other security devices all in one place using the Top Layer Network Security Analyzer. This device provides a lot of protection and flexibility for a good price.

SC MAGAZINE RATING	
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Documentation	★★★★★
Support	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★☆
OVERALL RATING	★★★★★
Strengths	Easy to manage, mostly configured out of the box, updates event displays in near real time.
Weaknesses	Slightly high price for the feature set.
Verdict	A solid product with all the features you need. For its features, ease of use and performance we award Top Layer our Best Buy.



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Peter Stephenson



perfecting the art of network security

Top Layer Networks
 US Headquarters
 2400 Computer Drive, Westboro, MA 01581
 508-870-1300
 London Office: (0)1483 243549
 Web Address: www.TopLayer.com • E-Mail: info@TopLayer.com