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GSEC Gold Certification

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1. Introduction

Host Intrusion Prevention Systems (HIPS) are becoming more of a necessity in any environment, home or enterprise. Host Intrusion Prevention Systems protect hosts from the network layer all the way up to the application layer, against known and unknown malicious attacks. Even with today's firewalls, Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS), and other network protection we implement, "hosts are still vulnerable to the myriad of attacks through all the different vectors". (Corman, 2005)

Although anti-virus, anti-spyware, and firewall vendors are changing the way they scan, both are far too often reactive (i.e. Creating signatures and blocking ports and/or IP addresses). We need to start being proactive and start using preemptive measures to stop unknown vulnerabilities. Computers and end users need to start using a combination of preventive measures to protect ourselves and stop designing our defenses with single points of failure. Firewalls, Network Intrusion Prevention Systems (NIPS), and Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS), do not protect hosts from layer 7 attacks. When attacks or probes are fragmented and sent to a host using evasion techniques, firewalls, NIPSs, and IDSs may not be able to block the attack or alert you because they may not interpret what the host may see. In addition, if the attack is trying to exploit an unknown vulnerability the anti-virus or anti-spyware probably will not stop it if it doesn't have the signature for it. This is just one example of why Security Administrators and home users need to use a HIPS.

Here, I will try to provide some insight into implementing, configuring, and tuning an enterprise HIPS. In addition, I'll

compare HIPS protection against traditional protection, review new features of HIPS, and lastly, the challenges it still faces. I will be using the IBM ISS Proventia Desktop/Blackice (Home IPS version) HIPS as my example.

2. What is Host Based Intrusion Prevention Systems and how it works?

Host Intrusion Prevention Systems or HIPS is a combination of a personal firewall, IDS, and anti-virus plus something. (Cole, Fossen, Northcutt, Pomeranz, Wright, 2006) IBM Internet Security System's plus something is their virus prevention system (VPS), buffer overflow exploit prevention, IPS (replacing IDS), and application control. The VPS is a proprietary technology that uses behavioral analysis instead of signatures to prevent worms, viruses, Trojans, and spyware.

By combining several preventive measures, users now have multiple layers of protection against various types of attacks. Personal firewall, buffer overflow exploit prevention, and IPS protect against local and network based attacks. Anti-virus, VPS, and application control defend against application based attacks. "A HIPS is like an airport security checkpoint. A variety of technologies look for multiple types of threats, including checking bags and people for weapons and chemical residues, and utilizing facial recognition software to identify wanted individuals. Still to prevent attacks you need some idea of what to look for."(Corman, 2005)

How host Intrusion Prevention Systems work is the "HIPS software uses the shim functionality inserting itself into the operating system to intercept the receipt and delivery of packets on the network." (Cole, Fossen, Northcutt, Pomeranz, Wright, 2006) (See figure 2.1) (Booth, 2007)



Figure 2.1

Proventia Desktop/Blackice executes files virtually before it reaches the operating system. Once Proventia Desktop has determined that all packets and files are not malicious, it will execute the commands in the live environment. If anything is suspicious or out of the ordinary, Blackice will stop it or flag it, quarantine it, and alert you to examine it further. If the packet or file is an executable, Blackice will ask whether or not to allow it through or to terminate the program. (See Figure 2.2)

🔯 Application Protection 🔹 💽
Unknown application detected SETUP.EXE You can either terminate the program or allow it to continue.
🖵 Don't ask me again.
Terminate Continue More info Install Mode Options >>

Figure 2.2

This shows exactly what files are attempting to execute. For unknown/zero-day vulnerabilities, Host Intrusion Prevention Systems separates itself from the firewalls, IDSs, NIPSs, and anti-viruses. By baselining the host and executing

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the files virtually first, Proventia Desktop learns how the OS and applications should operate. Whether it is installing a new program or simply executing an application, the HIPS should flag out of the ordinary behavior or system calls. In addition, because HIPS systems are anomaly based and not signature based, it has the ability to stop unknown and zero-day exploits by monitoring all traffic on the host and analyzing system calls. Not to say that the HIPS will stop all unknown and zero-day attacks, but depending on how the attack is carried out, HIPS is more likely to stop it than most other protective measures.

