

What is a VPN?

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The business world today is increasingly dependent on communications and real-time data is rapidly becoming a requirement for companies to stay competitive. This has impacted information security programs as employees, business partners, vendors and others beyond the traditional enterprise boundaries require immediate access to a wide array of systems and business information. These new business communications needs have demonstrated the need for new secure communications tools to help protect the information as it moves.

Since first recognized, there have been many approaches taken to meet the goals of securing this 'information in motion'. Some have emphasized support of high-speed communication, others have focussed on connecting multitudes of simultaneous, low-speed remote dial-up users, some have accentuated ease of use and deployment, while still others

concentrated on the security aspects of the communication. Few have been able to meet all of these goals and provide a system that scales to meet the needs of both small and large organizations.

There has been a great deal of discussion in the press and in industry about Virtual Private Network (VPN) products and services. Like many new technologies, the VPN market has been suffering through the standards development phases to establish the guidelines for interoperability. It is also suffering from the misuse of the term to describe certain services that are not actually true VPNs but External Private Networks (EPNs).

VPN Defined

There are many VPN products and services on the market today and a wide variety of implementations. This has created some confusion on what the term VPN actually means. We will attempt to define and provide

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