

AirDefense Should Strengthen Motorola in Wireless Security

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The acquisition of AirDefense will likely improve Motorola's position in enterprise wireless security. But Motorola must show that it is focusing on this market.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 28 July 2008, Motorola announced a definitive agreement to acquire AirDefense, a provider of wireless local-area network (WLAN) security technologies. AirDefense will remain a separate business and brand within Motorola's Enterprise Mobility unit, along with previous acquisitions Symbol and Wireless Valley. Motorola expects to close the transaction, which is subject to regulatory and other customary conditions, within the next few months.

Analysis

AirDefense is the market and "mind share" leader in the emerging WLAN intrusion prevention system (IPS) market. Motorola is the No. 2 player in WLAN infrastructure, with a broad product line and a loyal installed base, but has limited strength and visibility in the typical office WLAN market. The acquisition of AirDefense — which has partnered with Motorola for more than two years, focusing mostly on retail and industrial WLAN opportunities — will allow Motorola to compete more visibly against Cisco Systems and Aruba Networks in carpeted-space (nonindustrial) WLAN procurements, where integrated security monitoring is a major factor. Motorola's size and resources should enable AirDefense to better compete for wireless intrusion prevention system (WIPS) implementations in existing WLAN environments, which are dominated by Cisco technology.

Gartner views this acquisition as a generally positive development, especially since the two companies have already partnered successfully for several years. The acquisition does not give Gartner any reason for major changes to its Positive rating of AirDefense as a WIPS competitor, and should reduce concerns about the ongoing viability of a small, privately held company. We also see no reason for major changes to Motorola's Challenger rating in the WLAN infrastructure market, though the successful integration of AirDefense would likely increase the company's rating in the product strategy category.

Nonetheless, Motorola's overall financial and organizational instability, and the challenges inherent in integrating the Symbol, Wireless Valley and AirDefense technologies and organizations into the Enterprise Mobility unit, mean that Motorola will need to invest in and focus on making this acquisition succeed. Symbol, for example, has a poor track record in penetrating carpeted-space opportunities in enterprises. While this track record may not hurt AirDefense sales, it will not necessarily help Motorola make office WIPS sales. Motorola needs to rapidly integrate AirDefense to show the benefits of its security offerings to its traditional data-collection customers and in retail-store and warehouse applications.

Additional research contribution and review: Michael King and Tim Zimmerman

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Enterprises using AirDefense WIPS technology:** View this acquisition as a positive development, but closely monitor support levels during the inevitable rationalization of Motorola/AirDefense personnel.
- **Enterprises evaluating WIPS technology:** Consider AirDefense a stronger contender in environments where Motorola/Symbol technologies are in use, but otherwise make no changes in evaluation criteria.

- **Enterprises evaluating WLAN infrastructure:** Compare Motorola's security monitoring capabilities against Cisco's and Aruba's. Consider the AirDefense offering a competitive differentiator once Motorola has integrated its capabilities.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "MarketScope for Wireless LAN Intrusion Prevention Systems" — WLAN intrusion prevention system adoption is growing fast, but innovation is still required in this not-yet-mature market. **By John Pescatore and John Girard**
- "Magic Quadrant for Wireless LAN Infrastructure, 2007" — The WLAN infrastructure market continues to grow at a dramatic pace, driven by increasing embedded platform functionality. **By Michael King and Ken Dulaney**

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