Therefore, it does not matter whether or not it is a network or application attack, Host Intrusion Prevention Systems cover most of the attack vectors. Even though a HIPS is protecting a workstation, we still need to remember that there is no one silver bullet that stops everything. Host Intrusion Prevention Systems do have their weaknesses and vulnerabilities such as if the HIPS service is stopped. If the service is stopped then the HIPS is not running.

3. Benefits of implementing a Host Intrusion Prevention System

First and foremost, enterprise and home users now have increased protection from unknown zero-day attacks. Because HIPSs use anomaly detection, there is a better chance that it will stop an attack trying to exploit an unknown vulnerability as opposed to traditional protective measures.

A second benefit of using a HIPS is that the need to be running and managing multiple security applications such as anti-virus, anti-spyware, and software firewalls to protect your PC may be combined into one. Depending on the environment, you may only need to implement a HIPS on the workstation, like Proventia Desktop. Users now have a firewall, anti-virus, anti-

spyware protection, and application control in one application. The best part is not having to worry about making sure that multiple security applications work together correctly.

Another benefit is Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). In implementing a HIPS only one security application may need to be purchased instead of three (again depending on your environment). Therefore, instead of paying three license and support maintenance costs every year there is only one that will need to be paid. On the other hand, there are additional costs that follow with implementing and maintaining a HIPS, which will be discussed later.

In addition, "HIPS systems provide an advantage for organizations who struggle with patch management challenges and the short window of time between when a vulnerability is announced and when it is actively being exploited." (Cole, Fossen, Northcutt, Pomeranz, Wright, 2006) It provides organizations time to test the patches before installing them on production workstations.

Lastly, because many users are now mobile, there is a pressing need to protect the internal network from the vulnerabilities introduced from mobile users. "Distributing HIPS throughout the organization provides a better method of defending and extending our network perimeter." (Cole, Fossen, Northcutt, Pomeranz, Wright, 2006)

4. Implementing, configuring, and tuning an enterprise

4.1 Implementing a HIPS

Implementing an enterprise HIPS takes a lot of time and preparation. Whoever will be implementing and configuring the HIPS should have a thorough understanding of how the network is designed, know what applications are being used and how they

function. Some applications may need to write to the root of the primary drive, others may need to communicate over specific ports. Whatever the case may be, a thorough understanding of the network is needed or serious problems could arise while implementing the HIPS.

Most HIPS systems are managed by a centralized management console. Proventia Desktop is managed by Site Protector. Within Site Protector there is an Agent Manager which enables the Security Administrator to control what the agents will deny and permit on each workstation. Some specific things that are essential to know before configuring the agent's rules and policies are:

- What ports do the applications communicate over?
- Is the communication between the clients and servers only inbound, only outbound, or both? In other words who initiates the communication, only the servers, only the clients, or both?
- What protocols do the applications use UDP, TCP, ICMP, etc?
- Are there branches or remote sites that need to communicate with workstations at the main branch? If so, what IP addresses will need to be permitted?

It is also a good idea to check if the HIPS that will be used comes with its own anti-virus. If it does, determine if the HIPS is able to run concurrently with the anti-virus/antispyware already being used. Most HIPS systems integrate their own anti-virus/anti-spyware and most likely will not be able to run concurrently with another vendor's anti-virus/anti-spyware software.

A great feature of Proventia Desktop is that it has the flexibility to set different filtering rules. It can filter by

IP type, IP address, UDP, TCP, ICMP, or create a custom filter. (See Figure 4.1 Below)

SiteProtector						_ 8
Sepect gat givecton Tons New ▼ ※ 目 ♦ ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	le cultoct : Bolicu III Policu : Incalhost : Policu III Bolicu	🖞 😱 🚷		📋 Poli	cy	•
Repository Name: Deployed	Agent Type: + Proventia Desktop	Agent Ver	sion: 9.0 💌	Agent Mode:		
My Sites	ii 'Policy' @ '' jcOnlyTest Network Protection					/+× 00
Agent Build Settings Group Settings Dolicy Composition Agent Build Settings Composition Co	Default Settings Adaptive Policy Settings Corporate Network Firewall Settings Firewall Rules Firewall Rules IP Type Rules IP Rules Custom Firewall Parameters	IP Address All All All	UDP Port 500 62514 2233 8081	Action ACCEPT ACCEPT ACCEPT ACCEPT	Direction INBO INBO INBO INBO	Date/Time Start 2002-10-10 18: 2002-10-10 18: 2002-10-10 18: 2006-11-28 20: 2006-11-28 20: 2006-12-05 19:

Fig 4.1

For example, lets assume Trend Micro virus scan agents communicate over port 3035. In order for the virus scan agents to communicate with the server, the IP address of the server and port 3035 would need to be permitted under the UDP and TCP Rules in every group.

