



Blink Interactive Relies On FirePass 600 For Easy Employee Access To Client and Business Data

Customer Profile

Company Name:

Blink Interactive Architects

Location:

Seattle, Washington

Industry:

Software Interaction Design & Usability Consulting

Web site:

<http://www.blinkinteractive.com>

Company information:

Blink Interactive Architects provides planning, prototyping and usability services that help clients make software that is easier to use.

FirePass 600 Highlights

- Set up in less than 20 minutes
- Improved employee productivity
- Worked with both PC and Mac users

Executive Summary

Blink, a software interaction design/usability consulting firm, helps make software that is easier to use. To guarantee that their clients were given the best possible service, Blink consultants needed to consistently gain secure remote access to project files, templates and work examples for their clients to see, without being forced to return to the home office (i.e. lost productivity).

With limited IT expertise available in-house, Blink also required a remote access solution that could be installed in less than 30 minutes, was intuitively easy to use, and required very little day-to-day maintenance. Blink employs F5's FirePass 600 SSL VPN as an affordable and effective method for ensuring constant and secure access to their server and the critical information it contains.

Challenge

Blink Interactive (Blink) is a user-centered design firm that helps their clients make software that is easy to use and that meets user needs. Their processes include User Research, Interactive Design, Wireframe Prototyping and Usability Testing. Their work spans a range of technologies including desktop, Internet and mobile applications.

Prior to using F5's FirePass 600, Blink had no means for their employees to gain access to important data and project files in the home office while they were visiting a client site or working from home. This meant lost productivity because employees would have to return to the office to get the information they required.

"We're a pretty fast paced environment," said Kelly Franznick, Principal and Co-Founder of Blink. "We deal with a lot of clients and a lot of projects. Timelines are always a critical issue, so if we could give somebody access to something they needed immediately, as opposed to waiting for them to come back to the office - there's a real benefit to that."

In addition to being the co-founder of the company, Kelly also wears a second hat as an IT engineer. He cited limited experience in that field, however, therefore requiring a remote access solution that was easy to set up, easy to use, and easy to manage.

"We don't hire outside consultants to come in and set up things like that (IT networking equipment)," Franznick added. "My background is design, and although I've done a little programming and understand the fundamentals of networking, I'm in no way a network engineer. I needed a solution that I could set up quickly and then forget about it."

Franznick and Blink also required a remote access solution that could work with both a mix of Mac and PC users. And because the company often deals with client data, the solution needed to be very robust and secure as well.

Yet because Blink uses a DSL connection from their local Telco, they found that traditional VPN solutions were not compatible with the router and other hardware they were using as part of that connection.

"We were really struggling to find a way where we could connect to our office



in a secure way, using the small network that we have," Franznick added.

To relieve their challenges in obtaining consistent secure access to their file servers, the firm chose to implement F5's FirePass 600 SSL VPN as an affordable and practical remedy.

Solution

By employing FirePass 600, Blink employees now gain access to the server using a SSL VPN in conjunction with their standard web browser. The method lets remote users link through a web-based interface to the FirePass 600 controller. The controller, a box roughly the size of a hard bound book, then checks the authenticity of users and connects them with Blink's server.

Since the technology supports multiple platforms and requires only a web browser and an internet connection to function, employees can gain access to the server from virtually anywhere - whether they're working from home or visiting a client site.

The SSL protocol itself is one of reasons why user software doesn't need to be loaded onto each computer within Blink's network. All web browsers support HTTPS; therefore, no FirePass software needs to be installed on users' computers. In fact, since all web browsers support SSL, employees can access the server using any web-enabled device - from desktops to pocket PCs.

But it was the ease of setup and lack of ongoing maintenance that made an impression with Franznick.

"We only had to do two things to get this set up," he said. "We got a fixed IP address first, and then we got the FirePass - and that's all we needed to connect. It didn't take more than 20 minutes to get FirePass up and running. I haven't had to touch it since."

Network security headaches are a thing of the past as well, because security precautions, patches and service packs can be defined before access is granted. If a user tries linking to the server using a computer with sub-par security setting, FirePass will automatically deny the user access.

"Other remote access solutions may be cheaper, but in terms of security, I had more faith in FirePass," said Franznick.

Today, thanks to FirePass, Blink employees, no matter what device they're using or where they're at, can quickly and easily access files, templates, and work examples for their clients to see, without having to return to the home office. That alone has improved company efficiency and client service across the board.

"FirePass has allowed us to do more work in any given day," Franznick said. "Everybody can gain access now, regardless of platform. It's been great."

About F5

F5 enables organizations to successfully deliver business-critical applications and gives them the greatest level of agility to stay ahead of growing business demands. As the pioneer and global leader in Application Traffic Management, F5 continues to lead the industry by driving more intelligence into the network to deliver advanced application agility. F5 products ensure the secure and optimized delivery of applications to any user - anywhere. Through its flexible and cohesive architecture, F5 delivers unmatched value by dramatically improving the way organizations serve their employees, customers and constituents, while lowering operational costs. Over 9,000 organizations and service providers worldwide trust F5 to keep their businesses running. The company is headquartered in Seattle, Washington with offices worldwide.