

On the Radar: Pulse Secure delivers secure access solutions

Orchestration of connectivity protection, visibility, and threat response across mobile, network, and cloud

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Summary

Catalyst

Pulse Secure is an information security specialist focused on "secure access" for people, devices, things, and services. Since being spun out of Juniper in 2014, the company has made considerable investments innovating on its product lines, capabilities, and usability.

Pulse Secure Access Suite is the cornerstone technology, supporting IT access security and single sign-on (SSO) for global enterprises across a wide range of industry verticals and a hybrid mix of operational platforms. Sold separately or as a bundle, the secure access portfolio provides next-generation SSL-VPN facilities for mobile users, endpoint visibility and compliance, network profiling and Network Access Control (NAC), and virtual Application Delivery Controller (vADC) technologies. The value of the Pulse Secure Access Suite is to deliver protected connectivity, user and endpoint visibility, and threat response across mobile, network, and hybrid cloud environments, focused on ease of use for administrators and transparency for end users.

Key messages

- Pulse Secure enables enterprises to progressively move to the cloud with 360-degree user and endpoint visibility, protected access to applications and information, granular security controls, and high availability (HA) whether hosted on-premises or in multi-cloud environments (public, private, SaaS).
- Secure access orchestration is enabled through a centralized management system, a unified appliance platform, endpoint client support facilities, and standards-based infrastructure and cloud interoperability services, aiming to reduce IT and user complexity.
- Organizations taking a siloed, piecemeal approach to enterprise secure access can incur the complications of multiple access security systems, each with its own management console, end-user client components, and policy and enforcement limitations. This can result in security gaps, identity and data theft, and added operational and usability costs. A unified approach, such as that offered by Pulse Secure, can help enterprises to overcome these obstacles.
- Integrated suites are available to SMEs as well as large enterprises to address a range of scenarios including secure mobility, SSO, endpoint visibility and compliance, multi-cloud access protection and application delivery, and Internet of Things (IoT) security.
- The latest software release along with previous technology investments have propelled Pulse Secure far beyond its remote access SSL VPN origins to offer an enterprise-grade secure access platform. It is anticipated that recent acquisitions, development efforts, and ecosystem support will lay a foundation for future cloud-based access security and software-defined perimeter (SDP) offerings.

Ovum view

Since its divestiture from Juniper in 2014, Pulse Secure has moved far beyond its original remote access origins and now offers a more comprehensive, flexible, and interoperable enterprise secure access proposition. The company has enhanced and expanded its product line to support a full range of heterogeneous endpoint, mobile, network, cloud, and security environments with secure access. With its latest platform release (May 2018) and Pulse Secure Access Suite, the company can support enterprises looking for a "one-stop shop" for secure access.

Recommendations for enterprises

Why put Pulse Secure Access Suite on your radar?

Using Pulse Secure, enterprise clients benefit from secure access capabilities that provide users with simple, unfettered, and safe access to resources, as well as providing administrators with the visibility, control, and threat response facilities they require. IT security managers can centrally maintain and manage application and data access policies and controls alongside user and device compliance for applications and services that are delivered on-premises or in the cloud.

Other drivers include the following:

- The adoption and enhancement of flexible working practices can help organizations boost employee productivity, and indeed is promoted by various governments. Mobile workforce demand, combined with the consumerization of IT, introduces mobile access challenges and data privacy risks. Pulse Secure delivers "anytime, anywhere" protected connectivity, in a seamless way, and supporting popular devices of the user's choice.
- Many enterprises are looking to optimize IT application delivery by moving existing on-premises data center resources and applications to private cloud, public cloud, and SaaS. The migration yields a variety of secure access visibility and control challenges. Pulse Secure provides IT with a facility to ensure consistent user, role, device, and stateful policy management across computing environments, whether a business is fully cloud invested or moving per app and business case.
- Organizations are facing evolving malware, IOT security, and data privacy risks, which are further encumbered by endpoint compliance deficiencies (e.g., unaccounted-for systems, hobbled endpoint management and security software, shadow IT, and unsanctioned smart devices). Pulse Secure SSL-VPN and NAC solutions offer remote and network visibility and automated threat response for endpoint compliance, remediation, and network isolation.
- Business digital transformation is pushing IT to support a variety of device, application, and data protection requisites. As such, many enterprises have applied siloed or work-around components for secure access (e.g., using different application gateways, cloud access brokers, app wrapping, cloud authentication, and virtual load balancing), which can result in disparate policies, reactive management, and

impacted user experience. Pulse Secure can deliver a unified secure access management system to address these issues that is open, flexible, and scalable.

