



“BIG-IP v10 gives us a box that can truly do it all for our customers.”
Ian Jennings, Technical Director, BlueFort Security

IT Security Provider Optimizes Website, Offers Single-Box Solution to Customers with BIG-IP v10

BlueFort Security is highly experienced in delivering customer solutions based on the BIG-IP® Application Delivery Networking system. After testing the beta version of BIG-IP version 10 (v10), the company was so convinced of the value of the upcoming release that it deployed the beta to its production web servers. With BIG-IP v10, BlueFort Security has experienced a 60 percent reduction in server load, and believes that the new version will result in performance improvements as well as significant data center cost savings for its customers.

Business Challenge

BlueFort Security helps companies ensure secure and efficient access to enterprise applications. The company delivers solutions that are based on products from F5 Networks®, including the BIG-IP® application delivery solution. BlueFort Security is the F5 Technical Support Partner of the Year 2008 for EMEA.

In early 2009, BlueFort Security tested the beta version of BIG-IP v10. The upcoming release of BIG-IP includes changes and enhancements to help customers improve operational efficiency while lowering IT costs. BlueFort Security was particularly interested in the enhanced reporting capabilities, and improvements to the F5 TMOS® plug-in architecture which enable two BIG-IP product modules,

WebAccelerator™ and Application Security Manager™ (ASM), to run on the same device. BIG-IP WebAccelerator is a performance-boosting application delivery solution, and BIG-IP ASM provides comprehensive attack protection for web applications.

“We believed that the ability to provide web acceleration and application security on the same box would greatly benefit our customers,” says Ian Jennings, Technical Director at BlueFort Security. In the past, achieving best-of-breed web acceleration and application security required more than one BIG-IP device. Often, this limited customers’ purchase decisions. “They chose to invest in one solution or the other, and most often it was [BIG-IP] WebAccelerator,” explains Jennings. “The benefits are so

Overview

Industry

Information Technology—Security

Challenges

- Gain insight into application delivery environment
- Provide a single-box solution for customers

Solution

- BIG-IP v10

Benefits

- Better insight into website security
- Flexible, dynamic application delivery
- Simpler, consolidated, more cost-effective customer solution
- Significant data center costs savings

visible—you turn it on, and you see an immediate improvement in application performance. [BIG-IP] ASM, though of equal importance, is a more advanced system. Unless security compliance is a requirement, the customer doesn't fully understand the value of application security until systems have been hacked."

Solution

BlueFort Security tested a beta version of BIG-IP v10 in a lab environment. The company was particularly impressed by the following:

- A redesigned administrative interface. BIG-IP v10 features a streamlined interface and an all-new command-line shell that helps simplify and speed user navigation.
- Resource provisioning. With BIG-IP v10, system resources including memory, CPU, and disk space can be provisioned per module. This is critical to ensuring that the resources for acceleration and security can be properly tuned to meet a customer's needs.
- Enhanced reporting. BIG-IP v10 includes a new, easy-to-read graphical reporting dashboard that displays real-time and historical statistics for CPU and memory usage, connections, and throughput.

Once the testing was complete, BlueFort Security was so encouraged by the results—and the stability of the beta software—that the company chose to deploy the beta BIG-IP v10 to its customer-facing website. Jennings says, "The beta version of BIG-IP v10 was so solid and reliable, that we were confident about using it on our own corporate website. It provides us with a great showcase for demonstrating to customers: 'this is how a site functions without BIG-IP, and this is how it functions with BIG-IP.'"

BlueFort Security used the enhanced reporting features of BIG-IP v10 to discover astonishing statistics about its own website. "We found that there were up to 80 brute force attacks per day to BlueFort.com. Thankfully, [BIG-IP] ASM was blocking all of them."

Benefits

BlueFort Security has found that BIG-IP v10 includes significant enhancements that will help companies further improve their application delivery environments and save on associated IT costs.

Significantly enhanced website security

The enhanced reporting capabilities of BIG-IP v10 have helped BlueFort Security refine its own application delivery environment. "BIG-IP v10 allowed us to find website vulnerabilities by detecting numerous brute force attacks. While [BIG-IP] ASM successfully blocked the attacks, the precision of the reporting that BIG-IP delivers allowed us to refine our policies, and even recode parts of our website to further reduce vulnerability," says Jennings.

Flexible, dynamic, application delivery

The flexible and dynamic nature of BIG-IP v10 enables BlueFort Security to change resource allocation without causing downtime. "With BIG-IP v10, we can see what the memory allocation is for [BIG-IP] WebAccelerator and increase it if necessary, without rebooting the system." In general, BlueFort Security's insight into its application delivery environment is greatly improved. "We can see how much memory a particular module is occupying, how much is allocated, and the amount of [BIG-IP] ASM traffic going through the device." Because reporting and performance metrics are updated immediately, BlueFort Security can see within seconds the results of

applying different policies to the device. "It provides much better insight into actual cause and effect," says Jennings.

Better customer solution

BIG-IP v10 gives BlueFort Security the means to provide better, simpler, more cost effective solutions to its customers. With BIG-IP v10, companies can get both web acceleration capabilities and application security consolidated on one device. "We've been able to reduce our own server overhead by 60 percent, because BIG-IP allows us to migrate CPU-intensive tasks off of our web servers and onto the F5 devices," says Jennings. "Our customers can realize better website performance with reduced server load. And, the new release is going to give F5 an edge on the competition because customers will no longer have to go to one vendor for load balancing, another for security, and yet another for caching and proxy. BIG-IP v10 gives us one device that can truly do it all for our customers. It is a true single-box solution."

Significant data center cost savings

The single-box solution will result in significant reductions to data center costs and time spent administering systems. "By consolidating to a single box with BIG-IP v10, our customers can realize significant reductions to data center costs by reducing rack space used," says Jennings. Further, customers save on administrative costs, support, and training. "With BIG-IP v10, a customer can have one device in the data center that performs multiple functions," says Jennings. "With a one-vendor system, less training is required for administrators, and troubleshooting and maintenance are greatly simplified."

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