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Mark Remington, Chief Technical Officer, Ritz Interactive

## Ritz Interactive Puts F5 BIG-IP WebAccelerator to the Test in E-commerce Sites

Imagine a full array of photographic and consumer electronic products, as well as a wide range of marine, boating, and fishing products within one e-commerce network. That's what you'll find at **Ritz Interactive, Inc.** an e-commerce network of interactive websites dedicated to providing a wide selection of leisure-time products at the most competitive prices.

Based in Irvine, CA, the company's leading photo-specialty e-tail destinations for online shoppers include RitzCamera.com, WolfCamera.com, PhotoAlley.com, and CameraWorld.com. Additionally, Ritz Interactive owns and operates marine e-commerce leaders BoatersWorld.com, OuterbanksOutfitters.com, and eAngler.com.

To address scalability and performance issues associated with its aging web acceleration boxes, Ritz Interactive sought a faster, more cost-efficient web acceleration solution with enterprise-class caching capabilities. By implementing F5 BIG-IP® WebAccelerator™ web application delivery device, the company achieved its web acceleration goals and significantly decreased server use, download times, and bandwidth usage.

### Business Challenges

Ritz Interactive operates a diverse group of properties in different stages of growth. Each site, branded and marketed individually, is dedicated to bringing unique product offerings—as well as giving customers an exceptional shopping experience. Designed with the user in mind, the web pages are optimized for various connection speeds and browsers.

Chief Technical Officer Mark Remington and his staff of three IT professionals are responsible for ensuring that the Ritz Interactive e-commerce sites perform optimally at all times. All of the e-commerce sites run on a common platform using IBM WebSphere, implemented in 2002. “Running on a common platform helps keep maintenance and IT costs low—and it keeps us at the head of

### Overview

#### Industry

E-commerce

#### Challenges

- Implement a scalable, enterprise-class web acceleration solution
- Address caching issues created by running on a common platform
- Gain the ability to move profiles

#### Solution

- F5 BIG-IP WebAccelerator

#### Benefits

- Improved download and response times
- Reduced bandwidth usage
- Smooth integration of policies
- Fast implementation and configuration

the market," Remington explained.

Remington has been with Ritz Interactive for more than two years and has seen significant growth in site traffic. "Leveraging the common platform makes sense, but it also adds challenges to caching," he said. The technical team looked for an edge caching solution to reduce expenses. In 2003, Ritz Interactive deployed Swan Labs' product, Pivia Performance Server, on Linux boxes as a service for web acceleration. "We were an early customer," Remington said. "But the boxes got to be 'long in tooth.' In order to scale properly, we had to add more hardware on the back end, and this was not a good long-term strategy," he explained. "We liked the technology, but we needed more backups—and a purpose-built appliance."

In 2005, F5 Networks acquired Swan Labs, integrating that company's LAN/WAN traffic acceleration technology within the F5 BIG-IP platform.

With 12 years of experience in the IT world, and having previously managed data centers for Concentric, Remington was familiar with F5 product solutions for traffic management and load balancing. "I've always had a good experience with F5 products, and was excited they had a box for web acceleration," he said.

"Since caching is so important to our organization, we knew we needed enterprise-class solutions," Remington continued. The IT team looked at products from Radware and Cisco, as well as F5. Remington and his team did a month-long product evaluation to see what the options were, researching the user interfaces and assessing the differences. "At the end of the day, we wanted to be sure that we could take our profiles to a faster, better-supported platform," said Remington.

"WebAccelerator allows us to improve the online experience for customers, and at the same time reduce bandwidth use."

### Solution

Pleased with the F5 proof-of-concept results, Ritz Interactive worked with its reseller partner, Trace3, to purchase a pair of BIG-IP WebAccelerator 4500 devices.

The F5 BIG-IP WebAccelerator is an advanced web application delivery solution that provides a series of intelligent technologies to overcome performance issues involving browsers, web application platforms, and WAN latency. By decreasing page download times, BIG-IP WebAccelerator offloads servers, decreases bandwidth usage, and ensures the productivity of application end users.

BIG-IP WebAccelerator solves WAN content delivery issues by locating content closer to users, which speeds up their first and repeat visits to portal, CRM, e-learning, and e-commerce sites. This significantly increases the speed and reduces the cost of using enterprise web applications in remote office and mobile deployments. BIG-IP WebAccelerator is ideal for extremely scalable Dynamic Content Caching, lowering costs through server and data center consolidation.

### Benefits

A smooth migration to the new BIG-IP WebAccelerator 4500 devices took place in

July 2007. "We worked with the F5 team to make sure the profiles moved—and it was great," he said. He describes the solution as being almost "plug and play."

"We just put the boxes in and configured them; the whole process was very easy." He also noted that the product is intuitive, so there was no need to use the manual or go through training. "It was easy to configure and there were not that many rules to set," Remington added.

### Smooth integration of policies

BIG-IP WebAccelerator comes with generic WebSphere policies, but Ritz Interactive uses its own custom servlets and naming conventions. "We use specific names for images, style sheets for shopping carts, and other pages, so we defined our policies with those in mind," he explained. "We have a dozen rules in the policy."

### Improved performance

BIG-IP WebAccelerator supports Ritz Interactive's full network of e-commerce websites. "WebAccelerator allows us to improve the online experience for customers, and at the same time reduce bandwidth use," said Remington. For Ritz Interactive, BIG-IP WebAccelerator decreases server use by 50 percent, decreases download times by 20 percent, and decreases bandwidth usage anywhere from 20 to 50 percent. Remington said the company sees noticeable changes whenever they take BIG-IP WebAccelerator offline for one reason or another.

Ritz Interactive also appreciates the high level of support that is part of the F5 experience. About BIG-IP WebAccelerator, Remington said, "It is solid, fast, and well-supported. It just works."

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