In this year-end section, we call out companies leading the fray with their mission, product development and more, says Peter Stephenson, technology editor.

It is innovators time again. We take time at the end of every year to explore those companies that are setting the benchmarks within their respective product areas. These companies are innovators, not just in their technologies, but in their business practices and how they go to market. Some of our innovators are small and some not so small. Some are with us still and some have been acquired. A very small few have failed to make it through the gauntlet of the past few, very difficult years due to lack of financing, unexpected competition or any of a host of other spoilers. We miss them.

We have a fine crop of innovators this year, including a new and important category we are calling the Innovators Hall of Fame. These are the companies that have demonstrated both a long-term commitment to innovative excellence and actually have delivered on that commitment.

Penetration testing: SAINT

It certainly was good to see this venerable pen testing company on our list this year. SAINT was born out of the old open source tool SATAN and it never looked so good. There are some giants in the penetration testing marketplace, and some – fewer now with the acquisition of Metasploit – are open source. For those, the price certainly is right. But SAINT is not far off with its creative pricing schemes.

When you want to take on giants and no-cost spoilers, you need some pretty innovative business and marketing practices. Having been around since 1998 and still growing, it is pretty clear that SAINT has this part down to a science. Marketing, according to the visionary to whom we spoke, comes down to creative pricing, finding areas of real need that can comprise market niches, and then making the connection between vulnerabilities and exploits.

That certainly sounds simple enough, but there actually is a lot more to it than meets the eye. First, one must find what the marketers call the "pain points." It turns out that there are two important pockets: government agencies with their specialized regulatory requirements, and PCI testing.

The idea of bringing vulnerabilities and exploits together signals the convergence of vulnerability and penetration testing. And that, from a technical perspective, is exactly what SAINT has done. Additionally, this innovator focuses on heterogeneous targets and agentless technology. And the exploit is not all there is, as most experienced security professionals know. There are activities that take place pre- and post-exploitation. SAINT handles those as well.

Today, SAINT runs on Linux, but it turns out, the Apple Mac is becoming a favorite of security pros. Does that signal a Mac version in SAINT's future? That certainly would be a logical assumption, but it is just part of the creative way the SAINT folks view the market: Provide a product that is simple to use for the novice and powerful enough for the seasoned pen tester. Price that product appropriately, hit the right market niches and help the user make real decisions, not just list vulnerable machines. That's the SAINT secret. Sure seems simple to us.

AT A GLANCE

Flagship product: SAINTexploit (this is just a module on a very complete suite of tools)
Vendor: SAINT Corp. www.saintcorporation.com
Cost: Starts at $8,500 per year for 256 IPs.
Innovation: Effective integration of vulnerability assessment/ penetration testing.
Greatest strength: Durability.

Effective integration of vulnerability assessment/ penetration testing.

Peter Stephenson

SAINT Corporation
4720 Montgomery Lane #800
Bethesda, MD 20814
www.saintcorporation.com
sales@saintcorporation.com
1-800-596-2006

SC Reprints