



## NETWORK ACCESS HARDWARE

# Neoteris Instant Virtual Extranet Access 3000

As a sysadmin, giving users secure external access to your internal network is a nightmare, so why hasn't anyone made it easy? Paul Hudson reckons this new Linux appliance changes the extranet paradigm...

## BUYER INFO

1U Linux appliance providing 'set and forget' extranet capabilities.

- **SUPPLIER** Neoteris
- **PRICE** £25,000 (inc VAT)
- **WEB** [www.neoteris.com](http://www.neoteris.com)

So, the untrusted Internet – full of bad guys – comes into your router, your router goes through your firewall, and then your firewall splits off into a trusted domain full of your business-critical systems and also into your De-Militarized Zone made up of web servers and other insecure functionality. Sound familiar? This has been the networking paradigm for so many years now that people often just take for granted that this is the best layout. Under the watchful eye of its chairman, Jim Clark (of SGI and Netscape fame), Neoteris is a fledgling company with a whole new idea for handling the situation. Their aim is to provide a Linux appliance, designed and developed by them with large chunks implemented using Open Source software, that provide secure extranet functionality out of the box. Their Instant Virtual Extranet (IVE) range is split into three distinct models: the 1000, the 3000, and the 5000, in order of power.

## What's in the box?

Each machine is kitted out with some fairly standard hardware inside, and

one of the primary differences between the ranges is the amount of horsepower inside each box. Also inside the box is a folded A3 page of instructions that gets your server up and running in four steps. I'm a stickler for documentation as you may well know, so I was feeling a bit cheated by this flimsy amount of documentation – a £25,000 machine should come backed with some *serious* treeware.

Then, I turned the machine on, and, if I were less honest, I would delete the last sentence and replace it with, "The documentation is far too long, and could almost have been summed in one step, 'Turn it on. Job done.'" More on that soon – first, the rest of the box contents. For the first time in a long time – and, really, more companies should do this – I was happy to find a complete print-out of the GPL in there, which shows Neoteris isn't afraid to pay homage to its foundations. Also in there is the usual warranty and support information, plus a short Neoteris licence.

Enough of that – I think you all want to know how it works. Shame, really, because I could happily write hundreds of words about the beautiful design of the unit – "Neoteris" is clearly a strategy as well as a name!

## Configuring & using

You can configure this thing all you need, if you want to, however it's not really necessary. Configuration is done with a direct terminal connection from the serial port on the front of the unit

and is simply a matter of answering questions as prompted.

Once the text-based configuration is done and the server is plugged into your network, you can get to it through your web browser, which is a far easier way to change options. One particularly welcome feature is a Cobalt-like patch installer that uses your browser to snag pre-packaged service patches that are automatically applied to the box to keep it up to date. This always worked well for Cobalt users, so it's good to see Neoteris are making use of good ideas from the past.

Administering the box is made very simple, and it lives up to its aim of being an appliance very well. Like with your toaster or washing machine you don't need to know or care about how this thing works inside – you just plug it in and it will handle the rest. There *is* a lot of value-added stuff here, which is good as it helps justify what many would think is quite an exorbitant price tag. To be blunt, it *doesn't matter* what hardware is inside the machine, or what version of software is installed, because the box is designed to perform one task and perform it to a specification. In the same way that people don't buy a fridge because it's got a branded "Ultra 3000+" condenser, you don't buy an IVE based upon its specs – all that matters is that it smoothly handles a set number of users.

This is some *very* high-end hardware, no doubt about it. Plugging one of these things in lets your outside

users connect to through the IVE to Citrix or Oracle, or even their Exchange server, without the need to worry about encryption or security. The Access 3000 is a solid example of what Linux was designed to do, and it is to work in the background and get things done. While the price of this machine might make some baulk, it is a great deal less than most companies are already paying for the equivalent of this technology, with the difference being that the Neoteris solution has no further hidden costs.

If you've already committed a lot of cash to your extranet solution, this is certainly something to consider – particularly if you find money is still leaking away due to ongoing costs. It's a powerful box that's "fire and forget" in every sense of the word. While the price tag might make you think twice, you should definitely consider an evaluation – the chances are this thing beats your current extranet's total cost of ownership hands down. [LXF](#)

## VERDICT

Features	9/10
Performance	9/10
Ease of use	10/10
Value for money	7/10

Powerful, predictable, reliable, and lots of other praiseworthy "ables" too.

**LINUX FORMAT RATING**  
 9/10