Welcome

Welcome to this special supplement to the October 2008 edition of 'In The Boxing Ring'. This supplement provides details on the new Network Box Office Customer Portal system about to enter beta-testing.

The Network Box Customer Portal project is now reaching its goals, and should start beta testing towards the end of October. This is a massive project, designed to take data from most of our internal systems (such as licensing, global network monitoring, inventory, deployment, ticketing, etc) and make them available to our customers in a single unified user interface (under the Box Office Customer Portal framework). Pages 2, 3 and 4 of this newsletter describe this new system in detail so that you can see what will become available over the coming months.

The implementation of this system is currently under development, and internal beta testing. We are now nearing the culmination of this two year project.

We expect to be able to start public beta testing for selected customers during late October, and to roll this out to all customers sometime during November 2008. If you would like to participate in this beta test, please contact your local NOC for arrangements.

As usual, if you have any feedback, or comments, it is always appreciated. You can contact us here at HQ via email (nbhq@network-box.com). Or, drop by our office next time you are in town.

Mark Webb-Johnson
CTO, Network Box Corporation
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Customer Portal

A Global View

While our customers’ organisational structures may be centralised, distributed or individualised (and any combination of the three), Network Box has always been concerned with the global view. Our support offices and Network Operations Centres are geographically distributed around the world; but all provide feedback to a centralised system known as Outbreak.

The Network Box Outbreak system currently handles approximately 60,000 security events a minute (about 1,000 each second - more than 86 million a day). A large computer system (nicknamed the WOPR) summarises and correlates all those events in real-time, identifying trends and alerting our security engineers to changes in the global threat landscape.

The Outbreak system is just one of our internal systems that we rely on day-to-day to keep our customers secure. Other internal systems include:

- Global Monitoring System (NBGMS) - a global network of monitoring stations testing, recording and alerting on hundreds of health metrics for each Network Box and Internet gateway.
- Inventory - the system which records which customers own which boxes, resold through which channel partner.
- Licensing - recording the contractual, licensing and SLA arrangements between Network Box, our partners, and customers.
- Deployment - tracking the deployment of new Network Box installations.
- Ticketing - tracking customer and NOC initiated issues and ensuring we meet our SLA targets.
- Workload Statistics - a part of the Outbreak system, this tracks the workload that Network Box devices are handling (to ensure availability and be proactive in ensuring sufficient capacity for traffic peaks).

The single biggest feature request, related to the Network Box Service, that we have received has been to provide customers access to this information.

It doesn’t matter if the customer is a global multi-national with offices (and Network Box protection) in a dozen countries, or a small business protected by a single Network Box; our customers are telling us that they want to know the current and historical status of their protection - in real time.

The Network Box Office Customer Portal addresses this requirement by extending the Box Office system to include health, workload, licensing and other such information.

Key Functionality

The Network Box Office Customer Portal provides the following key functionality:

- An overview page showing a map of boxes, VPN and management links against a geographic background. This provides a single overview of the managed network.
- A ticketing module showing customer/NOC initiated tickets and their status.
- A deployment module for tracking the information requirements stage of deployments (including gathering the necessary information for deployment, using online collaborative tools).
- An inventory module showing box ownership and status. This module also includes:
  - A health module; interfaced to the Network Box Global Monitoring System (NBGMS), to show box, gateway and VPN link health status.
  - A licensing module; showing the SLA agreements and contractual arrangements.
  - A workload statistics module; showing box workload and trend analysis.
- A user management module; permitting designated customer administrators to view and maintain Box Office user accounts themselves (without requiring NOC involvement). This module permits the customer greater control of management of the team supporting global deployments.

The system provides a single, simple, powerful web-based user interface for the management of one or more Network Boxes - at the country, regional and global levels.

The next two pages of this newsletter detail this new functionality in greater detail, and present some screen shots to show it in action.
**Status Overview**

The above screen print of the new Customer Portal home page illustrates the power of this technology. The screen shows the overview for a typical multinational customer. The icons represent Network Boxes installed around the world, and the lines show VPN links connecting those offices.

The map is fully zoom-and-pan capable, so you can focus in on problem areas. In addition, placing the mouse over a Network Box icon or VPN link pops up a panel showing detailed status.

In addition to VPN links, the map can also show monitoring links. Each Network Box is monitored from NBGMS servers in America, Europe and Asia (in addition to local monitoring) and the global round-trip response times and reachability status are visible both on the map and detailed pop-up panels. This makes the system invaluable for customers with just one box - offering the ability to see, at a glance, the global connectivity status of your office and its Network Box protection.

For each monitored device, the Network Box Global Monitoring System is able to report on reachability (a function of whether the box and/or its gateway are reachable), VPN status (of IPSEC and SSL links between Network Boxes, as well as from a Network Box to third-party VPN servers), and general health status. The map shows good statuses in green colour, warnings in yellow, and critical faults in red.

**Drill-Down**

In addition to the overview screen (with pop-up status panels), hyperlinks are provided for drill-down to the individual Network Box level.

**Source of the Data**

The overview screen draws its data from several key Network Box systems. The box location information comes from the Box Office database itself (supplemented with Geo-Location data). The VPN link and overall health status comes from the Network Box Global Monitoring System (monitored from America, Europe and Asia). The License information comes from the Box Office license and contract systems. All these systems are brought together into a single global overview.
Multi-Language Support

As with the current Box Office, the new Customer Portal has multi-language support for English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese and Korean. Support for other languages is in the pipeline.

Ticketing

The ticketing system has been extended to include several alternative email notification templates. The user can now select a ‘notification only’ style message (which doesn’t include the full ticket detail) - especially useful for mobile platforms.

Inventory Management

The new Inventory Management module shows all boxes owned (or resold / controlled) by the user. As well as basic box information (such as name, status and location), the system allows for a textual description to be assigned to each box (to simplify management for customers unfamiliar with the boxids).

The module fully supports the Network Box Global Monitoring, Licensing / Contract, and Workload Statistics systems - allowing users to drill-down to see (and compare) health, licensing and workload status of all managed boxes. This ‘global overview’ feature supplements the per-box facility available with the full my.network-box.com system. Hyperlinks are provided for direct connection to my.network-box.com (for more detailed analysis).

User Management

For our larger (and in particular global multi-national) customers, the task of maintaining control over their Box Office users (including account creation, modification, rights management and control) has become increasingly difficult as their networks have expanded.

The new Network Box Customer Portal User Management module addresses this problem. It allows any Network Box Office user to be given the right to manage their own users - without requiring assistance from the Network Box NOC.

User accounts can be created, edited and deleted - all from a simple web-based user interface. Passwords can also be reset (should they be lost, or for security reasons). The system also allows the administrator to view a list of all active Box Office user accounts.

The module fully supports the ownership hierarchy of Network Box Office. In the same way that the ‘My Account’ screen allows maintenance of the user’s own account, the User Management module allows maintenance of all user accounts owned / re-sold / controlled by the administrative user granted rights to this system.

This feature is particularly useful for the management of the team responsible for large global deployments. The facility can be combined with the electronic site surveys system, during the information gathering phase of such global deployments.

Regional Mirrors

The Network Box Office Customer Portal fully supports the Box Office regional mirrors system. Mirrors are currently available in America, Europe and Asia - providing fast local access to the portal. You can set your preferred portal on the “My Account” screen.

Schedule

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