

Technology Evaluation: What if it broke?



Don MacVittie, 2008-23-04

It's easy when running through five hundred meetings and getting fifteen dotted-line approvals to lose sight of the purpose of technology evaluations, be they for products like ours or the best enterprise phone device, or the primary development environment for the next few years.

I've sat through those meetings, I've run them. The one thing they have in common is that the range of topics is wide and the concerns are genuine, but often misplaced. Frustration can run high, and boredom is definitely on the menu at some point if enough people feel the change will impact them.

So it's important to remember the point of technology evaluations in the enterprise, because the real important stuff is simple.

1. Is it suitable to the jobs we want to apply it to, and to our environment?
2. What happens if it breaks?

The meetings will cover everything - security, throughput, programming interfaces, how it will help that sticky problem with the online employee lunch ordering system, what time it is in Crete at the moment, what happened on the latest episode of *The Office*, and why so-n-so is late for the meeting *again*.

But all of these things are either (a) covered in the points above, or (b) Not relevant.

So when you're explaining the steps required to continue covering business manager X's systems with the new piece of equipment, keep points 1 and 2 in mind. They're the guiding principals of why the meetings are occurring in the first place. Prove that the system does or does not fit your environment, and if it does, make plans for redundancy or replacement in a timely manner. Then choose amongst those that fit 1 and 2 in whatever manner you like.

While to some this advice may be intuitive, when you're in the throes of the meeting process - when the testing is not going on because you're still early or very late in the process - keeping these bits in mind might just save your sanity. Or at least help control your blood pressure. It's not really about Bill in Accounting's 500,000 line spreadsheet that *must perform well over the network*, it's about keeping the business running if your choice includes a change. Bill and his spreadsheet are just a symptom you have to address along the way.

Oh, and since this is an F5 blog, the answers for our products are (1) Yes, and (2) Buy two. Or more.

Now you know why I'm not in sales.

Particularly since I take my answer to (1) back - I'd have to see your environment and planned uses - the BIG-IP is warm, but doesn't make a great toaster for example - and I'm not interested in your meetings, I have my own ;-).

Don.

/imbibing: Redbull, alone with the newborn this week

/reading: Nothing at the moment, see above.

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