

# Toll Booths and Dams. And Strategic Points of Control



Don MacVittie, 2011-08-09

An interesting thing about toll booths, they provide a point at which all sorts of things can happen. When you are stopped to pay a toll, it smooths the flow of traffic by letting a finite number of vehicles through per minute, reducing congestion by naturally spacing things out. Dams are much the same, holding water back on a river and letting it flow through at a rate determined by the operators of the dam.



The really interesting bit is the other things that these two points introduce. When necessary, toll booths have been used to find and stop suspected criminals. They have also been used as advertising and information transmission points. None of the above are things toll booths were created for. They were created to collect tolls. And yet by nature of where they sit in the highway system, can be utilized for much more. The same is true of a dam. Dams today almost always generate electricity. Often they function as bridges over the very water they're controlling. They control the migration of fish, and operate as a check on predatory invasive species. Again, none of these things is the primary reason dams were originally invented, but the nature of their location allows them to be utilized effectively in all of these roles.

Toll booths - Wikipedia

We've talked a bit about strategic points of control. They're much like toll booths and dams in the sense that their location makes them key to controlling a whole lot of traffic on your LAN. In the case of F5's defined strategic points of control, they all tie in to the history of F5's product lineup much like a toll booth was originally to collect tolls. [F5 BIG-IP LTM](#) sits at the network strategic point of control. Initially LTM was a load balancer, but by virtue of its location and the needs of customers has grown into one of the most comprehensive Application Delivery Controllers on the market – everything from security to uptime monitoring is facilitated by LTM. [F5 ARX](#) is much the same, being the file-based storage strategic point of control allows such things as directing some requests to cloud storage and others to storage by vendor A, while still others go to vendor B, and the remainder go to a Linux or Windows machine with a ton of free disk space on it. The WAN strategic point of control is where you can improve performance over the WAN via [WOM](#), but it is also a place where you can extend LTM functionality to remote locations, including the cloud.

Budgets for most organizations are not growing due to the state of the economy. Whether you're government, public, private, or small business, you've been doing more with less for so long that doing more with the same would be a nice change. If you're lucky, you'll see growth in IT budgeting due to increasing needs of security and growth of application footprints. Some others will see essentially flat budgets, and many – including most government IT orgs - will see shrinking budgets.

While that is generally bad news, it does give you the opportunity to look around and figure out how to make more effective use of existing technology. Yes, I have said that before, because you're living that reality, so it is worth repeating.

Since I work for F5, here are a few examples though, something I've not done before. From the network strategic point of control, we can help you with DNSSec, AAA, Application Security, Encryption, performance on several levels (from TCP optimizations to compression), HA, and even [WAN optimization](#) issues if needed. From the storage strategic point of control we can help you harness cloud storage, implement tiering, and balance load across existing infrastructure to help stave off expensive new storage purchases. Backups and replication can be massively improved (both in terms of time and data transferred) from this location also.



We're not the only vendor that can help you out without having to build a whole new infrastructure. It might be worthwhile to have a vendor day, where you invite vendors in to give presentations about how they can help – larger companies and the federal government do this regularly, you can do the same in a scaled down manner, and what sales person is going to tell you “no, we don't want to come tell you how you can help and we can sell you more stuff”? Really? Another option is, as I've said in the past, make sure you know not just the functionality you are using, but the capabilities of the IT gear, software, and services that you already have in-house. Chances are there are cost savings by using existing functionality of an existing product, with time being your only expense. That's not free, but it's about as close as IT gets.

Hoover Dam from the air - Wikipedia

So far we in IT have been lucky, the global recession hasn't hit our industry as hard as it has hit most, but it has constricted our ability to spend big, so little things like those above can make a huge difference. Since I am on a computer or Playbook for the better part of 16 hours a day, hitting websites maintained by people like you, I can happily say that you all rock. A highly complex, difficult to manage set of variables rarely produces a stable ecosystem like we have. No matter how good the technology, in the end it is people who did that, and keep it that way. You all rock.

And you never know, but you might just find the AllSpark hidden in the basement ;-).

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