

BIG-IP and Acopia Sandwich: the tip of the iceberg



Don MacVittie, 2008-29-07

Anyone who knows me knows that my comment in [this blog entry](#) about not knowing enough about Acopia ARX was made specifically as a self-motivator. After all, if I know that's the problem and fail to fix it, I'm not exactly doing my best, right?

So right after that post went live I started digging into ARX and trying to make certain I understood the product as well as I could. Several members of the Acopia team have been great about getting me the information I need and pointing me down the road to understanding. Since I'm pretty intimately familiar with NAS virtualization, all I really needed was a primer on the ARX in particular.

Thanks to some motivated members on that team, I've got thousands of pages of docs that I'm working my way through, filling in those gaps in my knowledge.

Note that there are likely people smarter than me thinking about this stuff, but I have the blog, so you get to listen to my ramblings over the next few weeks as my understanding solidifies.

I'm not ready to talk about all of the possible ways ARX and LTM could work together in your enterprise, but I did have one thought while reading the deployment guide that was interesting to me.

You've got an Intranet, we all do. There are other servers that fit into this scenario in your building, but we'll talk about the Intranet servers because they're in just about every organization. That Intranet may or may not be busy enough to be sitting behind a BIG-IP. For purposes of this post, we'll assume it is more than one server, but only because it makes my example more clear.

There are a few assumptions we can make about your Intranet web servers that are true in the vast majority of installations... that they serve up pages that are either relatively static or just an HTML rendering of data stored in a database somewhere, and that they are standard server hardware. That means you have a decent amount of disk space on the server, and that the Intranet is not filling it at a rapid pace. Assuming Intranet and not Internet server(s) also assumes that the server(s) are not exposed to the world through the DMZ or Net connection, again making this example clearer.

Short version of this post so far:

You have Intranet web server or servers that are not publicly exposed and have a large chunk of disk sitting unused.

Conveniently for this example, Intranet servers tend not to be buried in traffic either.

So using Acopia, you can add the excess disk on your Intranet servers to the virtual directory, and set that disk to be the place where Acopia stores infrequently accessed files or replicates data from some other location.

F5 Acopia ARX is now making use of disk whose cost you have already paid, and in most cases you are paying to spin.

Now if your Intranet is large, you've got several servers sitting there with unused disk and you're recouping that disk while maintaining control on how much it's used - putting infrequently accessed files on it (a relatively easy setup in ARX), and they're likely behind a BIG-IP. **Viola!** F5 sandwich! Your Intranet is optimized by the BIG-IP, your excess disk space is being recouped by Acopia, you are saving cash, and the fact that you're not buying something to put in more disk means you're more green. Meaning you've got a web server sandwich with F5 bread and green stuff falling out.

Just by virtue of having the two technologies. If your Intranet is a single server, then the savings will only be a few dozen Gig of disk space, but as I said at the beginning of this post, there are a lot of servers that have static disk needs and low usage in the average enterprise. Some of them were virtualized back when the term virtualization still meant *useful consolidation*, but some weren't, and those are sitting around waiting for you to make use of their disk.

Some kind of great epiphany? No, just thinking about what you could do while reading up on ARX, and pondering the power of ARX with LTM. You'll be seeing more and more detailed thoughts on how these products compliment each other as time goes on, for example, Lori and I hashed out a scenario last weekend for a highly agile web server farm, but I want to boil it down to post size before writing about it. Or making it a tech tip, but then I'd want to set it up, and that would have some logistical problems I'll have to overcome first.

Until then, I'm off to read some more.

Don.

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