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Anthony Wong,
BLP Senior Security Analyst

F5 helps Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP Law achieve Network Resilience and Peace of Mind

Industry

Law

Challenges

- Huge volume of electronic communications
- Increasing number of remote workers who needed to have secure, VPN access

Solutions

BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager
BIG-IP Link Controller
FirePass

Benefits

- In-House Data management, eliminating dependency on external providers
- Secure and rapid VPN access for remote workers
- Network resource more resilient, more secure and more efficient
- Secure and effective Disaster Recovery programme

Overview

Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP is a premier, full service law firm with over 600 lawyers based in offices in London and Brussels with representative offices in Paris and Singapore. It also has flexible and proactively managed relationships with preferred firms in over 50 countries around the world. Clients include FTSE 100 companies and financial institutions, major multinationals, the public sector, entrepreneurial private businesses and individuals. The firm was Chambers' 'UK Law Firm of the Year' in 2005, and The Lawyer's 'Law Firm of the Year' in 2004.

Its clients base is diverse and includes a growing list of large institutions, bluechip corporates, banks and financial institutions, major property companies and developers, public sector bodies and individuals.

Challenges

As a successful law firm, BLP sends and receives a huge volume of electronic communications each day – and that volume continues to increase. The firm's partners and consultants are increasingly using technology to support their professional practice, meaning remote access using laptops and handheld devices are increasingly becoming an important part of their day-to-day activities.

“Our growing use of the internet as a communications medium means

increased freedom and mobility for many of our staff,” explains Anthony Wong, BLP Senior Security Analyst. “While we welcome this, it also means a growing dependency on a handful of ISPs for all our connectivity. Even minor problems with one connection could cause potentially serious disruption to our business processes, and if the problem lay with the ISP itself we would have no means of resolving it directly.

Such a situation is unacceptable we require robust, high availability Internet access, but we simply cannot afford any level of vulnerability when it comes to business communication and data security.”

Research suggested that the best way to achieve the required level of resilience and flexibility was through intelligent load balancing – a technology whereby data traffic is automatically distributed across multiple ISP and server connections and adjusted intelligently, according to the capacity of the connections and the patterns of traffic. “F5 Networks came up in our research early on because its BIG-IP Link Controller directly addressed our needs,” commented Wong. “The question then became – what is the best way to deploy these products for optimum efficiency and minimum disruption?”

Resolving this was achieved with help from Nebulas Security, experts in IT security solutions. “Nebulas

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Security spent a lot of time with us clarifying the precise nature of our requirement,” recalls Anthony Wong. “As part of this phase, their team explained how F5 products could be deployed and configured to meet our immediate priorities, as well as other goals – such as more secure VPN access for remote workers and a comprehensive Disaster Recovery plan.” The outcome was a series of detailed system design alternatives, one of which was chosen by the infrastructure team as the optimum fit for BLP’s needs.

Solution

The system deployment was carried out by Nebulas Security and planned to coincide with the date for a separate IT project: a ‘Big Bang’ migration of the company’s entire IT estate from Microsoft NT 4.0 and Windows 2000 Professional, to Active Directory /Exchange 2003 and Windows XP. Load balancing was achieved by installing F5’s BIG-IP Link Controller, which seamlessly monitors availability and performance of multiple WAN ISP connections. In the event of a failure, traffic is dynamically directed across other available links so users and external customers stay connected.

The company’s remote access procedures were made faster and more secure via F5’s FirePass, an SSL VPN appliance which provides secure access to corporate applications and data using a

standard web browser. Offering quick and secure access from any location, FirePass gives staff who work remotely full network access while keeping corporate data secure.

Finally, F5’s BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager was deployed as a core service for the company’s Disaster Recovery strategy. The device transfers data seamlessly between two parallel sites, using failover and replication to provide high availability, maximum performance, and centralized management for applications running across multiple data centres.

The result is a consistent and significant improvement in BLP’s network security, performance and resilience, leading directly to greater flexibility, mobility and usability for employees. “For the IT department, Nebulas Security’s work has meant enormous peace of mind – and a reduced workload,” says Anthony Wong. “All our data network service management is now in-house, meaning there’s no danger of being caught out by service provider difficulties or unpredictable data traffic patterns.”

For BLP, the new system means better control of corporate data and more efficient network performance at all levels. More flexible working patterns can now be adopted more widely, allowing employees to become more mobile and more productive. For the infrastructure team, it represents an opportunity to focus on other projects, including the opening of a Singapore office, where comparable levels of IT performance will be required.

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