

Like Garth, We Fear Change



Lori MacVittie, 2010-06-04

Oh, load balancers are networks and applications are development, and never the twain shall meet.



We have a brittle system underpinning the data center: the network. It's brittle, yes. But it works. Thanks to years of tweaking and tuning and troubleshooting, it works. We know where everything is, and how everything interacts, and it works. It works well, in fact, now that we've got it all figured out.

Is it any surprise then that we might be resistant to change that might (probably will) upset that delicate balance?

One of the most difficult challenges in advocating the employment of a solution that is essentially a hybrid of two existing (and entrenched) concepts such as networks and applications is not only getting those responsible for each "side" of the solution to talk to each but to work together. Each one lacks the control over the solution because it is a hybrid, and thus each group is generally unwilling to give up any of *their* control to the other. The network team doesn't want the application developers mucking around in "their" network and the application developers don't want the network team mucking around in "their" application.

"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." – Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack-room ballads*, 1892

And that's really at the core of why application-aware networking is sometimes difficult to make stick and why, ultimately, cloud computing will also be as difficult to "make stick."

Brad Casemore reminded me of this fact recently in his post, "[The Long Winding Road to Application-Intelligent Networks](#)":

“The defining concept of application-aware networking has been with us for some time, and the technologies clearly exist to facilitate its widespread deployment. What's preventing it from coming together is the balkanized thinking and — why not say it? — the entrenched politics of the traditional data center and its vendor ecosystem.

We'll get there, though. The wheels are in motion, and the destination is in sight. The trip just took longer than some of us thought it would.

Lesson learned: Never underestimate institutional resistance to change that is seen to threaten an established order.

-- Brad Casemore, *Twilight in the Valley of the Nerds*

Ah, yes. Application-aware networking, the hybrid solutions of networking and development, threaten the established order within the data center. This is mine and that is yours. We fear change, for it may upset the balance – not just in the underlying systems but *in the balance of power* in the data center.

F5 Networks, Inc. | 401 Elliot Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 | 888-882-4447 | f5.com

F5 Networks, Inc.
Corporate Headquarters
info@f5.com

F5 Networks
Asia-Pacific
apacinfo@f5.com

F5 Networks Ltd.
Europe/Middle-East/Africa
emeainfo@f5.com

F5 Networks
Japan K.K.
f5j-info@f5.com

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