



DATACENTERSTHLM

Teknik i Media Datacenter Stockholm AB

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Björn Forselius, Communications and Security Specialist, Datacenter Stockholm

Datacenter Stockholm Provides Fast, Secure Remote Access for Users Worldwide with F5

Datacenter Stockholm is one of the leading IT resource providers focusing on the media industry in the Nordic countries. Headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, the company offers a wide selection of IT services, ranging from helpdesk support to managing entire IT environments. Its primary data center is in Stockholm and the company recently established a second data center in Malmö.

Datacenter Stockholm has built up a great deal of experience in operating extremely production-critical IT environments. Its 600m2 data center offers high levels of accessibility and capacity with robust security enforcement. Datacenter Stockholm helps more than 100 companies in 30 countries achieve more secure and efficient managed IT environments on a 24x7 basis. The company’s roots lie in the media vertical but it has expanded over the years to serve other customer types, including online retailers.

Business Challenge

As its old VPN solution stopped meeting current and upcoming customer security demands, Datacenter Stockholm began to research alternative solutions. Björn Forselius, Communications and Security Specialist at Datacenter Stockholm, says, “We specialize in serving the more demanding customers, and we needed a new remote access system since our previous one from Nortel was from the last millennium and was showing its age.”

Of the use case scenarios they needed to solve, two in particular highlight the need for adaptability:

- One customer, a worldwide free distributed newspaper, needed journalists and editors to be able to access its online content management system (CMS), which enables them to both post the latest news online and gather articles for upcoming print editions. Journalists’ mobility requires them be able to upload stories from a handheld device or from a desktop in an Internet café.
- The Icelandic web development company needed to provide 24x7 access to an online catalogue of the world’s largest home furnishing retailer for every country in which the Swedish retailer has a retail presence.

Overview

Industry

IT Hosting

Challenges

- Provide 24x7 access to web applications for external and internal users
- Ensure secure remote access using two-factor authentication

Solution

- F5 FirePass SSL VPN
- F5 BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager 3600

Benefits

- Ability to identify and separate customers from internal users in combination with Active Directory
- Increased security using two-factor authentication
- Ability to secure any application without impacting performance

Internal requirements also played a role in defining the optimal security solution to meet Datacenter Stockholm's ongoing needs. Continuously monitoring systems and answering customer support calls 24x7 requires 100 percent availability from the system. However, the internal network needs to be kept on a separate access tier from customers' hosted services.

Solution

Datacenter Stockholm selected F5 FirePass SSL VPN for its ability to secure authentication of remote access users. "The system is intended to separate our internal networks from all our customer and service networks. We use two-factor authentication by sending out passwords as text messages to our customers' mobile phones. After testing the equipment of F5 and Juniper, we finally selected F5," says Forselius. "We knew which two companies were constantly leading the SSL VPN market, so there were no others to choose from. F5 were very well thought of within the company as we had previously purchased their core application delivery platform."

In addition to enhancing secure remote access, Datacenter Stockholm also needed to refresh its traffic management technology. The company replaced its two existing BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™ (LTM) 1000 platforms with F5's new BIG-IP LTM 3600 series. The primary driver for the change was the need for additional bandwidth, along with a general trend toward consolidation. Datacenter Stockholm introduced virtual servers, which the BIG-IP LTM 3600 devices load balance along with the physical servers. The company installs a new server, either physical or virtual, almost every day. The virtual server farm is growing rapidly and now comprises about 25 percent of the 400 total servers.

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"We have now obtained other F5 products, most notably new application delivery controllers. We already had a lot of faith in F5, being long-term customers in this area, but our existing platforms were six years old, and we were getting ready to take on a customer that has big bandwidth demands," Forselius comments. "And, quite simply, we needed more power. The through put capability of the BIG-IP LTM 3600 devices later allowed us to move all of our other customers over to this new platform."

The old BIG-IP LTM 1000 devices have not lost their usefulness and are now being used for developing and testing.

Benefits

Datacenter Stockholm provides FirePass SSL VPN access to both internal users and external customers based on Active Directory.

Its free distributed newspaper customer, for example, has at least 100 users from France per day using FirePass to authenticate access to the CMS via the news portal. Journalists and editors from Spain and the U.K. access the same FirePass system on a daily basis.

As a further example, the Icelandic web development customer requires 1000 connections open from 8 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. during the weekend, with 24x7 access during the working week. The traffic to the site where its customer's online catalogue is located is never less than 20 MB per second, and it can peak at up to 200 MB per second. Currently, FirePass services seven companies, and another 200 accounts will also be migrated from the old Nortel VPN solution.

"The fact that the F5 equipment is relatively simple to maintain and operate saves us resources, which led to a major reduction in OpEx," says Forselius. "F5 is one of our primary suppliers, and when we are out talking to customers, F5's security solutions are always a part of what we offer to prospective hosting clients. What's really important to us is that F5 continues to develop and innovate to address new threats without affecting traffic speeds."

