Bare Metal Blog: Introduction

Don MacVittie, 2012-06-11

#f5 #baremetalblog Introducing the geekiest bits of F5 hardware in a new blog series: Bare Metal Blog.

Just about every high-tech vendor on the planet has some form of secret sauce that makes them believe they're the best option for your IT needs. For some it is price, for others service, yet others point at integration. All have some level of support for all of the others, but believe they excel at one more than the others. I'm not talking about the bit they tell you when you ask, I'm talking about the bit they talk about when you're not around. F5 does really well at all of the above, but the secret sauce, the thing that makes all of the above important, is the integration of rock-solid software running on a VM or hardware designed internally. By controlling all phases of development, the systems are purpose-designed from end-to-end to deliver applications fast and enable ADC functionality beyond the norm. By extension, our Virtual Editions are cool and work really well, especially in hybrid cloud environments, but for sheer geek madness, our hardware platforms are insane.

Since we don't often talk much about F5 hardware and how it comes to be what it is, this blog series is part of an effort to give you just a peek inside our hardware development environment. We keep a cadre of rock stars stashed away designing ever more powerful solutions, and even if you are the most devoted user of F5 gear, you probably do not know any of their names or realize what they do to bring high performing, high reliability hardware to your office. We're going to change just a bit of that here, by talking about a topic a week, and sometimes about the rockstars that make these topics work.

When it comes down to it, there are instances where hardware – particularly finely tuned special purpose hardware – just cannot be beat for performance and scalability. When that hardware is generally utilized to improve performance or add security without impacting performance, the difference can be amazing. By way of example, hardware-based compression for application acceleration is implemented throughout our line of physical ADCs. The performance edge that offers is often unknown or underestimated.

In the course of this blog series, we'll delve into how the hardware is tested, what benefits hardware offers that software or our Virtual Editions cannot, how to test hardware to get real-world test results that are also apples-to-apples across vendors, myths that actually sell more hardware but you can use for capacity planning, MTBF and what it means to your organization, and, well, a ton of other things that I have to choose from. From time to time others who have knowledge of this topic will post using the same #baremetalblog hashtag, so you can search DevCentral for baremetalblog to get the entire array of blogs, no matter which of us wrote them.

The goal (aside from talking about the cool stuff we don't normally discuss) is to arm you with questions you should be asking any networking vendor about performance, quality, sourcing of parts, and integration. We'll keep it up for as long as we have content, which is likely to be months.

I'm looking forward to writing it, hopefully it is as informative and evocative as I expect it to be.

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