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Burzin Engineer, Vice President of Infrastructure Technology, Shopzilla

## Shopzilla Gains Data Management and Operational Efficiencies with F5 ARX

Shopzilla Inc. is dedicated to helping shoppers around the world find the best price on the right products. Its patent-pending technology empowers shoppers with the ability to quickly and easily compare prices on more than 30 million products offered by 92,000 stores. Shopzilla was challenged by the complexity of physically managing rapid storage growth while minimizing downtime.

Shopzilla implemented F5® ARX® file virtualization devices to automate many tasks that had previously been performed manually. As a result, the company has eliminated the need for high-cost support on older equipment and has freed up IT resources to focus on other business-critical initiatives.

### Business Challenge

Shopzilla's IT organization faced several challenges. The first was how to move data without affecting applications. When Shopzilla's file servers reached end-of-life or a new platform was introduced, IT was faced with a laborious data migration process. Not only would the data have to be manually moved from the old platforms to the new, but the applications themselves would have to be “rewired to understand the movement from the old to the new,” according to Burzin Engineer, VP of Infrastructure Technology at Shopzilla.

This “rewiring” of the applications involved modifying the application source code to recognize the new storage location. While this process worked, it could take up to four months to do a migration. In addition, the process consumed significant IT resources, increased the potential for bugs, and affected customer-facing applications. As a result, upgrades were often delayed, and Shopzilla was forced to pay exorbitant support costs to maintain its older gear.

The second challenge was time-consuming manual load balancing. Maintaining

### Overview

#### Industry

E-Commerce

#### Challenges

- Streamline labor-intensive data migrations
- Replace manual load balancing
- Improve data replication options for vendor flexibility

#### Solution

- Clustered F5 ARX6000 devices

#### Benefits

- Data migration times reduced from up to four months to three days
- Automated, dynamic load balancing
- Seamless replication for more freedom when purchasing storage

the highest performance possible for the millions of visitors to its websites required Shopzilla's IT staff to manually distribute mount points across multiple servers to spread the load. This highly complex process required constant hands-on attention by IT.

The third challenge was replication restrictions. With its existing vendors, seamless data replication between Shopzilla's production data center and its quality assurance (QA) and test environment was only possible if the servers on both ends were identical. However, Shopzilla's QA and test environment did not require the same expensive high-performance servers as its production environment, and the company did not want to be forced to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in equipment in order to have data flow between its data centers.

### Solution

Shopzilla installed a pair of F5 ARX6000 intelligent file virtualization devices to create a global namespace and virtualize its file storage environment. In its first migration project following implementation, Shopzilla seamlessly phased out an older storage array by automatically migrating a 4-terabyte (TB) volume in just three days, without IT staff intervention and without affecting application operations.

In addition, the creation of a global namespace enabled Shopzilla to mask the underlying complexity of the physical storage environment, and it eliminated the need to manually balance content to maintain the fast response time and uninterrupted access its web visitors require.

"Having a device like F5 ARX, which masks all of that complexity, helps significantly," Engineer said.

"We don't have to take resources from the organization to help with these migrations... All the work is done by ARX."

### Benefits

With the ARX devices, Shopzilla's IT organization has seen a marked decrease in the time and effort required to manage its unstructured data.

Engineer explained, "Now, we don't need to maintain old gear or pay to support it. But more importantly, we don't have to take resources from the organization to help with these migrations. People are able to keep working on their deliverables. All the work is done by ARX. It's all just so much easier."

#### Data migration times reduced

Data migrations are now effortless. Each time a migration is required, the IT staff simply establishes the policy and lets the ARX device run quietly in the background. Migrations continue to be completed in three days rather than weeks or up to four months.

#### Automated, dynamic load balancing

The load balancing required for maintaining peak performance of the many Shopzilla websites happens automatically and dynamically, without manual intervention or changes to applications.

#### Seamless replication

With F5 ARX, data replication between heterogeneous storage arrays in the production and development QA environments occurs flawlessly.

"Now, when we migrate data, all the work is done by the ARX device. We can replicate data from one vendor to another, instead of being beholden to just one vendor. And now we have a single mount point, instead of millions of them," Engineer said. "ARX makes all the complexities go away."

Shopzilla now has the freedom to invest in the technology that fits its business requirements, rather than being locked in by storage vendors.

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