

“F5 has world-class products exhibiting high-grade performance and efficient post-sales service...”

David Ng
Manager of IT Networks

Institute of Technical Education Speeds Up Process of Learning and Teaching with F5's FirePass SSL VPN and BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager



Industry:

Education

Challenges:

- Secure network access from any location
- Ease of maintenance
- Even distribution of Internet and intranet traffic among multiple web servers

Solution:

F5's FirePass® SSL VPN
F5's BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager

Benefits:

- 24/7 access to the ITE network
- Considerably fewer access-related problems
- Easy to use for network administrators

Overview

ITE is a world-class post-secondary technical education institution which has achieved recognition both locally and internationally for the quality of its programmes, facilities, graduates and organisational excellence. It has garnered multiple awards, including the prestigious Singapore Quality Award (SQA), and has enjoyed a student enrolment growth of more than 100% since 1992.

With a burgeoning population of 2,300 teachers and 21,600 students on its Simei campus, the availability of a secure and fast wireless network system is absolutely critical.

With the installation of F5's FirePass SSL VPN and Big-IP Local Traffic Manager, the school's applications and data can now be easily, and securely, accessed by its fraternity members, enabling the school to move forward as a global leader in technical education.

Challenges

Manager of IT Networks for the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), David Ng, had system performance requirements when he requested for tenders in a project that involved a secure wireless access system for the school.

The system he had in mind was one where a measure of flexibility was available to its staff – one that allowed them to access ITE's network securely and from anywhere, conveniently – even from the comfort of their homes. Besides ease in maintenance, the proposed system should also be able to manage Internet and intranet traffic so that traffic is evenly distributed among multiple web servers.

In this respect, the school at Simei presented a unique situation as the vast campus housed well over 21,600 students and 2,300 staff members who regularly use the Internet as a fundamental part of the learning and teaching process.

With a view of implementing an E-learning system to improve teaching and learning efficiency, Mr Ng also needed a company that the school could rely on, to serve not only its present needs, but its future aspirations as well.

Towards this end, Mr Ng found a ready partner in F5 and, more importantly, ready solutions in the company's FirePass SSL VPN appliance and in its BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager.





Solution

To ensure a secure wireless system, the Infocomm Development of Singapore (IDA) had deemed necessary the installation of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) for schools and institutes of higher education.

The F5 FirePass SSL VPN (the first SSL VPN solution with cross-platform support) was selected over the other IPsec VPN solutions as it could extend its IP support to all client applications via a standard web browser.

The system also enabled anyone accessing the Internet via a laptop, desktop or even a Pocket PC; fast and secure access to the institute's applications and data from the comfort of the home, or at any point of convenience. It presented a reliable solution that could be deployed quickly and was interoperable with existing network infrastructure.

With the installation of the F5's BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager, an external load balancer, further improvements in performance could be detected in ITE's network – while operating from within, or outside the campus.

Conclusion

The BIG-IP traffic management system offered a set of unified application infrastructure services. "Upon its installation, there was no doubt that a user was able to experience several added benefits. These included considerably less time-out prompts, slow downloading speed and other access related problems," said Mr Ng.

"We tried several other products. With the others, we needed to go through too many steps to complete a simple singular process. This certainly did not augur well with our network administrators who

deemed that it was not user-friendly enough," said Mr Ng.

"We concluded that the F5's FirePass SSL VPN and BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager are indeed the way to go. These are two world-class products that I would recommend to any corporation having similar requirements. In addition, the F5 technical team is always on hand. Not only are they equipped with the know-how, but their follow-up and post-sales services are always fast, friendly and efficient."

Mr Ng is now looking for ever better ways for the school to work and further improve its usage of the FirePass and BIG-IP. With the latest launch of its state-of-the-art campus at Simei, the institution aims to be a global leader in technical education.

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