Therefore, depending on which HIPS is chosen, make sure that it is flexible enough to have the ability to filter by different rules, and control the agents granularly.

4.2 Configuring a HIPS

Once there is a thorough understanding of the applications and their communications, begin creating the groups. If everybody will have the same rules and policies then only one group is needed. For companies that have mobile or remote workers, HIPS systems are very useful. HIPSs are able to provide relatively the same level of protection as internal workstations. Also, a VPN policy for your mobile laptops can be created to make sure they are updated and running. For

instance, if the Marketing department uses a mobile laptop with an application that communicates on port 20 TCP, the Security Administrator can create a specific policy that permits only port 20 over VPN. In addition, the policy can be set so that if the agent cannot "phone home" or cannot communicate with the Agent Manager, to not allow the laptop to connect to anything else. "Phoning home" is when Proventia Desktop checks in with the Agent Manager making sure that it has the latest policies and updates. This is one way to ensure that all your agents are up to date and running.

One precaution to make sure that the agent service never stops is to set the agent protection to prevent unauthorized shutdown of the agent services (See figure 4.2).

: Policy : localhost : Policy	
Agent Type: 📲 Proventi	a Desktop 💽 Agent Version: 8.0 💌 Agent Mode: 💌
🎽 'Policy' @ '	
Acct Acct Application Lockdown Buffer Overflow Exploit Prevention Virus Prevention Administrative Settings Administrative Settings Administrative Settings Administrative Setting Administrat	 Prevent unauthorized changes to agent files Prevent unauthorized shutdown of agent services Require password to unlock Enter Password Encrypt configuration files Block all network traffic when Proventia Desktop is not running

Figure 4.2

This ensures that only administrators can shut down the agent service with a password, if the password option is set. If the password option is not set, anybody with administrative

privileges will be able to shut down the service. Additionally, there are options to encrypt the configuration files and prevent unauthorized changes to the agent files. If the password option is set, the agent password must be entered every time a change needs to be made. These options need to be set for each group and each group's password can be different. This works out well for those that would like to delegate control. If only one person will be managing the agents, it is probably not a good idea to set different passwords for each group.

An important thing to remember when configuring the HIPS agents is to implement the most restrictive policy allowed and then permit only what is needed. Never permit everything and then scale back. There is always a chance of missing something leaving the workstations vulnerable to attack.

The next step is to create and assign each group's rules and policies based on the applications that they use. If all the workstations use the same applications or are somewhat similar with just a few additional applications on some of them, copy the policies and modify them so that it will fit specific groups. After the groups have been created with their respective rules and policies start setting up the test environment. Having multiple workstations will be very useful.

During testing, be sure to test all communication that occurs on the workstation within the test environment to avoid any interruptions. For those that have remote sites, it may be necessary to have someone setup duplicated workstations at each site to test the applications and/or communications to and from the remote site. The workstations being used for testing should replicate production workstations. Large enterprises most likely will not be able to replicate all the different workstations, but still need to be sure not to miss any applications being used. If something is missed the HIPS will

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stop any application not permitted and may cause some disruptions or down time.

Once all applications have been tested thoroughly and made sure that everything will run correctly, start to deploy the agents to your production workstations. While deploying the agents do not deploy them to all the workstations at once. Deploy the agents to workstations that will be least affected if something goes wrong. Also, only deploy the agents to one or two workstations in each department at each site (if there are remote sites). Let them run for a few days or however long is needed to verify that all communication and applications have been permitted. After everything is running smoothly, deploy the agents to the rest of the workstations.

4.3 Tuning HIPS Alerts

Tuning HIPS alerts will take some time as false-positives have always been a problem with IDS and IPS sensors. When tuning any IPS or IDS alerts, the first thing to do is baseline the alerts. Investigate the alerts and find out which alerts are relevant and those that are not. Begin with the high severity alerts first and then work your way down to the medium and low severity alerts. There may be some alerts that will be triggered and will not apply to the environment which can be excluded quickly.