Highlights

Pulse Secure Access Suite supports the protected access requirements of small, midsize, and large enterprise organizations. It is an inclusive and integrated platform solution that provides policy-based secure access services to any corporate resource/application or third-party services from any authorized users, devices, and systems. The building blocks of the platform include Pulse Connect Secure, Pulse Workspace, Pulse Profiler, Pulse Policy Secure, and virtual Application Delivery Controller (vADC), complemented by the Pulse unified client, the Pulse unified appliance, and Pulse One centralized management system. The product portfolio is described in the following table.

Table 1: Pulse Secure Access Suite

Product portfolio	Description
<p>Pulse Connect Secure</p> <p>is a feature-rich SSL VPN facility that provides safe user connectivity, regardless of the device being used, to any corporate resource, including cloud applications and corporate data centers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilities include clientless access, strong authentication, host checking, granular audit, virtual desktop access, and mobile device management (MDM) integration. ▪ Its cloud security facilities enable seamless and compliant access to SaaS applications, such as Office365 and Salesforce.com. ▪ It supports always-on, application-activated, and mobile VPN facilities with multifactor and certificate authentication, SSO, and SAML facilities.
<p>Pulse Workspace</p> <p>offers a mobile application and device management solution for business and private use, enabling enterprises and their users to benefit from securely delivered corporate and third-party apps and data to personal devices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobile container facilities are used to separate personal and professional environments on each mobile device for apps and data. The approach balances the need for improved security, personal device privacy, and user experience. ▪ The technology is deployed with low IT administrative overheads and supports GDPR levels of data and privacy protection.
<p>Pulse Policy Secure</p> <p>Is a NAC 3.0 technology insofar as it provides visibility, policy-based controls, and phased enforcement for user and device access – it delivers the "who, what, when, where, and how" controls needed when users and devices connect to a company's network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NAC features include agent and agentless endpoint visibility, guest management, BYOD onboarding, granular compliance policies, logging and reporting, and threat mitigation capabilities (e.g., 802.1X port-level and L2-L4 enforcement). ▪ Its vendor-agnostic facilities provide interoperability with popular network and wireless switches, next-generation firewalls (NGFWs), security information and event management (SIEM) systems, and enterprise mobility management (EMM) tools. ▪ Predefined and custom-built policies are supported using a variety of facilities that include host checking for endpoint tracking, automated and user-directed remediation, network quarantine and blocking, and IoT device classification and security.
<p>Pulse Profiler</p> <p>is a network profiling solution that supports endpoint discovery, classification, and device monitoring for devices connected to enterprise networks. It can be purchased as a separate standalone product or as part of Pulse Policy Secure (NAC).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pulse Profiler offers comprehensive user and device visibility as well as the operational insight needed to make informed, policy-based decisions about issues and threats. ▪ It makes use of built-in RADIUS server facilities and can be implemented across distributed networks. ▪ To incorporate remote user and device visibility requires the use of optional Collector technology which is embedded in Pulse Connect Secure (VPN).

