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Yoram Bitton, Internet and Information Security Implementation Manager, NIOI

National Insurance Institute of Israel Optimizes Security and Network Performance with F5

The National Insurance Institute of Israel (NIOI) is responsible for the social stability of Israeli residents. The NIOI pays allowances to eligible constituents, assisting groups and families in temporary or long-term need with a financial basis for subsistence.

The NIOI's National Insurance Law includes a wide variety of assistance programs, such as old-age and survivors, maternity, children, work injury, general disability, and more. The goal of NIOI is to help fairly distribute national income and minimize poverty levels.

NIOI relies on its website and online applications for delivering essential content and services. Web services include provisions for insurance and collection data, authorizations, previous applications, and more.

Business Challenges

The National Insurance Institute of Israel systems support a wide array of applications, and it is critical for the NIOI to ensure continuity in providing services to the public.

Tight security is one of the top priorities of the institute. The NIOI's online systems store very sensitive information and web applications are accessed by hundreds of users every day. NIOI needed connectivity with central systems, without exposing applications to access by unauthorized personnel. In addition, personal data had to be strictly secured to comply with Israel's Privacy Act.

"As a national institute that deals with people in need, we came to the conclusion that we have to provide better service to our clients—without making any compromises on the level of security and storage of sensitive data," said Yoram Bitton, Internet and Information Security Implementation Manager at NIOI. "We needed a solution that will let us enjoy the best of both worlds—security and speed at the same time—without complicating the configuration."

To achieve these goals, the NIOI team knew it would need to maintain a rich and

Overview

Industry

Government

Challenges

- Maintain tight security for sensitive financial data
- Improve network management to deliver enhanced service for clients
- Increase system usage
- Provide remote network access for hosted applications

Solution

- BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™
- BIG-IP® Application Security Manager™

Benefits

- Security and speed at the same time
- Effective traffic management, enabling high availability for clients
- 50 percent increase in system use
- Secure remote access to hosted applications

flexible IT infrastructure. While its current IT infrastructure met existing needs, NIOI recognized that significant changes would be required to help the organization expand and deliver service improvements, such as capacity-on-demand.

Due to the high level of security needed, loading of NIOI's website was slow, sometimes taking up to 45 seconds to load the opening web page.

NIOI needed a solution to provide its clients (national institutes, employers, and the general public) with highly secure, remote access to hosted applications with as little administration and integration as possible.

Solution

After a thorough evaluation process, NIOI selected F5 BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager (LTM) with the Application Security Manager (ASM) module. These technologies offer advanced application delivery and security capabilities in a modular architecture, resulting in a solution that is highly scalable.

BIG-IP ASM is an application delivery security product that delivers comprehensive protection for web applications and operational infrastructure. BIG-IP ASM combines application acceleration such as RAM cache, compression, SSL offload, TCP optimization, and other performance advantages of the F5 TMOS® architecture to deliver security without sacrificing speed, which is an important requirement for NIOI.

"BIG-IP LTM with the ASM module stood out from the other products we evaluated because it allows you to combine intelligent load balancing, performance improvement, and security modules on a single platform," explained Bitton. "The alternative would have been to integrate three or four separate products into the network, which would have been much more complicated.

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Additionally, other products did not appear to support application flows as well as F5's BIG-IP solution."

F5 worked closely with NIOI throughout the infrastructure change and implementation. "F5 was a strong and supportive partner for our change process," Bitton continued.

Benefits

F5's solutions were easily implemented, providing effective traffic management for NIOI. The system now handles more than 10,000 user requests per day, resulting in a 50 percent increase in usage. F5 solutions have helped NIOI increase the availability and continuity of the services, while ensuring that data is secure.

Response times have also greatly improved. To address the issue of lengthy web page loading times, NIOI is using F5's cache module for intelligent uploading of static multimedia files (images) and compression module (for compressing documents). Now, loading the opening web page takes only seven seconds.

Following the implementation of BIG-IP LTM and ASM, NIOI commissioned a series of tests led by external experts. It also conducted tests using automated tools to try to expose weaknesses in its security. "The results of all of the tests were excellent," added Bitton.

Bitton is absolutely confident that NIOI made the right decision in selecting F5. "The positive experience we had with the product made it easy to evaluate and use related

security and optimization offerings from F5, especially since its technologies all work on the same underlying operating platform. We already had a degree of familiarity with F5's devices and management," he explained.

Follow-up is important to Bitton as well. "When you integrate a product as deeply into your IT infrastructure as we have integrated the BIG-IP system, you want to know that you have someone to call at any time, and that you will get the same attention as you did during the sales process," he continued.

"The relationship we have with F5 is more than just about the products we bought. The local team worked very hard to build up a relationship of trust between the two companies," concluded Bitton.

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