

REPORT REPRINT

OPAQ enables MSPs and MSSPs to deliver network security from the cloud

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The provider of network security as a service is partnering with MSPs and MSSPs to deliver an integrated security and private-network service focused on providing performance, flexibility and protection on demand, from the cloud.

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Most every organization is using some form of cloud service, with an increasing number adopting a multi-cloud strategy. However, security is still a top concern for organizations when it comes to the cloud. Legacy security tools and networks, designed for enterprise applications and data on-premises, are often incompatible for cloud environments, creating obstacles for cloud adoption. The influx of mobile users, IoT devices and BYOD is further complicating security and connectivity challenges. OPAQ aims to eliminate these challenges with its network-security-as-a-service platform, partnering with MSPs and MSSPs to deliver an integrated security and private-network service focused on providing performance, flexibility and protection on demand, from the cloud.

THE 451 TAKE

For MSPs and MSSPs, delivering security services that can holistically protect mobile users, IoT, dynamic multi-cloud architectures, branch offices, legacy platforms and on-premises datacenters can be difficult and costly. As the number of products required to provide such a broad range of services continues to expand, service providers are struggling to maintain margins while trying to integrate, automate and orchestrate across their entire service portfolio. OPAQ's cloud-based network-security-as-a-service platform simplifies traditional approaches to providing security services, delivering a robust set of security capabilities that help reduce complexity and minimize costs. MSSPs and MSPs should find the OPAQ Cloud platform appealing since it requires fewer people to support and no hardware to manage, and creates opportunities to add security services to their portfolios without the need for additional capital.

CONTEXT

OPAQ came out of stealth mode in January 2017 with \$21m in series A funding from Columbia Capital, Harmony Partners and Zero Gravity Venture Partners. In April, the company closed a \$22.5m series B round of financing led by Greenspring Associates with continuing participation from Columbia Capital and Harmony Partners. The Herndon, Virginia-based company is led by CEO Glenn Hazard, who was CEO of privileged identity provider Xceedium until the company was acquired by CA in 2015.

OPAQ offers enterprise-grade network security as a service from the cloud, with the goal to protect datacenters, office and remote users, web and mobile applications, cloud IaaS and SaaS data and applications, and IoT devices. The company says that the convergence of network and security is driving the enterprise need for an integrated solution that can tackle the problems associated with network transformation, cloud adoption and legacy infrastructure, as well as regulatory compliance, security product sprawl, hybrid IT and increasing resource demands. The company believes its OPAQ 360 platform resolves these challenges, delivering fully encrypted SD-WAN, security policy management, threat detection and prevention, real-time analytics, DDoS protection, WAF, federated identity and advanced endpoint protection.

OPAQ says its datacenter fabric enables it to deliver a full security stack across geographically separated locations tied together with a fully encrypted and heavily peered SD network. The company says it has over 150 direct peering relationships with major network, cloud and content providers globally. It says that providing the fabric between cloud providers, datacenters and users enables it to enforce security, control performance, prevent cloud lock-in, and provide automation, visibility and analytics across the entire ecosystem.

MSPS AND MSSPS

As part of its strategic plan, the company shifted to a 100% channel sales model at the start of 2018, focusing on MSPs and MSSPs. Although the company originally launched with a direct sales model, it says that model was intended to be temporary while it invested in acquisitions and building out the cloud platform.

OPAQ is not looking to sign partners in mass, instead choosing to be selective, with a goal of adding 30-40 quality partners by year-end. The company says it is focused on the business aspect of its partnerships, helping partners attract and retain clients, increase margins, add advanced security services, and accelerate provisioning.

According to OPAQ, it has invested heavily in its partner portal to deliver training, certification, deal registration, automated quoting and auto-provisioning from a single pane of glass that is fully integrated with the OPAQ Cloud platform. The company touts that it takes less than 30 days for a new partner to start delivering the service to their customers, and customers can typically be provisioned within hours. The platform can be delivered as a fully managed, direct managed or co-managed security service.

Priced on per-user/per-site model, the OPAQ Cloud is targeted for organizations with 100-2,500 employees, although the company says it currently has customers on the platform with as few as 20 and as many as 5,000 employees.

STRATEGY

Acquisitions and strategic partnerships have accelerated OPAQ's go-to-market strategy. Before coming out of stealth mode, the company acquired cloud security provider Bat Blue Networks and micro-segmentation technology provider Drawbridge Networks in mid-2017, and security analytics and automation provider FourV Systems in March. The company also has strategic partnerships with Palo Alto Networks, Cloudflare, Silver Peak and Duo Security. It would not be surprising to see OPAQ partner or acquire technology to boost its endpoint-protection capabilities in the near future.

COMPETITION

Zscaler and Cato Networks are OPAQ's closest direct competitors, although each of the companies has varying approaches to the market. Zscaler tends to focus on the large enterprise, while Cato Networks targets the same mid-size market as OPAQ. And while OPAQ has focused on acquisition and partnering with strategic technology providers to build its platform, Cato Networks and Zscaler both primarily developed their entire platform stack on their own. OPAQ believes its risk management framework, analytics capabilities and SDN segmentation are significant differentiators over both Zscaler and Cato Networks.

The company also faces competition from other fronts, including point security products such as firewalls and network IDP/IPS systems from Cisco, Fortinet and Juniper. OPAQ may also face indirect competition from cloud access security brokers such as CipherCloud, Symantec, Forcepoint, Netskope and Skyhigh Networks, which provide a variety of security functionalities enabling organizations to extend security policies into the cloud.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

OPAQ delivers a suite of integrated security functionality that should be attractive for midsize enterprises and the MSPs and MSSPs that serve them. Features such as micro-segmentation technology for endpoints and automated security management capabilities should enable service providers to deliver and manage an advanced set of security services for midsize enterprises.

WEAKNESSES

MSPs and MSSPs that are more knowledgeable and comfortable with traditional security stacks and 'best of breed' point solutions may be slow to embrace a single-cloud security platform.

OPPORTUNITIES

While OPAQ offers a robust set of security functionality, it has opportunities to add additional security capabilities such as data loss prevention and threat hunting.

THREATS

With just over 18 months of operation under its belt, OPAQ is a newcomer to the network-security-as-a-service market. Although the MSP market has yet to fully embrace network security as a service, both Zscaler and Cato Networks have strategically embraced the MSP and MSSP space, and have a head start on OPAQ.