<p>Pulse Secure vADC</p> <p>is designed to make applications run faster, more reliably, and more securely. It is positioned as a complete software-defined application delivery controller (ADC) that can be deployed at scale to free up applications from the constraints of hardware-based load balancers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pulse vADC delivers high performance and availability for enterprise and web application delivery within the data center and multi-cloud environments including Amazon AWS, Microsoft Azure, and Google Cloud. ▪ Its facilities include a virtual traffic manager, services director and built-in Web Application Firewall (WAF) facilities. App delivery intelligence and analytics aim to expedite resource optimization and troubleshooting.
<p>Pulse One</p> <p>enables IT administrators to utilize a single, centralized console for the management of multiple Pulse Secure solutions across operating environments. It offers end-to-end user and device visibility for controlling enterprise access to data center and cloud-based systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pulse One ties together the administrative components needed to deploy and maintain Pulse Secure systems, manage multilevel policies, and gain unified intelligence and orchestration. ▪ Pulse One can be deployed as an on-premises appliance, a virtual appliance, or software-as-a-service (SaaS).

Source: Pulse Secure

Background

Pulse Secure was created from a technology spin-off from Juniper Networks in 2014. The technology involved had a rich legacy of innovation dating back to 2004, giving the new company a strong opening position on which to build. Pulse Secure, privately owned by Siris Capital, is headquartered in San Jose, California, with offices in Europe and Asia. The company is led by security industry veteran Sudhakar Ramakrishna. CEO Sudhakar Ramakrishna was previously senior vice-president and general manager for the Enterprise and Service Provider Division at Citrix, prior to which he held management positions at Polycom, Motorola, 3Com, and US Robotics.

Since the company's formation in 2014, Siris Capital has continued to invest in strengthening Pulse Secure, with the acquisition of complementary technologies such as MobileSpaces in 2014 and more recently the Virtual Application Delivery controller business from Brocade Communications, Inc. in July 2017.

Current position

Pulse Secure is a strong, global organization with around 750 employees across support, sales, and R&D, and over 3,000 partners. It secures more than 18 million endpoints and has over 20,000 customers across most industry verticals, including 80% of the Fortune 500. The company has a proven track record of providing robust support for its products and services, having successfully sold a mix of integrated security products and suites to small and midsize enterprises as well as large, global organizations.

Today, businesses are in the midst of often difficult-to-deliver digital transformation challenges. To achieve these objectives, they require worker flexibility and greater accessibility to information. At the same time, IT and security teams must deliver safe access that addresses the conflicting demands of workforce mobility, IT consumerization, cloud migration, and privacy compliance. It is these fundamental business and operational requirements that have made enterprise secure access solutions such as Pulse Secure Access Suite evermore relevant.

Pulse Secure will continue to build on its network control and secure access heritage. It has already strengthened its substantial portfolio of products and services through innovation and acquisition and is continuing to extend its relevance to the business and user protection requirements of its wide-ranging customer base.

Pulse Secure is upbeat about the future business relevance of its security products and services. Annual revenue figures are growing at double-digit rates. Demand for its technology is increasing as the business mix of on-premises and hybrid cloud adoption continues across all sectors, and moves toward automated threat response as advanced malware and IoT threats continue to grow. Equally, Pulse Secure also sees further levels of interest as organizations adopt new flexible work styles alongside the need for more stringent data privacy and protection mandates.

Data sheet

Key facts

Table 2: Data sheet: Pulse Secure

Product name	Pulse Secure Access Suite: Pulse Connect Secure, Pulse Workspace, Pulse Policy Secure, Pulse Profiler, Pulse vADC, Pulse One	Product classification	Enterprise secure access
Version number	9.0r1	Release date	May 2018
Industries covered	All	Geographies covered	All
Relevant company sizes	Small, midsize, and large	Licensing options	Perpetual, subscription, named user, and concurrent user
URL	www.pulsesecure.net	Routes to market	Channel distribution
Company headquarters	San Jose, California, US	Number of employees	750

Source: Ovum

Appendix

On the Radar

On the Radar is a series of research notes about vendors bringing innovative ideas, products, or business models to their markets. Although On the Radar vendors may not be ready for prime time, they bear watching for their potential impact on markets and could be suitable for certain enterprise and public sector IT organizations.

Further reading

Ovum Decision Matrix: Selecting an Endpoint Protection Solution, 2017–18, INT003-000019 (December 2017)

"Artificial intelligence and machine learning are driving the next-generation cybersecurity market forward," INT022-000998 (June 2017)

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