Virtualizing VMware?

Jeff Browning, 2008-29-04

Wow - that sounds kind of bizarre. Like load balancing a load balancer? Or, maybe launching a rocket launcher?

OK - I kid. However, when you think about the ease with which companies can spin up instances of virtual servers, it's pretty easy to understand how a bit of intelligent load balancing could be useful. Useful from not just an optimization perspective but especially a management simplification perspective.

So, that's where Steve Duplessie's recent post comes into play. Honestly, sometimes it takes someone a few steps removed to explain things most eloquently. Here on DevCentral, we can get pretty deep in the technical weeds. So, it's always refreshing to see such a well articulated assessment of things.

Plus, any analyst that gets excited enough about technology to say "killer" is cool by me. Here's the part I thought really cut to the chase:

> "VMware can make one physical server look like 98. F5 can apparently make 98 physical servers look like 1. That's killer."

You should take a look. Steve really nails it.

However - there's another aspect of this that is worth mentioning. Spinning up that many virtual servers is cool. But, managing how they are virtualized by F5 BIG-IP (when you're talking about 98 of 'em) can be a bit overwhelming. It's no secret that virtual server sprawl is quickly becoming a hot issue for IT departments.

So, what's an IT pro to do? Type in a huge batch of CLI commands? Surprisingly, some do. It hurts my head to think of it.

There ARE better options though that really begin to show why we invested in the iControl API years ago.

- Example 1: what if you could automagically add new virtual servers to your BIG-IP collection of nodes when they start up? Pretty cool. Here's the sample code.
- Example 2: to get even more elegant, what if - based upon increases in connections/requests - you could AUTOMATICALLY spawn new virtual servers in VMware? Wicked. Check out the article (with screenshots) here and get the sample code here.

[Updated @ 6:30pm 4/29: Nicolas, our DevCentral/iControl/iRule rockstar in France, wanted me to mention that there's more coming soon on this front... stay tuned - you'll get the details here as soon as we have them! Also - working on updating the sample code... hope to have the right stuff there ASAP. -Jeff]

So, there you have it. Virtualization of VMware. And, integration code, ready-to-go, to help you automate the way they work together. That, to me, is "killer".

(Special shout out to Matt, Mohamed, and Nicolas - some of F5's best and brightest - for making these possible!)