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Christian Pitsch
Head of IT Systems Operation

No Waiting Time at AutoScout24 – Enormous Increase in Performance Thanks to F5 Networks

Industry:

E-Commerce

Challenges:

- Increasing volume of traffic
- Consolidation of different applications

Solution:

BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager 6400

Benefits:

- Cost-performance ratio
- Performance
- Easy-to-use system
- High level support

The chrome-coloured box in front of Christian Pitsch has a nice shiny matt finish. He knows that with this box of tricks, there are some fast-moving times ahead of him. But he, as Head of IT Systems Operation, won't be the only one to benefit from the thrill of this new-found speed – the millions of visitors to the interactive automobile marketplace, AutoScout24.de, will too. This box before him is not a high-power sports car with aerodynamic bodywork, but the very latest BIG-IP technology from F5 Networks. Without it, there'd be a real traffic jam on the data highway heading towards the Internet portal. And this tailback would quickly grow, bringing everything to a complete standstill during rush-hour.

AutoScout24 is Europe's largest automobile marketplace on the Internet. With its four business segments – the marketplace, advertising, IT solutions and market research – AutoScout24 offers professional car dealers, manufacturers, private customers and other business partners from the automotive industry a comprehensive platform for automobile trading on the Net. The company is currently operating in ten European countries, its website communicating in 16 different languages. AutoScout24's marketplaces for new and used cars, commercial vehicles, motorbikes as well as parts and accessories are

bringing together supply and demand, creating an efficient and additional channel of distribution that serves the interests and works to the benefit of all who participate.

AutoScout24's database is currently home to some 1.5 million vehicle ads. More than 28,000 dealers all over Europe use this online marketplace to redistribute vehicles among themselves and to sell them to private car buyers. What's more, AutoScout24 has concluded special cooperation agreements with all relevant automobile manufacturers, in which they recommend that their authorised dealers use AutoScout24's website as their preferred marketplace for doing business over the Internet. In view of the above figures, it's easy to imagine that it would very quickly become chock-a-block on the data circuits of the Internet portal if the right technology weren't in use.

This is why the doers and IT bosses at the company decided from the word go to systematically upgrade the technology in line with requirements. "This is imperative because we've now reached the stage where up to 120 terabytes of data are called up every month," reveals Christian Pitsch. And this figure is on the increase. "We've now got four huge databases installed behind our portal that must be able to be accessed at any time, irrespective of where the user is



Wer scoutet, der findet.



coming from and where he's going afterwards. After all, they're also being accessed by visitors linked from partner enterprises, such as ADAC.com, Allianz Autowelt or T-Online.de. These are, for example, the 8,000 new connections AutoScout24 counts every second. Under normal circumstances, these visitors shouldn't be any further than a click away from the information they are so eager to access. After all, the company doesn't want to lose its status as the industry's top dog. Prerequisite for this: the enquiries reach the target server without any problem.

Up to 1999, all that was needed to cope with the volume of users accessing the site was a single web server with two CPUs and a database server. When this solution was no longer up to the job, the IT team under Christian Pitsch added additional servers. And when the volume of customers really took off, the company decided to integrate a separate load-balancing level based on BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager (LTM), a combined hardware and software solution from F5 Networks. BIG-IP LTM incorporates a range of monitoring functions for servers, applications and network components and uses them to determine which server is in the best position to execute a user's request.

The BIG-IP product series was designed for local traffic management. The heart of this innovative technology is the Traffic Management Operating System (TMOS) – a standardised and fast application proxy architecture that gives companies total flexibility and control over existing and future applications. By deploying BIG-IP LTM, enterprises benefit from an integrated solution for all IP-based

applications that offer centralised and standardised application infrastructure services such as rate shaping, intelligent compression, TCP optimisation, IPv6 gateway, load balancing, application security, high-performance SSL and complete control over the entire application flow. Its special architecture rules out any loss of performance and long waiting times.

The greatest load that has to be dealt with at AutoScout24 is the anonymous search queries and the placing of ads by the four million or so registered users. Month after month, more than 4.2 million users click their way around the marketplace. So it's also very important that the main functions have short loading times. That's no problem with the BIG-IP 6400. "With each new generation supplied by F5, we've benefited from a massive gain in performance, and we're already looking forward to the BIG-IP 8400 version that'll be coming soon," says Pitsch and his team are now upgrading to 10 gigabits. That is, now that the BIG-IP 6400 solution is up and running, preparations are already underway for installation of the 8400 version. The reasons for this upgrade are obvious: the greater bandwidth offered by the 8400 version and the 10 gigabits, and the company's excellent experience with F5 in the past. To be precise, it's been the performance, the flexible, easy-to-use systems and the support that have been so impressive.

The current 6400 solution enables AutoScout24 to consolidate numerous different application loading tasks on a single platform and at the same time makes it easier to set up, test and make the network applications available for use. To this

end, F5 has enhanced the TMOS and added the capability to divide the system into separate virtual subsections and administrative domains. This puts AutoScout24 in a position, for instance, to service different spheres of business and customers more effectively on a single, jointly used computer, reducing both capital expenditure and administrative costs at one and the same time. Thanks to virtualisation technology, Christian Pitsch and his team are able to delegate a limited level of control over network configuration to colleagues who would normally have absolutely no authorisation to access configuration functions. As a result, applications can be put into service quicker and with complete certainty that they will run properly once they are installed. "On the one hand, the volume of traffic is increasing due to web-based applications, voice over IP, IPTV, e-mail, spam etc., while on the other hand, there's a trend towards consolidation. This is why our customers require application loading platforms that are faster and more intelligent," explains Michael Frohn, General Manager Central and East Europe at F5.

"The decision to further expand the traffic management operating system with F5 and to upgrade AutoScout24's performance capability was quite simply the logical consequence of the cooperation that had gone before," says Pitsch. For nowhere else is the level of support and personal commitment as high as that offered by F5. "In addition to the impressive cost-performance ratio, it was the long and happy business relationship with F5 Networks that was the deciding factor in favour of the project."

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