



Sonicwall CDP 2440i Appliance

Initial impressions

Introduction

If you need instant recovery of critical data and last night's backup tape means losing several hours of work then the Sonicwall CDP appliance is worth considering.

The Sonicwall CDP appliance is an automated backup solution with the capability for local or off-site storage facility while being well priced for SMB organisations.

The CDP product range has four models starting with the entry level 1440i – the 2440i as tested, and the larger enterprise class 3440i and 4440i with local RAID disks and 1.0 Gbit Ethernet connectivity.

So how does the CDP system work? Initially the system does a full backup of the target folders and files then any file write activity is detected by the continuously running incremental backup process to save the new file or revision to the local disk.

The system as tested can also archive Active Directory, Exchange Server information stores, and SQL Server databases while using the standard agent software. For complete system backups of servers and workstations you can go for the licensed add-on that uses imaging technology for "bare-metal" recovery.

Ease of Initial Setup

The CDP appliance was relatively straightforward to setup out-of-the-box with two main steps.

First you setup the appliance with an IP address to match your network, create an admin logon and register the appliance with Sonicwall. Install the Windows Enterprise manager which automatically installs the agent tool. The agent tool is required on the target Servers or Workstations.

Then, select the folders or files using the manager, associate a policy and backup is active.

Performance

When considering a device that continuously monitors file activity on target systems you may wonder what the performance penalty will be?

During full-backups utilisation levels for the agent were quite low when running the initial full backup phase or incremental backup activity. Data transfer rates were as you would expect over a 100Mbit Ethernet connection as supported by the 1440i model. The backup process stores the data in a compressed form to reduce disk space requirements. General latency times from file backup to being presented for recovery happened in seconds not minutes on local workstation tests.

File Recovery

Recovering a file is a simple process of point, click and restore. You don't have to be a system administrator. To recover a file the user logs on to the enterprise manager selects the target agent and locates the file. The agent tool incorporates a search function to assist with locating files also. Files with several revisions (up to a maximum of 20) are displayed as single directory entries which helps when locating the file, then double clicking lists backup versions available for recovery.

Conclusions

The Sonicwall CDP product can be an excellent solution for environments where critical office data is very dynamic in nature through a typical working day where rapid file recovery may save hours of extra work. It is an excellent supplement to a traditional tape solution providing a restore option for the most recent data.

(Kinetics still favours off-site backup with multiple days of history as the mainstay backup)

There are also a few inherent limitations affecting this product also.

In summary the pros for this product are:

- Ease of setup and administration
- File recovery easy point and click
- Exchange and SQL backup built-in to agent tool

The cons:

- No continuous system state backup capability. Only possible using bare-metal recovery option for a single point in time image.
- Exchange and SQL server backup not continuous. Limited to scheduled full and differential backups