



“We met an additional 25% in traffic without spending for more bandwidth...BIG-IP absorbed those costs.”

CJ Murzyn
Infrastructure Operations Manager



Classified Ventures Cuts Bandwidth Costs By 33% Using F5's BIG-IP

Industry:

E-commerce/Online Classifieds

Challenges:

- Increasing site visits
- Increasing bandwidth costs
- Slow page load times

Solution:

BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager v9 with Compression

Benefits:

- Compression absorbed bandwidth costs
- 33% per month bandwidth cost savings
- Application high availability
- Optimized site performance and improved page load times

Overview

Classified Ventures, LLC is a strategic joint venture 100% owned and funded by five of the nation's leading media partners whose objectives are to collectively capitalize on the revenue growth in the online classifieds of automotive, apartments, and real estate. Strategic partners include Belo Corporation, Gannett Company, The McClatchy Company, Tribune Company, and The Washington Post Company. Commercial web sites include Cars.com, Apartments.com, HomeGain.com and Homescape.com.

Initially, Classified Ventures brought in F5 Networks' BIG-IP® to balance traffic for its various sites, some of which are backed by 20 or more web servers.

“The original reason we went with BIG-IP is that it's a great load balancer,” said CJ Murzyn, Infrastructure Operations Manager at Classified Ventures.

Challenge

What the team at Classified Ventures *didn't* expect was a rapid 25% growth in the number of visitors to their sites – and they certainly didn't want the potential increase in monthly bandwidth expenditures this additional traffic would bring. The need to compress and optimize this sudden surge in traffic, meet visitors' expectations of good site performance, and keep monthly bandwidth costs (already budgeted

for the year) in check soon became the overriding objectives for the team at Classified Ventures.

Solution

Classified Ventures needed an all-in-one traffic management product that could:

- Efficiently load balance traffic and applications across their servers, delivering high availability and excellent site performance
- Optimize increasing amounts of traffic without increasing their bandwidth costs
- Be easy to manage
- Be supported by a viable company that would in turn support their business for the long term

To meet these challenges, Classified Ventures chose F5's BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager (version 9).

The BIG-IP system, also known as an application delivery networking system, was designed to improve the performance and scalability of applications through intelligent traffic management, server offload, and application acceleration functionality. BIG-IP not only provides powerful load balancing capabilities, it also includes sophisticated Layer 4, Layer 7, SSL, and various optimization features in a centralized network device with granular traffic control capabilities.



In terms of load balancing, BIG-IP includes rich static and dynamic load balancing methods, including Dynamic Ratio, Least Connections and Observed Load Balancing, which tracks dynamic performance levels of servers in a group, ensuring that the best resources are used and that the servers are always available.

“All of our sites consist of a standard three-tier web application/database format,” said Kevin Nassery, Senior Systems Engineer at Classified Ventures. “We load balance our applications using (BIG-IP’s) round robin load balancing. But because one of our sites has different types of web servers, we also use (the product’s) ratio-based load balancing. It’s the original reason we went with F5 – they have great load balancing.”

However, it was the unexpected increase in traffic to Classified Ventures’ text and image-intensive sites – cars.com and apartments.com – where BIG-IP really began to prove its mettle.

Bandwidth Saving

As traffic to the Classified Ventures’ sites unexpectedly grew at a faster pace than planned, so did the threat of increased expenditures on bandwidth. By reducing the volume of traffic that is sent to the user, BIG-IP not only allowed Classified Ventures to obtain a marked gain in application performance and improve the end user experience, but it worked to absorb increases in bandwidth costs – a classic case of getting more for less.

“We saw our traffic increase by 25%, but the compression capabilities (on BIG-IP) allowed us

to stay steady on bandwidth costs,” said Murzyn. “We met an additional 25% in traffic without spending for more bandwidth that would have normally been required. BIG-IP absorbed those costs.”

“The traffic that goes into BIG-IP from our web servers is in the 120 megabit range, but it’s going out in the 80 megabit range,” added Murzyn. “That’s over a 33% savings per month that we’d normally be charged by our hosting provider.”

In addition to compression, BIG-IP also provides extensive connection management as well as TCP and content offloading capabilities to optimize server performance and speed page load times. For example, BIG-IP’s OneConnect™ feature can increase server capacity by aggregating millions of client requests into hundreds of server-side connections – ensuring that requests are handled more efficiently by the backend system.

“We’re making extensive use of (BIG-IP’s) OneConnect to reduce TCP connections on the server side,” Murzyn confirmed.

Streamlined Management

With so much traffic and complexity, and a limited amount of support personnel, ease of management was an important consideration for Classified Ventures.

“We narrowed our search to two different products for doing compression with load balancing,” said Murzyn. “We ended up choosing BIG-IP as an integrated package because we felt it was the easiest-to-manage solution.”

BIG-IP version 9 offers a new GUI that simplifies product configuration, giving administrators visibility into traffic and hardware resource consumption while making it easy to change and fine tune large configurations.

“The web-based GUI makes BIG-IP really easy to manage,” said Murzyn. “It also allows us to efficiently distribute configuration information to those responsible for the web servers. That’s a significant advantage for us.”

And one that saves a lot of time and headaches for everyone involved.

So Why F5?

Beyond product capabilities, the viability of the company behind the product was also considered, especially in light of all the recent acquisition activity within the networking industry.

“One of the issues we had during our evaluations was based on the viability of the company offering the product,” said Murzyn. “We knew this was going to be a significant investment – and we wanted to make sure this product and the company was going to be around for the long term.”

“Besides that,” Murzyn said, “we weren’t impressed with some of (F5’s) competitors in terms of their sales organizations, support behind the product – just what they brought to the table. To us, it’s a total package when you’re buying equipment like this. In this case, F5 has it.”

F5 Networks, Inc.
Corporate Headquarters
 401 Elliott Avenue West
 Seattle, WA 98119
 (206) 272-5555 Voice
 (888) 88BIGIP Toll-Free
 (206) 272-5556 Fax
www.f5.com
info@f5.com

F5 Networks
Asia-Pacific
 +65-6533-6103 Voice
 +65-6533-6103 Fax
info.asia@f5.com

F5 Networks, Ltd
Europe/Middle-East/Africa
 +44 (0)1932 582 000 Voice
 +44 (0)1932 582 001 Fax
emeainfo@f5.com

F5 Networks
Japan K.K.
 +81-3-5114-3200 Voice
 +81-3-5114-3201 Fax
info@f5networks.co.jp