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High marks for Mangosoft's VPN alternative
Dec 4, 2001 | Brian Hook | [E-Mail](#)

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Everyone knows that e-mailing data over the Internet—specifically, sensitive corporate documents—is a risky business if there are no safety measures in place to secure the transmission.

The virtual private network (VPN) is routinely cited as a great mechanism for secure file sharing via the Web, but it's also often described as hard to deploy, cumbersome to manage, and a bit costly.

[Mangosoft](#), a Westborough, MA, services provider, believes its technology, [Mangomind Business Internet File Service](#), erases those deployment and maintenance headaches and provides a simple and cost-effective alternative for providing secure collaboration outside today's firewalls.

A simple, cost-effective solution
According to Mangosoft, Mangomind is designed for businesses that frequently collaborate with partners, and it can be implemented without traditional VPN hardware and maintenance costs. And, because it offers a similar Windows user interface, it also doesn't require extensive end-user training. Mangosoft supports Windows XP, 95/98, Me, NT, and 2000.

Security features include end-to-end 128-bit encryption of transferred and stored files, user authentication, and file access controls. Mangomind lets users set their own access permissions for files and folders, and the software automatically synchronizes files if a user is disconnected and then reconnects to the Internet.

According to one VPN expert, the Mangomind Business Internet File Service is a good VPN alternative that CIOs should consider. "One of (the) things that both a VPN and Mangomind do well is let you securely share files. But Mangomind is a much simpler thing to use," says Salvatore Salamone, principal consultant at Salamone Research, based in New York.

Scott Davis, Mangosoft's CTO, said the auto-synchronization feature is valuable, especially for road warriors conducting business away from the corporate office.

"The data is all kept in sync, and they're able to take the data they need on a laptop. And when they make modifications, it is synchronized with everyone else. It's an extremely cost-effective way to operate," noted Davis.

Not a security cure-all technology

Yet Davis admits that Mangomind can't completely replace a VPN. For example, enterprises can't use Mangomind for intranet-based application use between companies. A VPN is required for that, said Davis.

"Mangomind is really a best-of-breed file service. It's a file service and nothing more than that," he added.

But that doesn't diminish its value, according to Mangosoft, as the file service is still regarded as an important tool. It's just hard getting enterprises to switch over to a secure sharing approach, said Davis.

"People are in the habit of e-mailing documents, even though it is insecure," said Davis. Salamone, who recently participated in several VPN focus-group efforts, said he was very surprised to hear that many executives are still e-mailing critical data without a VPN or file-service product.

"They want to send stuff outside the company, and they just don't think. It really opens a liability if you are sending confidential financials. You are in trouble if someone happens to get this before a disclosure date," he noted.

In terms of cost, Mangomind is clearly much less expensive than building a VPN. According to a cost analysis review by [eVision Technologies](#), an e-business consulting firm, using Mangomind for one year would be nearly one-fifth the cost of a VPN. The firm estimates that one year would cost a company \$2,994 with Mangomind vs. \$15,580 with traditional VPN equipment. That cost difference also does not take into account the additional \$5,100 a year for recurring maintenance associated with VPNs.

Cost savings can be a critical factor

The lower cost factor is what prompted Greg Baber, CTO for [Internet Publishing Group, Inc.](#) in Newtown, PA, to [choose Mangomind](#). His company, which provides information services to business customers, has no infrastructure in-house.

Baber said setup was easy and that he recommends Mangomind because it eliminates unnecessary costs.

"We delayed making a decision about building a VPN until Mangomind came along, and we found it fit our needs almost perfectly. If you can postpone a 'build it' decision, do so," said Baber.

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