For example, if there are a lot of Windows attacks being triggered and there are only Linux or Unix operating systems being used, obviously these are false-positives that do not need to be investigated and the signatures could be turned off. Another example is if SNMP or DHCP is being used in the network. DHCP and SNMP traffic will be traversing the network all the time triggering a lot of alerts. It might be better to turn off SNMP and DHCP alerts so that it doesn't get too annoying. If

the alerts need to stay on, think about changing the severity to a medium or low.

Using Proventia Desktop as an example, Figure 4.3 shows a few default signatures that IBM Internet Security Systems provides. They give the ability to enable, disable, block, or override the block for each signature they have. So if an application continuously sets off an alert, but you know it is a false positive, use the option to turn that particular signature off or change the severity on the signature. The general goal of tuning alerts is to not waste time investigating falsepositives that are triggered repeatedly.

nen urity	an intrusion is d / Events Back	etected: Block and Alert	sted Addresses	; Detail Advar	nced Configuratio	ן י		
sei	this tab to view	and edit settings for rules that monitor ro	r security even	cs.		a lette	🗙 💷 I 🗖 Filtor	I F T
-								
ŀ	\rightarrow \land Attack/	Audit						
Ĺ	Enabled	Tag Name	Severity	Protocol	Block	Block Overri	Severity Ov	Т
Ľ	<u> </u>	NewTear	High	ip	<u> </u>	No	No	1.
Ŀ	V	SynDrop	High	ip		No	No	
Ľ	V	TearDrop2	High	ip	V	No	No	
E	V	Bonk	High	ip	V	No	No	
E	V	Boink	High	ip	V	No	No	
Г	V	Fragment Differential Size	Low	ip	V	No	No	
Г	V	Fragment Resources Exhausted	Medium	ip		No	No	
	V	PingOfDeath	Medium	ip	V	No	No	
Г	v	IP SourceRoute	Medium	ip		No	No	
E	V	IP Hdr Options Zero Length	Medium	ip	V	No	No	
Г	V	<u>Nestea</u>	High	ip		No	No	
E	V	IP Fragment Empty	Medium	ip		No	No	
Г	V	IP Timestamp Not Aligned	Low	ip		No	No	
Г	V	IP PingOfDeath Jolt2	Medium	ip	V	No	No	
Г	V	IP Ping Of Death Jolt	Medium	ip		No	No	
Г	V	IP Microfragment	Low	ip		No	No	
	V	IP SS Ping	Medium	ip		No	No	
		IP Flushot	Medium	ip		No	No	
	V	Win IP Src Route	High	ip	V	No	No	
	V	IP OShare	Medium	ip	V	No	No	-
16		1	1	1			f \f \	

Figure 4.3

Depending on the environment certain alerts may be of importance. Going back to the previous example and assuming that the opposite is true, DHCP is *not* being used in the network and DHCP alerts are being triggered, it might be a good idea to

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find out where the DHCP request is coming from and why. It may be one of the employees trying to use their home laptop in the network or it could be a malicious person trying to release a worm or Trojan in the network.

In either case, knowing about high severity alerts as soon as possible and finding the cause behind the alerts helps in preventing any malicious attacks from happening or avoiding any possible outbreaks from personal computers ridden with malware.

If static IP addresses are being used, change the alerts to be notified every time a DHCP request is broadcast. To change this in Site Protector go to Proventia Desktop "Security events Corpnet", which is when the agents have "phoned home" to the server, and go to the security events tab (See Figure 4.4).

