

Meeting the toughest challenges

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I MAY BE the chief technology officer at F5 Networks, but a more appropriate title might be “chief customer officer.” That’s because I spend a huge amount of time visiting customer sites, from San Francisco to Tokyo to Beijing to London. The information I pick up about the challenges and needs of users around the world is an indispensable and critical element that goes into the solutions we bring to market.

What these visits clearly show is that there is a heavier reliance on business applications today than ever before, and that reliance continues to escalate. Further, there are pressing needs to distribute these applications to a much larger base of internal and external users. And with Sarbanes-Oxley and other regulatory features of the business environment, there’s a growing reliance on centralized applications—usually web-based—to handle users’ needs while maintaining compliance.

The real challenge I see, given these and other factors, is that the traditional network infrastructure really doesn’t address how these applications get distributed. Just about everyone agrees that the old remedy of adding more and more bandwidth and letting routers and switches handle the chore has proven woefully ineffective. An additional and rapidly growing challenge is getting the “IT troika” of the network, application, and security groups to work together so that applications are distributed properly and in a way that ensures security and high performance.

Help is at hand

It all sounds pretty daunting, I admit. But don’t chuck that IT career just yet for that flower shop you’ve always wanted to open! At F5, we not only feel your pain—we also want to do something to



The challenges and needs of our customers around the world provide critical information that goes into all the solutions we bring to market.

ease it and to help your organization move forward into this brave new world of aggressively distributed applications.

For example, companies are finding great success in using our iControl Application Programming Interface to bridge the gulfs among the networking, application, and security groups. For starters, iControl allows application developers to automate very-high-level functionality within the network without having to understand the nitty-gritty details of network topology. And iControl lets developers respond to various application

events without having to bother the network administrators.

If you need virtually instantaneous scale in your network, we can help. In Beijing, a customer of ours that redistributes live video feeds was given a new contract that required them to scale their core network to run from 10 gigs all the way up to 80. They are doing

this dramatic scaling—which is going to become more common as video grows in popularity—with F5 devices.

Application delivery magic

Even I am amazed at what users are doing with our iRules customizable commands, which are giving businesses wonderful control over IP application flows. Check out devcentral.f5.com to get a glimpse at what some highly innovative users are doing with this ultraflexible solution.

What people are starting to really get is that F5 is a whole lot more than load balancing. The foundation of our solutions is our TMOS architecture. Driven by present as well as future user requirements, we are building increasing functionality into TMOS that allows users to pick and choose the functions they need, fully confident they will have a consistent operational environment. This translates into the smooth integration of new functionality, not the headaches of having multiple operating systems that often confront and confound users. With TMOS, users also get a consistent management interface and one set of policies for managing all functions in a uniform and efficient way.

Like I said, we learn a lot from the users. Hopefully, we are giving a lot back. *