



AUTO SCOUT 24

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Joachim Rath, Head of IT Production, AutoScout24

E-commerce Site Boosts Website Traffic and Performance with F5 BIG-IP Solution

With more and more consumers turning to the Internet to make purchases of all kinds, **AutoScout24** has been able to expand rapidly following its early adoption of an e-commerce business model. In recent years, traffic on its portal has doubled each year. At peak times of the day, there can be a quarter of a million users online concurrently, with an average of 5.4 million people using the website each month. To solve performance and availability concerns associated with this increase in website traffic, AutoScout24 implemented BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™ (LTM) and BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager™ (GTM). The solution has greatly improved user experience as a result.

Business Challenge

Scout24 is a leading business group, offering online marketplaces throughout Europe in areas such as mobility, housing, employment, relationships, and finance. One of its most successful online marketplaces is AutoScout24. Founded in 1999, AutoScout24 is available in 17 countries and offers more than 1.8 million vehicle adverts online at any one time. Users can search for a car, commercial vehicle, or motorbike in several countries. The website also carries tips and links to insurance companies, as well as an extensive magazine section with supplementary information, reports, and articles.

The site's overwhelming success began to severely test the company's IT systems. Performance problems during peak periods grew, manifested through longer page load times. Like any e-commerce business, AutoScout24's IT department was very conscious of the fact that sluggish response times frustrate customers and make it more likely that they spend less time on the website, or even avoid it completely.

In acting to solve these issues, management goals were to minimize commercial risks and maximize performance, and to lay a solid platform for future growth. “Our aim

Overview

Industry

E-commerce

Challenges

- Improve website performance
- Improve user experience
- Guarantee scalability for future growth

Solution

- VIPRION
- BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager
- BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager

Benefits

- 30 to 40% increase in site access frequency and session time
- 20% faster website response times
- Smoother traffic management with fewer peaks

was not simply to achieve our immediate performance goals. We also wanted to make sure that we chose a solution that can cope with the rapid growth we anticipate in coming years," says Joachim Rath, Head of IT Production at AutoScout24. "Apart from efficient traffic management, scalability and reliability were our main criteria."

Solution

The AutoScout24 IT team evaluated three competitive solutions before deciding in favour of F5. Apart from offering the best performance—capable of handling millions of incoming and outgoing requests simultaneously—the proposed F5 portfolio of software and hardware devices exhibited the greatest degree of flexibility while conforming to in-house requirements.

Efficient traffic management is handled by a combination of BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager and BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager on 6800 series hardware devices. The BIG-IP solutions redistribute end-user requests based on business policy, data centre, and network conditions, as well as application performance. AutoScout24 has two data centres at different locations. Traffic is routed to the location best capable of handling it at a given point in time.

The company also implemented VIPRION®, an extremely high performance hardware chassis and modular blade system, upstream of the firewalls to balance traffic between the two data centres. This measure was aimed at reducing the risk of the firewall itself becoming a bottleneck and thus causing performance problems. Further VIPRION devices then distribute the traffic to the web servers. This solution allows for a huge degree of future scalability; adding capacity to the VIPRION platform is simply a matter of plugging in an extra performance

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blade, which then automatically starts processing application traffic.

F5 consultants helped AutoScout24's IT staff incorporate iRules™, F5's customizable scripting language that provides direct control over the TMOS® platform, the foundation of all F5 products. AutoScout24 implemented specific iRules to directly manage all IP application traffic—both incoming and outgoing—in order to configure how data traffic is to be intercepted, inspected, transformed, and passed on. The advantage of iRules is its ability to directly manage web traffic without the need to bring in additional technology from other vendors. The AutoScout24 team also uses iRules for custom URL filtering, rewriting, and redirecting of any traffic that is relevant for the web application.

Benefits

With site availability levels in excess of 99.9 percent, the AutoScout24 portal enjoys around 44 million site visits per month, with 1.9 billion page views.

"F5 has enabled genuinely impressive performance improvements," says Rath. "We have 250 servers that are now being used much more efficiently, thanks to F5's server offload capability. User experience is better; we've reduced

page load times by 20 percent, especially pleasing in view of the fact we've seen a 30 to 40 percent increase in the number of users. Furthermore, visitors now also stay on the site for longer. This translates directly into increased sales revenues, so it's a huge advantage for us, especially in view of the growth we anticipate."

Two people manage the F5 solutions at AutoScout24, which support a number of enterprise applications. These include Microsoft's Internet Information Services, Oracle, VMware, and Red Hat solutions, as well as tools developed in-house. Configuring new applications on the F5 devices takes less than a day.

Another advantage of the F5 TMOS platform is the option to virtualise the F5 devices in separate partitions and administrative areas. This functionality enables AutoScout24 to manage part of the traffic of its affiliate company, FriendScout24.

Next Steps

"We intend to purchase more F5 solutions as we continue to grow," says Rath. "We aim to further improve the efficiency of our data centres by integrating in-house monitoring with the F5 appliances. We're also looking at dynamically de-provisioning systems' auto save power during low traffic periods, such as at night. Users shouldn't notice this at all." The company also intends to implement BIG-IP Application Security Manager™ (ASM), aiming to tighten security of the portal and related applications.

"We are seeing increasing utilisation as a result of the F5 implementation," concludes Rath. "It's extremely gratifying to watch how customer satisfaction is growing even with increased traffic to the site. The F5 implementation means we enjoy a very stable, high-performance operation."

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