Agent	: localhost :	alhost :	u 🖦 🖼 🔄 🛙	security Events Cor				y	·
sitory	Name: Coployed		Agent Type: 📕	Proventia Desktop	Agent Versio	on: 10.0 🔻	Agent Mode:		
Í		-			-		- I		
	~ .	A 10	it F	10					
iny Site	calboot	X Secur	ity Events Corpret						
		When ar	n intrusion is detected	Block and Alert 💌					
í T	- X Administration	Security F	Vents Back Tracing	Packet Log Evidence Log Trusted 0d	droccoc Dotail Ì	Advanced Con	figuration		
	- Agent Build Settings	Line at 1	a balk the stars and a diffe			Mavancea con	ingulation		
	- Application Compliance	Use thi	is tab to view and edit	settings for rules that monitor for securit	y events.				
									=Filter
			→ △ Attack/Audit						
	- 🤞 Firewall Default			(_ ···	(<u> </u>	1	[[a]	
	🤞 Firewall VPN		Enabled	∠ Tag Name	Seventy	Protocol	Block	Block Overri	Severity
	📺 Group Settings			DeepThroat Response	High	udp		No	No 📥
	- 🚺 Install and Update Settin			Devil Request	Medium	tcp		No	No
				DEchGrisch TCP Response	High	tcp	<u> </u>	No	
			TT .	DHCP Broadcast Assignment	D Low	dhcp		No	No
	- A Security Events VPN		<u> </u>	DHCP ClientID Dos	Low	dhcp		No	No
			V	DHCP Domain Metachar	High	dhcp	V	No	No
	Universities			DHCP Format String BO	High	dhcp	V	No	No
1	Wirus Prevention			DHCP Hostname Overflow	High	dhcp		No	No
1	desktop			DHCP Large Option Bo	High	dhcp		No	No
	Agent Build Settings		<u>N</u>	DHCP Long Discover Message	High	dhap	<u> </u>	No	No
	E			DHCP Long Hardware Address	High	dbcp	¥	No	No
	X Administration			DHCP Param Underflow	High	dhcp		No	No
	📋 Agent Build Settii			DHTML IE JavaScript XSS	Medium	http		No	No
	Application Comp		V	DHTML Object Overflow	High	http	V	No	No
	💏 Common Antiviru			DigitalRootBeer TCP Request	High	tcp	V	No	No
	🛶 👌 Firewall Corpnet		V	DNS Address Length	High	dns		No	No
	🤞 Firewall Default		<u> </u>	DNS Antisniff Overflow	High	dns	<u> </u>	No	No
	- 🤞 Firewall VPN			UNS Authors Request	Medium	dns		No	No 👻
	👗 Curum Cathlana								
	Group Settings								

Figure 4.4

On the security events tab find the DHCP Broadcast Assignment signature and edit the severity (See figure 4.5).

Issue ID:	2122029	
🔽 Enabled		
Attack/Audit:	Attack	
Tag Name:	DHCP Broadcast Assignment	
Severity:	Low	
Protocol:	dhcp	
Block		
Blocking Type:	Drop Packet	
XPU:	XPU 28.020	
Check Date:	2/2008	
Block Overridden:	No	
Severity Overridder	n: No	



Change the severity to high, to be notified about any DHCP requests. This will trigger the alert as a high severity. Why should it be set as a high severity? Two reasons: one, the system should be configured to email the Security Administrator when any high severity alert is triggered. Two, if static IP addresses are being used why is there a DHCP request being broadcasted. After the signatures have been edited, test the alerts by connecting a workstation configured for DHCP and see if it triggers a high alert.

If DHCP *is* being used in the network, think about changing the alert so that it does not trigger at all. Unchecking the signature will turn off the alert. (See figure 4.6)

¥	DCOM SystemActivation DoS	Low	dcom		No	No
₹	DeepThroat Response	High	udp	₹	No	No
•	DeltaSource Response	High	udp	V	No	No
₹	Devil Request	Medium	tcp		No	No
₹	DEchGrisch_TCP_Response	High	tcp	•	No	No
	DHCP Broadcast Assignment	⊃ Low	dhcp	v	No	No
V	DHCP ClientID Do5	Low	dhcp		No	No
V	DHCP Domain Metachar	High	dhcp	v	No	No
•	DHCP Format String BO	High	dhcp	V	No	No
V	DHCP Hostname Overflow	High	dhcp	v	No	No
•	DHCP Large Option Bo	High	dhcp	V	No	No
₹	DHCP Long Discover Message	High	dhcp	▼	No	No
1	DHCP Long Hardware Address	Hiab	dhan		No ,	No

Figure 4.6

To change any other default signature to reduce false-positives or false negatives "Security Events Corpnet" would be where to change it. (See figure 4.4)

Another feature to help with tuning alerts is viewing events by groups, if groups have been created. Being able to view alerts and events by groups helps give an idea of what really may be happening with a certain agent or group. Figure 4.7 shows what the general event view may look like. Figure 4.8 shows the events and alerts for a particular group.

