

# The Secret of the Security Safety Dance



Lori MacVittie, 2009-03-06

*Attackers say, we can go where we want to; we can leave our code behind...*



There's probably a raid going on right now in [Naxxramas](#) and the attackers are almost certainly doing the Safety Dance. They probably learned the Safety Dance the same way I learned about it; from someone well-versed in its intricate steps.

See, if you don't know the Safety Dance and you come up against [Heigan the Unclean](#), well... he's not called Heigan the Unclean for nothing. You will not survive. Not even if you happen to have a [Holocaust Cloak](#) at hand.

Players in [WoW](#) (World of Warcraft) have figured out exactly what steps to take and when in order to defeat the defenses of Heigan the Unclean and they aren't shy about sharing them with other folks.

The [Safety Dance](#) is about keeping safe while defeating the enemy. It's a set of tactical maneuvers that have been carefully learned by

trial and error over time and is now shared in forums and videos and image galleries across the web.

Kind of like how attackers share information about the vulnerabilities inherent in myriad software and hardware infrastructure inside your data center and, in some cases, exactly what steps to take to defeat *your* defenses.

---

## **YOU AREN'T A COMPUTER GENERATED 'BOSS' in a VIRTUAL REALITY DATA CENTER, ARE YOU?**

At least I hope you aren't. I hope you're a real life, flesh and blood person with the capability to *adapt* to evolving attacks and vulnerabilities. I hope you're *agile* and fluid, not inflexible and easily broken. And I hope your infrastructure, is, too.

The reason that WoW players use the Safety Dance is *because it works*. Every time. Heigan the Unclean is inflexible, unable to adapt, and does not react at all to anything other than the raiders attacking it. Heigan doesn't even realize that the WoW community has figured out how to break his defenses let alone be able to change *its* tactics in order to extirpate the effectiveness of its enemies attacks.

Heigan has nothing but his weapons and magic to help him, and a predefined set of actions which he can take to stave off his inevitable defeat at the hands of his attackers. It isn't a matter of *if* he will lose, it's a matter of *when*.

You, one hopes, are not so ill-armed *nor* is your defeat at the hands of attackers inevitable. One hopes that your and [your infrastructure are agile](#), ready to react at the first sign of trouble. Able to fend off the most determined

~~adventurers~~ attackers no matter what type of dance they may try to use to slip past your defenses.

Sure, your defenses are technological and his are magical, but there are *some* elements of your infrastructure that can be, in a way, magical in nature. A [dynamic infrastructure](#), Infrastructure 2.0, can provide the ability for systems – including security – to be more agile; to adapt in real time to changing conditions and threats. That’s kind of magical considering the rigidity inherent in traditional infrastructure offerings. Between context-awareness and [programmability](#), such systems offer [a platform](#) on which immediate tactics and long-term strategies can be implemented that can defeat attackers without massive disruption of internal systems.

---

## YOU MUST BE AS DYNAMIC AS YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE

---

Certainly dynamic infrastructure affords you the opportunity to be agile. It *enables* IT and therefore the business to be more adaptable and counter the tactics and attacks used by miscreants bent on leaving behind destructive code. But inherent in that statement is that you must take advantage of that agility. While there is much that Infrastructure 2.0 can offer in terms of automation, [integration](#), [collaboration](#) with the entire infrastructure ecosystem, and agility there is much that lays dormant waiting for you to take advantage of it. Like developers, you have to use the platform to your advantage and implement solutions that improve the overall security of the applications which you are charged to protect. You have to be dynamic, too.

You can’t stand before the armies of the invaders and defend yourself – and your applications – using the same old tired tactics because the attackers *know* exactly what you’re going to do, when, and where. You must develop a new set of tactics and responses by leveraging the tools at your command; by leveraging the intelligence inherent in Infrastructure 2.0 solutions to detect and prevent old and new attack methods.

If you can’t adapt then you can’t leverage the infrastructure and you will fail as more and more DPS (damage per second) is directed your way. Just like Heigan the Unclean.



- [Infrastructure 2.0: As a matter of fact that’s not what it means](#)
- [The Context-Aware Cloud](#)
- [Do you control your application network stack? You should](#)
- [Jedi Mind Tricks: HTTP Request Smuggling](#)
- [I am in your HTTP Headers, attacking your application](#)
- [BIG-IP v10 System](#)

---

F5 Networks, Inc. | 401 Elliot Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 | 888-882-4447 | [f5.com](#)

F5 Networks, Inc.  
Corporate Headquarters  
[info@f5.com](mailto:info@f5.com)

F5 Networks  
Asia-Pacific  
[apacinfo@f5.com](mailto:apacinfo@f5.com)

F5 Networks Ltd.  
Europe/Middle-East/Africa  
[emeainfo@f5.com](mailto:emeainfo@f5.com)

F5 Networks  
Japan K.K.  
[f5j-info@f5.com](mailto:f5j-info@f5.com)