



“Our experience shows us that the F5 solutions have delivered as promised—they have been doing the job constantly, and we have not had any outages at all.”

Renaud Larue-Langlois, Manager, Telecommunications and Security Information Systems, Transat A.T.

## Transat A.T. Ensures High Availability and Scalability with F5 BIG-IP Systems

**Transat A.T. Inc.** is an integrated international tour operator with more than 60 destination countries. It also distributes products in over 50 countries. A holiday travel specialist, Transat operates mainly in Canada and Europe, as well as in the Caribbean, Mexico, and the Mediterranean Basin. Montreal-based Transat is also active in air transportation, destination services, and distribution (TSX: TRZ.B, TRZ.A). When the company decided to completely redesign and revamp its business-to-consumer (B2C) transactional website with a new architecture, they turned to F5 Networks® to create a robust and highly available environment. Transat uses F5® BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™ (LTM) and BIG-IP® Link Controller™ to ensure reliability and redundancy for customer transactions.

### Business Challenges

In the competitive travel industry, great customer experiences translate into referrals and repeat business. Customers have many choices, so availability and reliability is critical. “We must be available when customers are ready to make their travel plans,” explains Renaud Larue-Langlois, manager of Telecommunications and Security Information Systems at Transat A.T. “If our site is the least bit slow, customers will buy somewhere else.”

Transat’s many branches deal with different areas of the travel business, including:

- Air Transat, Canada’s leading holiday travel airline.

- Transat Tours Canada, Canada’s largest tour operator/wholesaler of vacation packages.
- Transat Distribution Canada, which owns or franchises more than 450 travel agencies throughout Canada.
- Handlex, which manages airline ground operations (baggage, cleaning, passenger check-in, and boarding) for Air Transat and foreign airlines in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.
- Jonview Canada, the country’s leading incoming tour operator.

### Overview

#### Industry

Travel, Airline, Tourism

#### Challenges

- Develop a robust, reliable web environment
- Eliminate or minimize downtime
- Provide flexibility in application development
- Integrate with existing technology

#### Solution

- BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager
- BIG-IP Link Controller

#### Benefits

- Delivered reliable network connectivity
- Ensured redundancy of connections
- Easy to configure and manage
- Added functionality for IT development
- Adapted to heterogeneous environment
- Increased scalability for future growth

Most customer travel sales are through travel agencies, so downtime immediately results in lost business. "If the travel agent has a customer sitting in front of him, and he can't reach Transat's system, he's going to sell the customer a travel package from another operator," Larue-Langlois says.

The information systems department offers IT services in a shared services model. Transat maintains a production data center, where most services are located, and a smaller data center for pre-production and development.

Transat made two important decisions regarding its web presence. The first was to repatriate web hosting: Transat brought all web services in-house for more hands-on control and the ability to make changes quickly.

The second decision was to totally redesign the AirTransat.ca website, one of the company's main B2C transactional websites. "The site was based on a completely new architecture and new booking engine," says Larue-Langlois. "It wasn't just a new website, but a new experience to allow people to build custom tour packages instead of buying only pre-defined packages."

Transat required a complete networking and telecommunications infrastructure to support the site. "At that time, we had just moved into a new data center, and had the opportunity to get the best technology—so we looked at solutions for redundancy—one that would not fail us," says Larue-Langlois.

## Solution

After thorough analysis, Transat selected F5 BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager (LTM) and BIG-IP Link Controller. "Our philosophy for mission-critical systems? Always go with best-of-breed technology," Larue-Langlois says. "We shopped around and interrogated

Gartner. Early on, it was clear—everyone, everything, and every factor always pointed to F5."

BIG-IP LTM is an Application Delivery Networking system that provides intelligent load balancing and traffic management, as well as advanced application security, acceleration, and optimization.

BIG-IP Link Controller seamlessly monitors availability and performance of multiple WAN ISP connections to intelligently manage bi-directional traffic flows, providing fault-tolerant and optimized Internet access. It ensures the fastest available connection, and in the event of a failure, traffic is dynamically directed across other available links to keep users connected.

"One thing we wanted to achieve with [BIG-IP] Link Controller was ISP redundancy," he adds. Transat has a data center serviced with two different internet circuits from two different ISPs. "We required complete redundancy in case one failed." Additionally, Transat balances traffic, so that the more efficient of the two links is used, depending on where users are and who their ISP is.

Working with an integrator, Transat deployed the BIG-IP solutions. "Everything worked well, right from the start," says Larue-Langlois. Transat's main network administrator took F5 training. "He probably would have made it without training, because the F5 solutions are very easy to configure," he adds, "especially compared to other vendor solutions, which are often cryptic and difficult to configure. That's definitely not the case with F5."

## Benefits

F5 solutions have now been running successfully at Transat for a couple of years. "Our experience shows us that the F5 solutions have delivered as promised—they

have been doing the job constantly, and we have not had any outages at all."

"From a user standpoint, the F5 solutions are totally transparent, and to me, that's one of the main qualities," notes Larue-Langlois. "Nobody knows they are there—and they don't have to know. It just goes to show you that the F5 solutions are doing their job." BIG-IP LTM is a vital part of Transat's infrastructure. It is used both between the front and back ends, and between the back end and the database servers.

Transat maintains a heterogeneous environment, using Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, and Informix databases, and running services on Microsoft, UNIX, and Linux servers. "We have a mix of everything," he says. "We support a variety of products, and F5 solutions fit well within our environment."

During the planning stage, Larue-Langlois says scalability was not a concern. "We were convinced that we knew exactly the capacity we needed—or would ever need. Experience now shows growth faster than we anticipated, and fortunately, our F5 boxes are big enough to accommodate growth, so we don't anticipate capacity issues in the near future."

With a robust environment in place, the IT team has more flexibility, plus a path for future development. "We realize that we are probably only using 25 percent of the features of BIG-IP [solutions] right now, but our application architects are thinking of F5 as they design new applications, in order to fully exploit the [BIG-IP] LTM and [BIG-IP Link Controller] capabilities," he says.

"What's been a definite plus for us is that F5 solutions have worked reliably from day one," says Larue-Langlois. "They're rock steady."

F5 Networks, Inc. 401 Elliott Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 888-882-4447 [www.f5.com](http://www.f5.com)

F5 Networks, Inc.  
Corporate Headquarters  
[info@f5.com](mailto:info@f5.com)

F5 Networks  
Asia-Pacific  
[apacinfo@f5.com](mailto:apacinfo@f5.com)

F5 Networks Ltd.  
Europe/Middle-East/Africa  
[emeainfo@f5.com](mailto:emeainfo@f5.com)

F5 Networks  
Japan K.K.  
[f5j-info@f5.com](mailto:f5j-info@f5.com)