Tag Name	Status	Severity 🛆	Event Count 🗸	Source Count	Target Ci
HTTP_IIS_Unicode_Wide_Encoding	P Detected attack (vuln not scanned recently)	🔺 High	12	1	5 🔺
Content_Incorrect_Extension	Simulated block (blocking not enabled)	🔺 High	7	2	5
Content_Incorrect_Extension	Petected event	🔺 High	6	3	1
EventCollector_Error	Petected event	🔺 High	5	1	1
MSRPC_Svcctl_Remote_Control	Petected event	🔺 High	3	1	1
Brute_force_login_attack	Petected event	🔺 High	3	3	3
HTML_Hostname_Overflow	P Detected attack (vuln not scanned recently)	🔺 High	2	1	1
MSRPC_SuspiciousEncryption	Petected event	🔺 High	1	1	1
Content_Compound_File_Bad_Extension	Petected event	🔺 High	1	1	1
Brute_force_login_likely_successful	Petected event	🔺 High	1	1	1
RPC_CallIt_Unknown	🥝 Attack failure (blocked at host)	📃 Medium	2646	1	1
RPC_CallIt_Unknown	Petected event	📃 Medium	589	1	1
TCP_Port_Scan	💦 Simulated block (blocking not enabled)	📃 Medium	408	46	8
TCP_Port_Scan	Petected event	📃 Medium	361	78	22
MSRPC_Pipe_SAMR_Failed	Petected event	📃 Medium	256	1	1
SMB_Winreg_File	P Detected attack (vuln not scanned recently)	📃 Medium	101	49	3
All Proventia protection stopped	Petected event	📃 Medium	98	56	56
Rendezvous_Detected	P Detected attack (vuln not scanned recently)	📃 Medium	67	1	2
XML_EntityRef_DoS	Petected event	📃 Medium	33	2	2
HTML_NullChar_Evasion	Simulated block (blocking not enabled)	📃 Medium	30	1	4
Logon_process_registered	Petected event	📃 Medium	17	3	3
HTML_NullChar_Evasion	Petected event	📃 Medium	15	1	4
Failed_login-unknown_error	Petected event	📃 Medium	11	2	2
Email_Executable_Extension	Petected event	📃 Medium	10	2	2
Startup_of_important_programs	Petected event	📃 Medium	7	2	2
Computer_account_changed	🕐 Detected event	📃 Medium	6	1	1 🚽

Figure 4.7

Time	Source IP	-Target IP		Event Analys	is - Event Name	• 🔻
Start 2008-02-20 00:00:00 GMT-10:00 🔻	Shave -	Shave -		-Incidents/Ex	ceptions	
		Start j		📃 🖂 Show Ind	idents	
	End	End		Show Ex	ceptions	
Tag Name	Object Name			Show Att	ack Patterns	
III Event Analysis - Event Name (Agent)				_		
and Erone many sis Erone Name (rigene)						
Tag Name	Status	Severity 🛆	Event Count 🗸	Source Count	Target Count	Object Co
Tag Name Content_Incorrect_Extension	Status Status ? Detected event	Severity 🛆	Event Count ⊽ 4	Source Count 3	Target Count	Object Cor 3
Tag Name Content_Incorrect_Extension RPC_CallIt_Unknown	Status P Detected event Detected event	Severity A	Event Count V 4 32	Source Count 3 1	Target Count 1 1	Object Co 3 1
Tag Name Content_Incorrect_Extension RPC_CallIt_Unknown XML_EntityRef_DoS	Status P Detected event Detected event Detected event Detected event	Severity A A High Medium Medium	Event Count ♥ 4 32 31	Source Count 3 1 1	Target Count 1 1 1	Object Cor 3 1 1
Tag Name Content_Incorrect_Extension RPC_CallIt_Unknown XML_EntityRef_DoS pcAnywhere_Ping	Status C Detected event Detected event Detected event Detected event Detected event	Severity A High Medium Medium	Event Count V 4 32 31 255	Source Count 3 1 1 1	Target Count 1 1 1 1 252	Object Cor 3 1 1 1
Tag Name Content_Incorrect_Extension RPC_CallIt_Unknown XML_EntityRef_DoS pcAnywhere_Ping SNMP_Discovery_Broadcast	Status ? Detected event ? Attack failure (blocked at host)	Severity A High Medium Vedium Low Low	Event Count 🗸 4 32 31 255 40	Source Count 3 1 1 1 3 3	Target Count 1 1 1 252 1	Object Cor 3 1 1 1 1 1

Figure 4.8

In the event that suspicious events or specific alerts are being triggered, there is the option to break it down to a specific group or agent. This may provide insight as to whether or not a particular application on a specific workstation is triggering false-positives or triggered by all workstations.

