

Industry Analyst Insights

Industry Analyst Research Highlight

Gartner: Magic Quadrant for Network Access Control

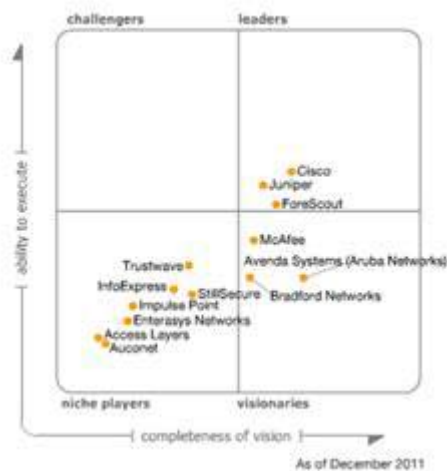
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Overview

Gartner has released its latest Network Access Control Magic Quadrant and that is very good news for Cisco.

The introduction to the report tells readers, “The BYOD phenomenon is driving growth in the NAC market as organizations seek to apply policies specific to personally owned mobile devices. Vendors that can easily identify and enforce policies on non-Windows endpoints are positioned for success.” and “If your organization faces bring your own device (BYOD) challenges, consider solutions that can easily profile personally owned mobile devices and apply controls consistent with your organization’s mobile device policies. Because there are multiple approaches for enforcing NAC policies (for example, virtual LANs, firewalls, access control lists and others), look for solutions that best fit your existing network infrastructure.”

Based on the Magic Quadrant graphic and corresponding Cisco profile, we are the best-positioned vendor to solve those challenges in Gartner’s opinion.



Cisco-specific profile:

In May 2011, Cisco began shipping its new NAC solution, the Identity Services Engine (ISE), a RADIUS-based policy server. ISE is available in two versions. The Basic package supports 802.1X-based authentication and enforcement. The Advanced package performs endpoint profiling and baselining (checks for compliance with patching, antivirus and other policies) and supports Cisco's identity tagging feature (as noted in the Strengths section). With ISE, Cisco now owns technology that it was formerly dependent on via OEM deals from partners. It developed a basic profiling solution, and it acquired the intellectual property for its guest management and provisioning application. Cisco customers should consider ISE. Non-Cisco customers can also consider ISE, because it is standards-based and interoperable with other vendors' equipment. However, Gartner believes that, as ISE matures, it will become a more Cisco-specific platform.

Commentary/Highlights

Cisco Strengths

- ISE's 802.1X-based support is a strong complement to Cisco's installed base of switches and wireless LAN components. Most Cisco customers will be able to use their existing wired and wireless infrastructures to enforce NAC policies (customers with older equipment may require software upgrades).
- Cisco customers are well-positioned to implement a "limited access zone" in BYOD environments, since ISE can apply policies to Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance (ASA) firewalls and other Cisco policy enforcement points (for example, wireless controllers, Integrated Services Routers (ISRs) and a broad family of Cisco switches).
- Cisco's commitment to profiling technology should ultimately lead to a competitive advantage. By developing its profiling technology in-house, Cisco has removed its dependency on its previous OEM supplier. Cisco is porting the profiling function to its switches and wireless controllers, eliminating the need for Cisco customers to purchase separate profiling probes. Cisco has plans to build a third-party device profile library by providing APIs and support to device manufacturers (printers, badge readers, security cameras, etc.) so that Cisco can accurately identify their network endpoints.
- Cisco's support of identity tags (Security Group Access tokens) in the Ethernet frame (via the IEEE 802.1AE standard) enables its more advanced customers to plan to implement identity-based policies (apply policies based on a user's role in the organization). This feature requires infrastructure updates, and full Cisco support is likely to be at least two to three years away.

Cisco Cautions

- Cisco has introduced a subscription-based pricing model that is unique to the NAC market, and, in some scenarios, may equate to a more expensive solution. Customers receive a continual feed of updates (which includes new profile templates), and subscriptions are available in three-year and five-year plans. When comparing prices of NAC solutions, Cisco customers should extend their analyses past the term of the contract. For example, for a three-year contract, analyze the cost for a possible fourth year (most other NAC pricing models are based on the purchase price of the solution, so a "fourth year" would only include maintenance charges).
- Cisco offers two endpoint agents. The Advanced package requires the Cisco NAC Agent for endpoint baselining use cases (checks to see if the endpoint is compliant with patching, antivirus and other policies). ISE supports Cisco's AnyConnect supplicant, as well as native OS-based supplicants. Cisco plans to integrate the NAC Agent with the AnyConnect client in the 2H12.
- Cisco now offers two RADIUS servers, ISE and ACS. Organizations that use Cisco's TACACS+ will still need to use ACS. Cisco positions ISE for customers that require RADIUS functionality for wired, wireless or VPN authentication. Cisco has a road map (which extends into 2013) for consolidating ACS, ISE and its older NAC Appliance. Until the consolidation has been completed, some organizations will likely find that they require two RADIUS servers from Cisco.
- Unlike some competing RADIUS/802.1X-based solutions, Cisco lacks a cross-platform 802.1X-based supplicant configuration tool.

Some additional interesting information about the report:

- In previous versions of this Magic Quadrant, Gartner noted that the overall direction of the NAC market was toward embedding functionality in core network and security infrastructure. However, they now believe the BYOD phenomenon has shifted momentum to the NAC pure-play vendors, many of whom have added capabilities in support of personally owned mobile devices.
- To be included in this Magic Quadrant, a vendor's solutions must include the policy, baseline and access control elements of NAC.
- Avaya, Check Point, HP, Insightix, Sophos and Symantec were all dropped from this year's Magic Quadrant for various reasons.

I want to take a quick second to thank Russell Rice, Brendan O'Connell, Matt Schmitz, Allan Bolding, Atif Azim, Jason Halpern and Ziad Sarieddine for their participation in the submission process for this Magic Quadrant.

Accessing the Report

Access to the full report is available only to named Gartner seat-holders. If you have a seat, you can download this report by clicking [here](#).

If you do not have a seat and would like to purchase one, you can do so via the [SRE tool](#).

If you have any queries about this research highlight, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Thanks,

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