# Hard to Crack

Fortinet has managed to score a perfect 100 in the security hardware segment, whereas Cisco has failed to impress

Security hardware is one of the new categories added this year in the DQC-CMR Channel Satisfaction Survey. The channel partners evaluated the top 4 companies in this segment, including Cisco, SonicWall, Fortinet, and Cyberoam. And as per the ratings given by these partners, Fortinet has been well endorsed by them for its security hardware products. Though the race was quite close between Fortinet and Cyberoam, the former ruled the roost with its overall product quality, commercial terms, and relationship management.

Fortinet's products are not only technologically superior and offer value for money, but are also diverse in range, user-friendly, and conform to specifications. Apparently, it has scored 100% points in overall product reliability over all its competitors. The profit margins given by the company, the efforts towards back-end incentives and its settlement, promptness in communicating the schemes/incentive programs, credit policy, and flexibility in commercial terms and policies are very much laudable by the channel partners of the country. Above all, Fortinet has garnered a healthy relationship with its partners, as it not only runs training and certification programs for them, but is also consistent and effective in communicating with its partners.

Cyberoam has managed to put other players a little behind in the race by performing well in providing marketing support to its partners. It not only has an efficient team to carry out marketing activities but has also done proper allocation of funds for marketing along with providing point of sales material to its channel partners. The ratings also suggest that the services of the company's account managers/helpdesk are very competent and always available for the partners. And besides having a proactive service approach, Cyberoam has an excellent technical expertise to resolve problems. However, the company certainly lacks in terms of
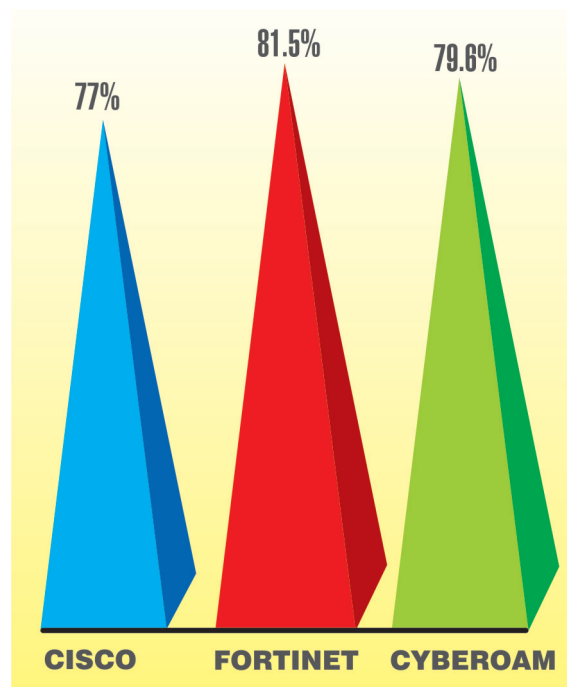
conducting training and certification programs for its partners.

It seems that the networking giant, Cisco, has failed to impress the channel partners in all the parameters except for the relationship management. The company certainly needs to buck up in overall product quality, especially in the area of technological leadership. It also needs to concentrate on the market development programs and ability to provide satisfactory repair and replacement services to its partners across the country. Its product pricing, profit margins given to the partners, transparency in commercial terms and policiesâ??all have to be re-visited so that it lives up to the expectations of the channel partners.

CISCO 77% FORTINET 81.5% CYBEROAM 79.6%

CHANNEL CHOICE: SECURITY HARDWARE

Vendor	Overall	Product Quality	Marketing Support	After Sales Support	Commercial Support	Online Support	Relationship Management
IMPORTANT		100	97.6	93.5	99.3	99	95.2
FORTINET (30)	81.5	93.8	84.4	77.1	89.9	70	73.3
ELITE CORE (CYBERROM) (30)	79.6	87.9	85.4	78.6	83.7	76.5	64.8
CISCO (35)	77	83.3	77.8	76.2	75.5	73.2	76.1

*The results of the satisfaction measurement was factored with the IMPORTANCE that respondents attach to each criterion used for evaluation. Since one Channel Partner can often deal with two vendors for one product, the sample size of the respondents in a particular category could be more than total base of the survey.

On basis of Satisfaction scores, top vendors were awarded in each Product Category

FORTINET

BEST IN
◆ Overall product reliability, technological leadership of the product, diversity of the product range

WORST IN
◆ Allocation of funds for marketing, turnaround time, promptness in online support

CHANNEL SATISFACTION QUOTIENT
(Then & Now)

2012:
FORTINET
CYBEROAM
CISCO
SONICWALL

JITENDRA GHUGHAL
channel manager,
Fortinet India

How do you ensure leadership in product quality?
As firewalls have evolved, additional technologies have been added to the core firewall technology to provide additional functionality and protect against new threats. FortiGate consolidated security platforms have been at the forefront of this evolutionary process. We have led the market with our ability to anticipate changes to the threat landscape by adding new functionality and technologies into our UTM platform. Some of the important and notable recent additions are wireless controller/wireless LAN, two-factor authentication, WAN optimization, and data loss prevention.

Please highlight your marketing activities?
We do have a strong marketing support system for partners and have been actively working along with our distributors to participate in major events and to run various promotions. We do encourage partners to take initiatives in bringing innovative ideas, and we help them finance as well as execute. Our partner portal is rich with a lot of marketing and sales tools that partners can leverage. However, the resources can be accessed only by Fortinet authorized partners.

How are you going to improvise on your after sales support?
Fortinet has invested heavily in local infrastructure and people to provide level-2 and level-3 post-sales technical support services. We recently announced our toll-free number to make it easier for our partners and customers to reach out to us. Fortinet provides a very convenient and easy interface to partners on the partner portal to raise technical tickets. For Gold and Silver level partners who have completed the certification requirement, Fortinet provides Support PINs so that the certified engineers can reach Fortinet round-the-clock to get priority service. Fortinet can also provide specialized service such as Dedicated Technical Account Manager (TAM services).

How do you ensure flexibility in commercial terms?
We do understand that profitability is one of the core objectives for business of our partners and that is why partners prefer to be associated with Fortinet. We work with our partners and distributors to enable speedy disbursals of all valid claims. We also believe in responding quickly to any concerns that are raised by partners for such matters.

However, the company has failed to impress the partners in terms of 'overall online support'. Going forward, what will be your efforts in maintaining an effective partner portal?
As mentioned earlier, we do provide world-class online support through our partner portal through web-tickets. Also, our partner portal is rich with technical information and documents. It also provides access to self-paced pre-recorded training modules which are very easily accessible. We recently launched Fortinet application on iPhone and Android devices which can be used as a sizing tool and for accessing product information. We would work towards encouraging partners to use Fortinet Partner Portal much more efficiently both in terms of support and self-education.