DevCentral Top5 09/25/2012

Colin Walker, 2012-25-09

If ever there were a time that my proverbial tank were on empty in regards to my knowledge of the goodness that DevCentral brings the eager F5 using boys and girls of the world, all I would have to do is go on the road for a couple of days to User Group meetings and mix it up with "the people" to be fully recharged. Not that my tank was anywhere near empty, mind you. Let's be honest, I'm a bit fervent in my DevCentralyness (also, I make up words sometimes, welcome to the program), to the point of bowling people over with my "Community is awesome and we're all going to kick butt together!" message. In the end though, they tend to dust themselves off and join the rallying cry. I was lucky enough to travel to the East coast last week for some user group hawesomeness and fun in the sun in Raleigh, NC and Miami, FL. I attended two pretty stellar user groups. We talked, we laughed, we cried, we became blood brothers and sisters in a purely figurative and not at all medically dangerous way involving no blood whatsoever. We bonded over F5 and associated technologies, working together to solve each others' problems, and hopefully learned some really cool stuff about F5 gear and in particular iRules. *Pause for shocked expressions to clear*. One of the great things about working in such a killer ecosystem of people, the DC Crew, as they've been affectionately referred to, is that there is no cause for pause in content just because someone's out and about. As such, there's still plenty of killer stuff coming at you in this week's DevCentral Top5, upon which we will embark … now:

#The101: iRules - Control Structures and Operators

http://bit.ly/UDYbrs

Even from across the continent I'm dropping iRules knowledge. Whether your name is Mal or otherwise, you can't stop the signal. In this new edition of #The101 series we're walking slowly deeper into the wondrous ways of iRules. Dealing with some more core concepts here with a look at Control Structures and Operators. Not exactly a sexy topic if you're looking to be wowed with flash bang gizmos and fancy tools, but a darn important thing to understand before moving forward. DevCentral is all flash bang, packed with wow and a side of "hold my beer and watch this!". The whole purpose of this series is to take as step back and work from the ground up to prepare everyone for the leap they may soon want to take when they delve into some of the wicked awesome iRules wonders wandering around DevCentral. This is one step closer to that, and there's much more to come.

ASM Custom Signatures, oh my!

http://bit.ly/UthS0v

If you've used ASM, you've dealt with signatures. If you've dealt with signatures, there's a decent chance that you, like I, were simultaneously excited and petrified when reading this title. It could be great, or ghastly very easily, and which path gets chosen is largely based on the tour guide of the topic. Fortunately our very own security nut Josh Michaels has a sure hand on the tiller and a keen eye on the horizon, and isn't about to let us get lost in the sea of signatures. This is a solid, simple look at custom signatures in ASM. It talks briefly about what they are and why you may want them, and then digs right into showing you how to build them, giving you some commonly used parameters, and some usable examples to make the uptake on this potentially perilous topic rather easy. I may not be a true security monkey, but I have a deep appreciation for the topic and the needs of people like Josh to keep us all honest. This is one that I'd highly recommend if you have, want, may have, have thought about or heard of ASM, etc. Check it out.

Monitoring Your Network with PRTG - Custom Sensors Part 2

http://bit.ly/PW7mik

Chiming back in with another look at custom sensors in PRTG, Joe sets us up with even more info to keep things running smoothly in the world of monitors. Monitors in a deployment are, to me, much akin to logging in a programming context. What I mean is they are vitally important, a powerful and useful tool, and often completely and utterly overlooked. Trust me when I say you don't want to make the mistake of forgoing proper monitoring with accurate, reliable sensors, polling and reporting. Don't be that guy (or girl, as the case may be). It isn't fun. Do you know what's worse than getting alerted at 2am that something has gone awry in your deployment, or is heading that direction, and needs attention to avoid total disaster? Waking up at 8am to find a total disaster, because you never got that alert at 2am. Monitoring is your friend, and Joe talks you through how to make PRTG dance to your particular beat, regardless of what it is you need to monitor.

Traveling in the New Mobile Environment

http://bit.ly/PDOy7L

Frank Yue, for his maiden voyage in the DC blogging arena, makes quite a splash, at least in my book. Talking about service providers and the way in which they are approaching general vs. specific users is interesting to me for multiple reasons. Not the least of which is that I am one of those users affected by their approach and the resulting outcomes. Relating it to traffic and tolls makes this something that I think anyone can understand and relate to, which is important when trying to discuss complex concepts. Ever wondered why certain services are targeted with more scrutiny or even costs than others when dealing with a CSP? (Communication Service Provider - hurray for new TLAs!) Well, if you have, you should check out the infrastructure needed to make things tick and then rethink a bit. There is a heck of a lot that goes into making sure that streaming things stream and text bits text. It's not as easy as plugging a couple of cables in, what with all of the inspection and decision making required. Luckily Frank's on our side and I get the feeling that this will be only the first of many great such dives into the CSP world, or at least I'm hoping (Hey Frank? This is my version of a subtle hint. Say hi to the 100,000+ people I'm putting you on the spot in front of, don't let us down… just sayin'). Everyone welcome Frank by reading his entry, and making sure that he gets the picture that we want more of this type of thing on DevCentral.

DevCentral Security Podcast - September

http://bit.ly/PW7zC6

For our media-ish podcast-y bit of the week, I want to call out a pretty killer podcast that's been going on for months now, but I can't recall if I've ever featured. Since Josh joined our team a while back now, he's been producing a pretty great security podcast on a monthly basis. This time through he chats with another local, F5 security great Jeff Costlow and they talk about all sorts of things from BEAST to CRIME to kittens and other such horrifying manner of security related topic. I've probably disclaimed 100 times by now that I'm not a security guy (pro tip: still not), but I really enjoy this boiled down, distilled version of what's going on in their world. It's a scary place out there and someone's got to keep us safe. Winter is coming and all, and these dudes are the ones at the front line keeping the baddies out and letting us app folks do our thing. Paying a bit of attention to what they're up to and how we may be able to help seems like a solid thing to me. One app, one team, one purpose and all that. Take 15 minutes and play this while you're sorting emails or taking notes on that article you're supposed to be writing or you know, something. It's definitely worth the listen.

With that we find ourselves through to the other end and finished with this week's installment of the DC Top5. I hope it's been as enlightening and/or entertaining for you to read as it has been and always is for me to write. If you've got any suggestions, questions, feedback or general chatter, it's more than welcome. Otherwise, I'll be back in two weeks for five more of my favorite picks from Devcentral's best.