LOADBALANCER

Wanstor and Loadbalancer.org work together to enhance Hosted Desktop IT Services

When customers of London-based IT services specialist, Wanstor, started to need more complex hosted services, the company's load balancing system came under review, especially in high-volume, multi-site, multi-server environments. After consulting with a range of providers and deploying Loadbalancer.org's Enterprise VA solution.

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> *Enterprise VA is the intermediary between the hosted desktop service we offer and the customers who use that service. It is crucial because without a solution like Enterprise VA - which can easily handle complex, multi-user, multisite environments – we cannot offer the kind of flexible multisite access that our customers want day-to-day."*

Ferdie Koukakis
Technical Director, Wanstor Ltd

Challenges

- Customers needed increasingly complex IT infrastructure services
- Existing load balancing system limited the ability to deliver high availability services
- Customers required enhancements to their remote desktop access.

Solution

- Enterprise VA (Enterprise Virtual Appliance Load Balancer)

Benefits

- Improves load balancing especially in high-volume, multi-site, multi-server environments
- Helps to improve customer service and customer satisfaction
- Cuts remote access log in times to milliseconds
- Provides an easy-to-use, highly scalable load balancing solution

Challenges

Wanstor is a UK IT solutions company with around 60 staff across two locations – London and Manchester. Wanstor's services include IT support, networking, security and hosted desktop solutions with some Wanstor staff working at customer sites.

One of the services that Wanstor provides is a remote desktop facility known as the hosted desktop service where PC software, applications and data is hosted off-site providing a secure and manageable computing environment. Wanstor's business was growing, and demands from customers for the hosted desktop service were becoming increasingly sophisticated.

Some of Wanstor's customers have over 3000 staff spread across offices all over the UK. With highly demanding situations such as this, Wanstor's application load balancing system came under review. Complex situations, such as multi-location server farms with 100s of users accessing data and applications across different servers, needed a top rate load balancing solution to avoid generating connection problems.

There are a number of scenarios in which load balancing becomes important. Some users don't follow procedures and log off correctly. Leaving a machine on in the office, they then log on at home expecting to pick-up the same session. Also, if a session was terminated - because of an Internet disconnection, or the PC had not been used for a while - when the user attempted to log back on, they needed to access the last session. A new session should not be opened, with all their previous work still in the old session. If this happened, users would have to get support to retrieve the session, wasting a lot valuable time and effort.

"We were concerned about the possibility of getting calls from users who could not access their PCs in the kind of flexible way that we wanted them to," says Ferdie Koukakis, Technical Director at Wanstor.

Solution

Wanstor researched a number of load balancing solutions including those from Loadbalancer.org. The company decided to test out Loadbalancer.org's solution and after initial trials deployed it for a customer with 600 staff running up to 300 remote desktop connections a day from multiple servers at two separate hosting sites. The solution - Loadbalancer.org's Enterprise VA (Enterprise Virtual Appliance Load Balancer) - had an immediate impact on the customer, instantly improving the flexibility of session terminations and server misdirection.

Enterprise VA manages application traffic, inspecting, transforming and routing requests as it load balances them across the application infrastructure. Wanstor has deployed Enterprise VA for those customers experi-encing problems with the old system and for any new customers.

"Enterprise VA basically does what it says on the tin," says Koukakis. "One of the nice features of Enterprise VA solution is that it scales very easily, so that as our customers expand their operations and users numbers, we hardly have to do anything, we just add in more server licences and the new users are supported."

Results

Since installing Enterprise VA, Wanstor has been able to offer far greater flexibility around remote desktop load balancing, as a result, calls to the help desks have fallen and customer satisfaction increased. "The main thing for us was happy customers and that's what Enterprise VA has helped us achieve," says Koukakis.

One of the other benefits that Enterprise VA has delivered, and something that Wanstor's customers have commented on, is quick login times. Enterprise VA has reduced these to a millisecond delay.

From a technical point of view Enterprise VA is extremely easy to deploy and maintain. Koukakis says, "It's very much a set and forget solution; deployment is absolutely seamless. You just download it, configure it and off it goes. And because it runs under Linux it is very easy to manage because you don't have to worry about all the administration tasks associated with other operating platforms."

Koukakis adds, "I would have to take my hat off to Loadbalancer.org's support. If I send an email, they get back to me quickly, they are always available on the phone and we always get to speak with people who know what they are talking about. We deal with many, many vendors and that level of support is an important and distinguishing aspect of the whole service from Loadbalancer.org.