



● TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT APPLIANCE

Zeus Extensible Traffic Manager 7000

PRICE From £16,500 exc VAT

WARRANTY 1yr RTB

SUPPLIER Zeus Technology 01223 525000

INTERNET www.zeus.com

VERDICT Zeus delivers a powerful appliance for managing and load-balancing web traffic.

In the traffic management market, Zeus has always stood out from much of the competition by offering its Extensible Traffic Manager (ZXTM) as a software-only product. However, even Zeus hasn't been able to resist the allure of the appliance and now offers a complete set of rack mounts. Here, we look at the top-of-the-range 7000 model.

ZXTM offers a fine blend of high-performance load balancing, Layer 7 traffic management and extensive security features to web-based applications and websites. The latest ZXTM 4 software adds many new features, including out-of-band management, optional web caching, an improved activity monitor and configuration backup and version management. The 7000 appliance offers a decent specification based around a pair of 2.4GHz Opterons. Fault tolerance is good too, extending to RAID-protected Ultra320 SCSI storage and dual hot-swap power supplies.

A key selling point for ZXTM is ease of installation. You start with a local connection to the appliance and step through a simple questionnaire. This sets up administrative access, where you can define which network port you want to isolate this onto. You need to provide IP addresses and host names for the public interfaces, and then you can move over to the main web interface to configure traffic management and security features.

ZXTM uses the simple concept of virtual servers to intercept, manage and load-balance web traffic. These are then assigned to physical servers, which are defined as logical groups or clusters. A key advantage of this approach is that more servers can be added without taking the system offline; the price includes support for unlimited servers. The drain function will undoubtedly prove useful as it stops new connections associating with a node. So once



existing connections have closed, the back-end server can be removed safely. The appliance automatically performs load balancing across all members of a pool and offers extensive options, which include a basic round-robin system to a perceptive mode. This measures system responses and distributes traffic accordingly to ensure no system is being overloaded.

Setting up virtual servers is a cakewalk. A Service wizard runs you swiftly through providing a name, protocol and port and assigning these to a pool. Next, you select a service from the homepage and then configure your traffic management, load-balancing and security requirements. ZXTM's extensive rules are applied to pools and use sets of conditions and actions to determine how incoming traffic should be handled. Conditions can be anything from a remote IP address, HTTP version or URL path, while actions range from bandwidth restrictions

and URL redirects to a simple log notification. ZXTM can also compress outbound traffic to improve performance and monitor virtual server performance and send warnings if problems have been spotted. Even more flexible options are available via the TrafficScript scripting language tool, which allows you to manually create your own traffic-management rules.

During testing, we were impressed with how simple ZXTM is to use. It offers an extremely powerful set of traffic-management, load-balancing and security features. Although you pay a premium for the appliance hardware, it does make light work of deployment and configuration.

DAVE MITCHELL

PC PRO RATINGS	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★