The next step after configuring the alerts is to configure the notifications. It is critical to know when high severity alerts are being triggered. If somebody is attempting a DoS attack on a workstation and high severity alerts are being triggered, it is imperative to know immediately in order to ascertain the situation and respond appropriately. Therefore, Site Protector needs to be configured to email a notification when high severity events are triggered. To configure notifications in Site Protector go to Central Responses and select Response Objects (See figure 4.9).

Repository Name: Deployed	💌 Agent Type: 🔔 Centra	al Responses 💌	Agent Version: 1.0 💌 Age	ent Mode:
 My Sites → □ calhost □ mu c " 	Response Objects' @ Email Log Evidence Quarantine SNMI	P User Specified		
				/+×
Response Objects	Name	SMTP Host	From	To A
📒 Response Rules	High Priority	10.x.x.x	siteprotector@alerts.com	securityadmin@alerts.com
🖃 🗠 🚞 desktop	DHCP	10.x.x.x	siteprotector@alerts.com	securityadmin@alerts.com

Figure 4.9

Here, add specific alerts such as DHCP alerts, to be emailed when they are triggered.

Name:	test	
SMTP Host:	10.x.x.x	
From:	issresponse@email.com	
To:	securityadmin@alerts.com	
	Destination Port Name Message Object Name Object Name	<&lertDateTime><&lertID><&lertName> <productid></productid>
	Object Type Subject -> Physical Port Product ID	
	Protection Domain Protocol Protocol Name Source Address	<componentaddress><componentname></componentname></componentaddress>
	Source Port Source Port Name VLAN Tag Vulnerability Status	
Col	Component Address Body ->	

Figure 4.10

Figure 4.10 shows how to customize the email to include specific information about the alert, for example the source address, destination address, the name of the alert (AlertID), Agent Address, etc. This feature can be very useful for those that have handheld devices with access to their email. If a high severity alert gets triggered and Site Protector is configured

to email a notification whenever those alerts are triggered, the Security Administrator will know immediately. On the other hand, notifications can be very annoying if the alerts are configured incorrectly. Therefore, Administrators need to be careful when configuring the alerts.

Once all of the agents have been deployed and the alerts are tuned, there is the never ending task of monitoring all the alerts, agents, and event logs. Alerts will also have to be continuously tuned as well as the agents to work with new vulnerability patches and new programs. Each time a new program is added or a new vulnerability patch is released, test it in a non-production environment and determine what needs to be permitted, just as with any other program or patch being added. Make sure that any alerts or signatures that have been turned off do not create any vulnerabilities in the network.

Understanding the applications and knowing what is traversing the network is an essential part in tuning alerts. The more that is known about the network, the faster the alerts can be tuned.

Also, depending on how many and what kind of applications are running will determine how long it will take to tune. The more applications being run, the more false-positives may be triggered. As new vulnerabilities arise, new signatures will follow with the probability that those new signatures will trigger false-positives from your applications. Be sure to check that the new signatures do not overwrite the settings on any current signatures.

To solve the false-positive problem, continue doing what is already being done. Test any new applications or patches in a test environment and see what alerts they trigger. Then make the necessary changes to reduce the false-positives.

To help understand the overall process of implementing, configuring, and tuning a HIPS, Figure 4.11 shows the steps from beginning to end.



5. <u>HIPS protection compared to IDSs, NIPSs, and anti-</u> virus/anti-spyware

So how does HIPS compare to IDSs, NIPSs, and antivirus/anti-spyware? We will compare IDSs first. IDS is a very good tool to have in your network. An IDS has the capability to tell you exactly what has happened on the network. Where it falls short is that it cannot stop an attack from happening. An event must occur before it will send an alert that there has been an intrusion. Also, if the attack is being carried out on the workstation, the file is fragmented, and it is using evasion techniques, an IDS may not be able to alert on it because the packets are being assembled and interpreted differently than the end host. An IDS is good for alerting and recovery purposes, but unfortunately cannot prevent an attack from happening. Some products such as Tripwire are similar in that it will send an alert and tell you that an attack has happened and what file(s) were changed, but again it is after the fact.

