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Jeremy Cointin, Senior Network and Security Analyst, Rotary International

## Rotary International Ensures Site Availability, Boosts Efficiency of Small IT Staff, with Products from F5

Rotary International deployed a new public-facing website using Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007. To encourage viewership and achieve optimal return on its SharePoint investment, Rotary uses the BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™ (LTM) 3400 device from F5 Networks® to manage site traffic. With F5 devices, Rotary maintains high website availability, has simplified administration, and has freed-up server processor usage as much as 20 percent, resulting in significant infrastructure cost savings.

### Business Challenges

Founded in 1905, Rotary International has grown to become a worldwide organization of more than 1.2 million business, professional, and community leaders. Today, there are 33,000 Rotary clubs working towards the organization’s objective of providing service, encouraging high ethical standards in all vocations, and promoting goodwill and peace in the world.

With such a dispersed member base, providing a central hub for information is key to the success of Rotary International. The organization relies on its website, [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org), to deliver information such as descriptions of global Rotary service projects, programs for students and youth, contributions, events, club leadership

guidance, and financial information.

The Rotary International website, built on Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, is published in nine languages and experiences traffic of 5,000 to 7,000 page views per hour with approximately 200 unique visitors at any given moment.

Supporting its public-facing website, the organization’s primary communications tool with potential and current member organizations, is a top priority for Rotary International. “We wanted to ensure that we were supporting the website and its back-end application infrastructure as effectively as possible,” says Jeremy Cointin, Senior Network and Security Analyst at Rotary International.

### Overview

#### Industry

Nonprofit

#### Challenges

- Ensure high availability for website
- Streamline administrative tasks

#### Solution

- F5 BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager 3400

#### Benefits

- Better site availability
- Administrative tasks 90 percent faster
- Infrastructure cost savings

## Solution

Rotary relied on F5 products to provide higher availability for other internally-focused web-based applications such as PeopleSoft software for human resources and finance. "Originally, we used another vendor's load balancer to support these applications, but from a management perspective, the products proved cumbersome," says Cointin. So, when it came time to deploy its Office SharePoint Server 2007 infrastructure, Rotary turned to the same company with which it had experienced prior Application Delivery Networking success—F5 Networks.

For its Office SharePoint Server 2007 deployment, Rotary uses four BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager (LTM) 3400 devices. Two are located in the DMZ to load balance traffic to the Rotary website's front-end web servers. Two others are located inside the organization's network, to support internal collaboration, document management, and other back-end applications and processes associated with Office SharePoint Server 2007.

Cointin and his IT team deployed the F5 devices themselves, and used F5's DevCentral online community for application developers, network professionals, and IT architects to create custom-built iRules™ to flexibly manage IP traffic to the website. F5's iRules use an easy-to-learn scripting syntax that enable Rotary to customize how its web servers manage application traffic. "I'm not much of a programmer," says Cointin, "but I was able to easily create custom iRules for setting up HTTPS redirects." Through these redirects, Rotary migrates CPU-intensive secure sockets layer (SSL) encryption and decryption from its SharePoint servers to the F5 devices, thereby reducing server load. The IT staff also uses iRules to direct traffic within its PeopleSoft environment.

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"Our plan is to transition to using all web-based applications for Rotary's business processes," says Cointin. "And our goal is to have all of those applications running through F5 devices. When we started the website project, we wanted to be sure of compatibility between Microsoft and F5 products. After some evaluation, we emerged with no concerns and were highly comforted by the strong partnership between the two companies."

## Benefits

Using BIG-IP LTM devices to load balance traffic to its website, Rotary is able to enhance site availability, manage its infrastructure more efficiently, and also save on hardware and server software licensing costs.

### Better Site Availability

BIG-IP LTM delivers sub-second system failover, which helps ensure availability for the Rotary International site if a web server fails, or during regularly scheduled maintenance. "Keeping up with software patch updates is critical, and if we had to shut down the whole server farm each time we had to issue an update, it would not be acceptable," says Cointin. "The F5 devices let us perform server maintenance while ensuring the website uptime that is critical to the business of Rotary." Rotary International also uses custom-built iRules to configure its BIG-IP devices to prevent denial-of-service attacks.

"We recently used iRules to divert a huge number of network packets sent by hackers in an attempt to take down our website," explains Cointin.

### Administrative Tasks Nearly 90 Percent Faster

Rotary is able to configure new server clusters nearly 90 percent faster than before. Cointin attributes this improvement to the intuitive, web-based BIG-IP user interface. "It takes 15 minutes to set up new servers within BIG-IP, whereas it used to take several hours with the other vendor's devices," he says. Also, Rotary can perform many administrative functions, such as installing SSL certificates, directly on the F5 devices. Cointin estimates that it takes his staff 20 minutes to install an SSL certificate. With one F5 device supporting five web servers, he explains, "in the time it used to take us to install a certificate on one server, we can have the functionality installed across the entire server farm." This helps Rotary operate efficiently with a small IT staff. "We have 10 operations people supporting an infrastructure that serves 1.2 million members," adds Cointin.

### Infrastructure Cost Savings

Due to the SSL offload capabilities of the BIG-IP LTM devices, Rotary was able to purchase fewer servers for its Office SharePoint Server 2007 deployment than it would have without the F5 devices. With processor-intensive SSL encryption migrated to the BIG-IP LTM devices, Cointin says, "We're seeing a 10 to 20 percent decrease in processor usage on our web servers. Not only did this allow us to purchase fewer servers, it means we also save on licensing costs for server software."

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