



“It’s good equipment to own. We praise it from all sides of our business.”

James McGhee,
Lead Network Engineer

Thomson Scientific and Healthcare Relies on F5’s BIG-IP for Local and Global Traffic Management and High Availability of Their Database Applications

Industry:

Information Services

Challenges:

- Local and global application high availability
- Reduce costs
- Business continuity
- Ease of maintenance

Solution:

BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager and BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager

Benefits:

- Ease of management and maintenance
- Comprehensive reporting
- Improved application performance
- Robust and reliable operation

Overview

Thomson Scientific and Healthcare is one of four market groups within the Thomson Corporation (2005 revenues of approximately \$8.5 billion), a global leader in providing integrated information solutions to business and professional customers. Thomson’s information solutions assist professionals in research and development—from discovery to analysis to product development and distribution. Thomson’s integrated solutions are used by researchers, information specialists, and professionals in the fields of: biotechnology, chemistry, engineering, healthcare, law, financial services, higher education, reference information, corporate training, and assessment.

Access to Thomson Scientific and Healthcare’s databases can be achieved through a variety of Internet platforms, plus several different online hosts. Recognizing the need for products that ensure high availability and reliable delivery of their data to a far-reaching global community, Thomson Scientific and Healthcare relies on F5’s BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager (formerly 3-DNS) and F5’s BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager.

Challenge

Thomson Scientific and Healthcare’s customers subscribe to various databases to help them at every stage of research and development. The databases need to be available 24x7 across all continents, time zones and data centers. Many of Thomson Scientific and Healthcare’s customers are academics ranging from small two-year schools to large consortiums of universities that require round the clock access to the critical data Thomson offers. Needless to say, interruption or slow delivery of these services “would seriously impact our business,” said James McGhee, Lead Network Engineer for Thomson Scientific. The need for a robust and reliable solution to ensure high availability for their customers, both at the local and global level, was a key requirement to Thomson’s continued business success. The solution they chose was the BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager, paired with BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager, both from F5.

Solution

Thomson Scientific’s network consists of three data centers located in various parts of the world, with over 120 top level





domains, 980 wide ip's, and just under 2000 public virtual ips. Most of those customer-facing applications are front-ended with F5's BIG-IP Local Traffic Managers (LTM) 6400's, with seven BIG-IP Global Traffic Managers (GTM) handling applications out in the field. BIG-IP Global Traffic Managers balance high volume traffic across the data centers; BIG-IP Local Traffic Managers balance local content within each data center.

BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager provides high availability of IP applications/services running across Thompson's multiple data centers around the world. It distributes end-user requests according to business policies, data center conditions and network conditions – ensuring the highest possible availability for their sites. It also works hand-in-hand with F5's BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager, which enables network-speed full payload inspection and programmable, event-based traffic management at the local level to understand and act upon application flows. The result is that when a customer decides to research information at three in the

morning in Paris, for example, the information is delivered seamlessly, reliably, and in their language.

The versatile F5 device combination has worked behind the scenes to serve not only Thomson's demanding customer base, but also the demands of Thomson's IT department.

"Seeing it from both sides [the customer and our IT department], the value on what the [F5] units do for us is big," said McGhee. "Just the product continuity allows for easier maintenance. IT can take units offline, balance systems, move traffic based on wide IP rules or the BIG-IP rules, and bring the systems back up without affecting anyone else."

Along with the ease-of-management and object-style configuration functionality of the F5 systems, McGhee also noted the various reporting capabilities provided – and why they're important.

"One of the demands of large universities is usage reports – they need to justify the money they're spending," he said. "We're actively taking advantage of the reporting functionality that the F5 products provide."

But ultimately, the decision to go with the F5 products came down to providing high availability.

"Because we need to be available in all time zones, and we have customers all over the world, the databases they subscribe to need to be available around the clock," McGhee said. "Our SLAs (service level agreements) to those customers demand that we consistently deliver. If we ever fail to meet those demands, people will be lining up for refunds (to our services)."

"The F5 devices are robust and reliable; the high availability functions between the redundant pairs work very well; and the global synchronization on BIG-IP Global Traffic Manager works great," he said. "From my perspective, it's good equipment to own. We praise it from all sides of our business."

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