Next we compare NIPSs. NIPSs are a little better than IDSs in the sense that it has the ability to stop malicious attacks,

but unfortunately cannot stop or alert on as many things as a HIPS. The reason being, NIPSs cannot afford to have falsepositives. Depending on where the NIPS is located within the network, the rules and policies cannot be as restrictive as a HIPS. If the NIPS is triggering false-positives, it could create a DoS on the network. Legitimate traffic may be trying to get through, but the NIPS may be denying that traffic thinking it is malicious.

In addition, both IDSs and NIPSs are unable to see inside encrypted traffic. Because both are unable to see inside encrypted files, neither can stop or alert on any encrypted files. All they can do is pass the files on to its destination.

Lastly, there are anti-virus and anti-spyware protection. Anti-virus and anti-spyware vendors have made great strides in how they scan for viruses, trojans, worms, and spyware, but still rely heavily on signatures. This is where the protection is weak. If somebody does not send in logs for an attack or the vendor does not discover the new virus or spyware, a signature cannot be created for it. Yes, they do scan and stop known viruses, trojans, and spyware, but they lack the ability to stop the unknown which is where everybody is the most vulnerable. What you don't see can hurt you.

Thus, HIPS protects hosts in ways that other types of protection cannot. This is not to say that IDSs, NIPSs, antivirus, and anti-spyware are not needed. All should definitely be used, but if it is not feasible to have all of them or if you are deciding what to spend the budget on first, this should give an idea of where to start.

6. New Features of HIPS

New features HIPS vendors are releasing target new vulnerabilities that are being exploited in today's

environments. Take for example Computer Associates (CA) HIPS. Their HIPS features such things as restricting USB devices, alerting and denying any confidential information being copied off to USB/CD/DVD, or when infrared devices are being used. Another feature being used is "Dynamic rule creation for custom applications where applications that have not been thoroughly analyzed by vendors for analysis, detection techniques are put into a learning mode. In learning mode the HIPS learns how the workstation operates, what files are allowed to be altered, what system calls are being made, keys accessed, etc."(Cole, Fossen, Northcutt, Pomeranz, Wright, 2006)

7. HIPS Challenges

Like any other protective measure, HIPS has its fair share of challenges. "Plaguing HIPS deployments are implementation and maintenance challenges - testing updates, deploying updates, troubleshooting updates etc." (Cole, Fossen, Northcutt, Pomeranz, Wright, 2006) Yes those are quite concerning, but none are more important than false-positives. Like NIPSs and IDSs, HIPSs have problems keeping false-positives to a minimum. In some cases, false-positives may become so annoying that the alerts are ignored because it is triggered too often. Security administrators should never let it get to this point because once alerts are ignored there is no point in having alerts. It defeats the purpose of having alerts.

To prevent this from occurring a constant tuning of the alerts is needed, at least twice a month if not more. Depending on how often applications are added or workstations are updated with vulnerability patches.

Additionally, the cost of actually implementing an enterprise HIPS could be cost prohibitive. Not only is there the cost of the product itself, there is also the amount of

hours it will take to implement, whether it be internal staff or a consultant. Also add in the cost of managing the system. Is there adequate staff as well as the training to be able to manage the system once it is implemented? Will the Security Analyst understand what the alerts mean when it is triggered? These are just some of the challenges HIPS still face.

8. Conclusion

With a plethora of vulnerabilities out there, security administrators need to constantly mitigate the risks associated with the ever changing environments and applications being introduced. As you can see, Host Intrusion Prevention Systems are an invaluable tool, but we need to remember that it is not the "silver bullet" for workstation security. "They can be a great addition to a solid, layered defense including firewalls, NIPSs, IDSs, and anti-virus applications among other things, but should not replace them." (Bradley, 2005)

"As each host protection technology possesses strengths and weaknesses, selecting just one technology for comprehensive host protection results in too much risk to the host environment. Any single technology represents a singular point of failure. Employing the different technologies in concert brings risk exposure to threats down to acceptable levels. In addition, combining multiple host protection technologies into a single host protection solution significantly reduces management costs. When developing a host protection strategy, only a comprehensive solution can keep you ahead of the next threat." (Corman, 2005) Are your hosts protected from the unknown?

9. References

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