



“There’s a fundamental shift in the computing world with virtualization. So how do you redirect traffic to a specific target area in this virtualized environment? That’s where F5 iRules comes into play.”

Gopi Balasingam
Director of Engineering and Professional Services, Casero Inc.

Casero Creates Customized Services for Telecom Clients Using F5 BIG-IP LTM and iRules

Industry

Telecommunications

Challenges

- Provide a unified, seamless user experience drawing from two separate back-end systems
- Avoid an expensive custom development effort
- Minimize long-term TCO

Solution

F5® BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™ with iRules™ scripting language

Benefits

- Quick and cost-effective custom deployment
- High performance
- Reduced TCO
- Ability to offer differentiated services
- Simplified IT administration

Overview

Casero (www.casero.com) is a Web 2.0-based application company that provides white-label solutions to telecommunication service providers in North America and Europe, including BT, Bell Canada, Eircom, BSKyB, SaskTel, Dependable Home Tech, and Cincinnati Bell. Using F5 BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager (LTM) and iRules scripting language, Casero created customized products that have enabled its clients to offer differentiated services and provide a unique and seamless user experience—all without an expensive custom development effort.

Challenges

Casero’s clients are large telecommunications companies that compete directly with some of the world’s most well-known online service providers. These telecom companies are constantly seeking ways to offer their customers differentiated services that keep the user experience at the forefront of what the web has to offer.

Recently, one of Casero’s telecom clients was looking to offer its subscribers a unique new service. The service would give users on a social networking site the ability to track concerts and other events and see what their friends planned to attend. If they saw an event they wanted to go to, they could then purchase tickets in one seamless transaction.

To achieve this goal, the social networking application provided by Casero and the back-end ticketing system from another vendor needed to work in conjunction and appear as one branded site to the user. At the same time, the business model required a cost-effective solution that would not involve an expensive custom development effort to get the two applications to work together.

Solution

Casero evaluated several options and consulted with its technology provider, [Scalar Decisions](http://www.scalar.ca) (www.scalar.ca), to help assess the possible solutions. Scalar provides professional services focused on optimizing IT infrastructures to achieve their clients’ goals in the easiest and most cost-effective way.

Casero had F5 BIG-IP LTM in place, as it does in all of its solutions, but the ticketing service company was using Citrix NetScaler. Scalar assessed the goals of the joint project and recommended F5 BIG-IP LTM with iRules scripting language.

“As soon as they described the problem to me, I knew that F5 iRules was the only way. Nothing else out there gives you as much flexibility,” says Matt Kucherawy, Senior Network Architect at Scalar. “The Citrix product wasn’t going to do it, and anything else would have





required a lot of custom application development. That didn't fit the business model for this partnership because they wanted to get it done without a lot of expense."

With the F5 solution, users access the social networking and ticketing capabilities through one seamless portal, but the systems remain completely separate on the back end. Using Casero's custom iRules, BIG-IP LTM disassembles the incoming requests, determines if they're looking for a ticketing component or a social networking component, pulls the component from the appropriate resource, and then reassembles it back toward the customer.

Benefits

By using F5 BIG-IP LTM with iRules, Casero was able to respond to its telecom client's request for a high-performance, custom product very quickly and cost-effectively and ensure a lower total cost of operation (TCO) on a long-term basis. Using iRules, Casero is able to provide differentiated services that enable its telecom clients to monetize their subscriber base.

Top Performance

Among all of the possible solutions, it was clear that only F5 BIG-IP LTM could deliver the high performance the project required.

"We looked at performance levels, especially dealing with SSL. What we found is that other solutions don't have the rich scripting at layer 7 that F5 offers via iRules," says Gopi Balasingam, Director of Engineering and Professional Services at Casero. "For example, Cisco offers some of that capability, but if you try to take advantage of it, you take a huge hit in terms of performance. And the last thing in the world you want to do is to sacrifice performance by adding rules.

"We are a Web 2.0 company, so everything we deal with is at the web traffic layer and we need something that's able to handle all of that," Balasingam continues. "That's what F5 and iRules are all about."

Rapid Implementation

Once Casero decided to use iRules to create the solution, Balasingam says the actual design and scripting took "an hour at the most." Balasingam's team finds the community of iRules users and the iRules examples posted on F5 DevCentral to be very helpful.

"We tend to do some interesting stuff with iRules, so sometimes we'll pose a question on DevCentral," Balasingam said. "Our experience has been that the responses have been quite rapid and we've found the answers we were looking for."

Ease of Use and Lower TCO

Casero has been using F5 BIG-IP LTM in all of its deployments for five years and credits the user interface (UI) with significant resource savings. "When you compare the administrative UI of the F5 console to anything else out there, it's miles apart," Balasingam says.

"I need to make sure the knowledge is spread across an entire team," Balasingam explains. "Having a more intuitive interface streamlines things as new people come into the team, and we don't have to look for specialized skill sets."

After introducing the ticketing company to F5, Casero found that they quickly saw the potential business benefits of BIG-IP LTM. Over the past few years, the company had been investing in more and more Citrix units to keep up with growth, resulting in increasingly complex deployments.

"That's something they hadn't built into their cost model on day one, but it caught up to them," Balasingam says. "Once the decision-makers looked at scalability and the total cost of ownership of the BIG-IP appliance, they saw the benefit and they made a full transition to F5."

Differentiated services

By successfully integrating the applications, Casero provided a way for its telecom client to monetize its subscriber base through ticket sales. This capability is an important differentiator for Casero, and Balasingam points out that F5 iRules plays an essential role in their overall service offering.

"We can offer differentiated, or tiered, services based on certain profiles," Balasingam says. "For example, with another client, we use iRules to redirect mobile device users to a cluster of application servers reserved just for mobile users. That guarantees a certain quality of service for users who pay for premium service."

Balasingam points out that with the proliferation of user-generated content in Web 2.0 and the enormous strain this places on networks, it's essential to have the horsepower and flexibility that can serve up the different applications.

"Gone are the days when you could have one big system with many applications running on it. There's a fundamental shift in the computing world with virtualization," Balasingam explains. "So how do you redirect traffic to a specific target area in this virtualized environment? That's where F5 iRules comes into play."

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