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Michael Xylogiannopoulos, Infrastructure Technology and Data Center Services Manager, SingularLogic

SingularLogic Gains a Secure, Scalable Platform for SaaS with F5

With 40,000 customers, **SingularLogic** is the leading software and integrated IT solutions group in Greece. When the company decided to make its market-leading software solutions available via the Internet, it couldn't afford to take any risks. It had to ensure that its new hosted services would deliver the exceptional performance and security that customers would expect.

SingularLogic built F5 products into the core architecture of its new business venture and now has the scalable platform that is so essential for providers of software as a service (SaaS).

Business Challenges

The software division of SingularLogic offers a range of applications that have dominated the enterprise software market in Greece for many years. Used by tens of thousands of businesses, this software includes applications for enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), accountancy, finance, and hospitality.

Two goals that lie at the heart of SingularLogic are *to lead* by developing innovative new products and *to deliver* by focusing on the solutions that will help customers achieve business success. The company sought to achieve these goals by making its market-leading applications available via the web to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Although such SaaS offerings were established in many

parts of the world, it was an innovative new approach in Greece. SingularLogic aimed to launch the first hosted ERP and CRM services specifically for the Greek market.

The company's primary concern from the outset was security. There had recently been several high-profile security breaches at large global organisations that had heightened SingularLogic's awareness of the risks associated with malicious attacks. The company knew it had to put robust defences in place to protect its systems and its customers' data.

At the same time, SingularLogic needed an effective way to balance its web traffic and ensure fast application performance. It had to be able to deliver a consistently good

Overview

Industry

IT

Challenges

- Provide a high level of security for new SaaS business venture
- Balance web traffic to ensure fast application performance
- Ensure scalability for growth
- Minimise data centre costs

Solution

- BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™ (LTM) 3600
- BIG-IP® Link Controller™
- BIG-IP® Application Security Manager™ (ASM)
- iRules®

Benefits

- Provide highly secure environment for SaaS
- Accelerate performance for five hosted enterprise applications
- Scale to over 4,000 users
- Realize cost savings from 50 percent fewer servers

Partner

- Pylones



quality of service for its customers—both on day one and when the service grew to many thousands of simultaneous users. “We want to have happy users,” says Michael Xylogiannopoulos, Infrastructure Technology and Data Centre Services Manager at SingularLogic. “This means we have to have clever systems in the data centre that are reliable and available. We cannot afford to have problems with the traffic.”

SingularLogic also had to ensure that its IT infrastructure was cost-effective, so that its new venture would be financially viable and profitable. It therefore needed to optimise the performance and utilisation of its servers to minimise the cost of hardware, power, and cooling in its data centre.

Solution

Prior to selecting F5® products, SingularLogic evaluated several solutions from different vendors. It then acquired two BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager (LTM) appliances, plus two BIG-IP Link Controller modules and two BIG-IP Application Security Manager (ASM) modules.

BIG-IP LTM, which was installed at the company's data centre near Athens, balanced traffic across more than fifteen application servers, some of which were configured in a virtual environment. BIG-IP Link Controller managed their ISP connections, and BIG-IP ASM is an advanced web application firewall that reduced the risk of loss or damage to data and web applications. At the time of installation, some ports on the F5 devices were unused, leaving room for SaaS growth.

SingularLogic configured and deployed the F5 products with support from **Pylones**, an F5 Gold Partner. Pylones provides computer and telecom solutions to medium-sized and large businesses in Greece, Cyprus, and the Balkans. “From sales all the way through to technical support, Pylones delivers a

consistently good service, with no problems,” Xylogiannopoulos says.

Pylones used F5's flexible programming language, iRules®, to configure the products to precisely meet SingularLogic's requirements. For example, it used iRules to implement complex network address translation and forwarding processes, which are necessary due to multiple entry points into the company's infrastructure, such as site-to-site virtual private networks (VPNs), client-to-site VPNs, and the Internet. In addition, Pylones used iRules to apply rate shaping policies based on source and destination. “All that SingularLogic asked for, we could deliver with iRules,” says Nikolaos Simos, Technical Manager at Pylones. “F5 provided the solution for everything.”

Benefits

The F5 products support SaaS offerings for five vital business applications, including the company's flagship CRM and ERP solutions, as well as a mobile application for Vodafone. The load balancing capabilities of F5's products have been extensively tested and have demonstrated their ability to deliver exceptionally fast application response times over the Internet. As SingularLogic's user numbers grow and traffic to the system increases, the benefits of load balancing will become even more evident.

In its first year of offering hosted application services, SingularLogic expects that the environment will support around a thousand users. But the company is already conservatively planning on growth of at least 100 percent year on year, which means that the F5 products could be balancing traffic for as many as 4,000 users by year three. “We are confident that the F5 products will be able to support this expected growth,” Xylogiannopoulos says.

Currently, SingularLogic uses two ISPs, providing 100 Mbps, and the company can expand this bandwidth as demand for its hosted services grows. It uses BIG-IP Link Controller to dynamically divide and allocate different proportions of this bandwidth to different customers. For example, it can allocate 50 Mbps for one customer and 10 Mbps for another.

Using BIG-IP LTM enables SingularLogic to offload key processing tasks from its application and web servers. If the company wasn't able to use F5 products in this way, it would need a lot more servers in its data centres. “We could need as many as 50 percent more servers without the F5 products,” estimates Xylogiannopoulos. SingularLogic would also need a corresponding increase in space, power, and cooling. By using F5 products, SingularLogic has substantially reduced data centre costs.

Xylogiannopoulos adds, “Because we can offload tasks from our application servers to the F5 products, it reduces the time needed for users to download data from our data centre servers. F5 speeds up the performance of our servers and helps to ensure that our customers have a good experience of using our applications remotely.”

One of the most important benefits that SingularLogic has gained is the peace of mind that comes from knowing that its SaaS environment is totally secure. BIG-IP ASM provides comprehensive attack protection from DDoS, layer 7 DoS, brute force, XSS, SQL injection, OWASP Top Ten, and many more known threats. “Web security is extremely important for all providers of services via the cloud,” states Xylogiannopoulos. “Our F5 products give us assurance that our data and systems are secure. We believe that F5 provides one of the best products in the market to protect against outside threats.”

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