Top5 08/30/2013

Colin Walker, 2013-30-08

From making heroes and rock stars, to a complete interface facelift, to throwing up the horns and rocking out (the dude abides, by the way, most certainly), DevCentral has undergone more than a few small changes since the last Top5 hit the waves of the verse. Fortunately, much like the signal, the goodness that is the community and the many contributors therein cannot be stopped. (No, not even by Reavers, though let's not talk about such things; they give me the creeps.) As such, there has been an absolute landslide of discussion, banter, content and media to keep up with. Some having to do with getting to know the newer, kinder, sleeker, **faster** DevCentral, some normal "Let's do cool stuff with F5 stuff" stuff. Either way, there's been much to keep up with in a very good way. Even though I'm sure you've read every article, comment and post, I've taken the liberty of picking a few of my most recent favorites to hand over personally and reiterate the hawesomeness within. You know, as a refresher. Since you've read it all. Right? Right. Even so, here's this week's Top5:

iCall Triggers - Invalidating Cache from iRules

http://bit.ly/194zVmE

If you've ever read the Top5 or any of my other writing, or seen one of my speaking engagements, or my Facebook/Twitter pages, or met me, or frankly been within earshot of me for more than 7 seconds, then you've probably heard me ranting and raving about iRules in some fashion or another. While iRules are awesome and wickedly powerful, they are not, however, the only killer language on the F5 block. There are other ways to leverage the extensive programmability of the various F5 platforms beyond the admitted powerhouse that is iRules. iCall, for instance, is the newest kid to the programmability party, and a darn fine one at that. I've started beating the iCall drum more and more in recent months, and for good reason. If you're looking for granular, programmatic ways to affect your control plane, that is, the configuration of the F5 device itself, rather than the traffic being passed through it, iCall is a slick, powerful way to do just that. Jason, in this awesome, get in and get dirty article shows you a great example of just what kinds of things you can do with this exciting new toolset. He steps you through from concept to each chunk of code necessary to string together this cool solution that will let you invalidate your acceleration cache quickly and easily from anywhere. This is a great read and a good place to get started if you're looking for some concrete examples of what iCall looks like and how it works.

The BIG-IP Application Security Manager Part 1: What is the ASM?

http://bit.ly/18prLDb

If you mention F5 to ten people, I'm willing to bet you'll hear a mix of answers from "Load Balancers" to "Application Delivery" to, well, your guess is as good as mine. One of the things you will definitely be hearing more and more these days, and going forward, however, is "Security". F5 has always been very security minded and capable, but you may have noticed the past year or two that we've been getting way more security **focused** as well, and that is an altogether different thing. Security is something we take very seriously, and an arena into which we've been pouring a large amount of time, energy and resources, with no intention of stopping. One of the security offerings that F5 brings to the table is Application Security Manager, or ASM for short. If you aren't familiar with ASM, you're in luck, as John Wagnon is just embarking on a 10 part article series to illustrate just what ASM is, what it does, how it works and some presumably killer examples of making it do the moonwalk upside down. Except, you know, doing technical security things, rather than dancing. Horrible analogy aside, this article is the first foray into what promises to be a solid series, so I'd keep an eye out, I plan to.

VMware Virtualizing the Network on its Way to the Software Defined Data Center

Virtualization. SDDC. SDN. DevOps. ITaaS. NFV. If you're as confused at the alphabet soup as I am, then this is a good stop on your path to virtualization illumination. Lori, our resident proselytizer of all things cloud and virtualization, digs into some of these terms, how they're tossed about, what they mean and how the different technologies that they actually represent interact and play off of or with each other. It's easy to get lost in the rapidly changing world of virtualization and today's ever shifting datacenter, but there is some sanity to be had in there, I promise. I also dig Lori's overarching theme in this piece which seems to be "Application Virtualization is great, but what about the network?". It's easy to forget the wiring when talking about shifting things around on the fly, elasticity and expansion. If you do forget it, however, I can almost guarantee you'll be sorry down the road. Instead take a look here and keep an eye peeled towards Lori's articles for future discussions and thoughts on the matter. There are solid solutions, and we can help without question, so take a look and see what your options are before getting behind the 8-ball.

Automating application delivery with BIG-IP and VMware vCenter Orchestrator

From the very outset Simon's article grabs me with, "Orchestration is a growing trend…". Preach it, brother, is it ever. Applications and the datacenters supporting them are getting ever more flexible, elastic, extensible, dynamic and a host of other terms that basically boil down to "NOT STATIC ANYMORE!". That is all fantastic for application functionality, growth, rapid iteration and deployment and a host of other things. It is often, however, not so awesome for the people trying to keep up with all of the infrastructure and configuration changes that go along with that blistering pace of advancement. The ever present march of technological improvement is something that many an administrator dreads without proper orchestration. The more moving parts, the more rapidly moving those parts are, and the more interconnections there are between different pieces of the constantly growing application delivery fabric, the more important orchestration of those things becomes. This article talks about one way in which your F5 devices can help combat the possibility of being overwhelmed by allowing you to plug directly into VMware's vCenter Orchestrator to perform some of the more common tasks on your F5 devices. This is a good read for anyone looking at or thinking about management on a larger scale, or anyone that might get there someday. Note: That should cover pretty much everyone, mmkay? So read up.

Another FSE iRules Challenge, Even More Surprising Results

You knew there were going to be iRules in here somewhere, didn't you? Come on, have we met? I got the hugely fun opportunity to present and judge yet another FSE iRules challenge over the last couple of weeks. I truly enjoy each and every one of these experiences, and this was no exception. From dreaming up an interesting (I hope) challenge for the competitors to tackle, to playing the part of the customer and delivering my requirements before fielding a bevy of questions from the eager to quell the problem engineers, to seeing the massive brain power being tossed around to solve said issues; it's always a good time for a geek like me. This time around we had a ringer, hence the somewhat surprising results, but you'll have click through to find out the details of his cyborg ways. In the meantime, if you're looking for some examples of what our engineers are up to in their first weeks at the company while getting up to speed on iRules, here's your chance to find out. Hint: It's pretty darn impressive.