



Groupe Flo ensures the availability of its business applications with an ALOHA Load Balancer from Excellence

With over 1,000 users located at over 300 restaurants and the head office, Groupe Flo's IT system faces heavy loads during specific time periods. To improve availability and performance of its business applications, Groupe Flo deployed Excellence dynamic load balancer.

Project at a Glance

Customer :

Groupe FLO

Brands:

Brasseries Flo, Hippopotamus, La Taverne de Maître Kanter, Tablapizza, Bistro Romain...

Vertical Industry :

Restauration

Location:

Paris La Défense, France

Customer needs :

- Increase the availability rate of applications accessed from each restaurant
- Guarantee that users at the head office have continued access to specific applications
- Improve flexibility for performing server maintenance

Solution :

ALOHA Load Balancer Rack Duo

An information system distributed between the head office and over 300 restaurants

With over 300 restaurants located in France and abroad, 136 of which are franchises, Groupe Flo is the themed restaurant leader in France with brands such as Hippopotamus, La Taverne de Maître Kanter, Tablapizza, Bistro Romain, as well as the iconic La Coupole and Bofinger brasseries in Paris. The IT department, based at head office, provides all the restaurants with the business tools they need. However, the information system, which has approximately 1,000 users, is completely distributed between the restaurants (cash front-office, business back-office) and the head office which hosts central applications (accounting back-office, messaging, virtual desktops for around 100 mobile workers, etc.).

Starting point – high availability of the accounting application

Accounting and financial management (Oracle Applications) is one of Groupe Flo's most critical applications. Because the group is listed on the stock exchange, Groupe Flo's 50 accountants must meet extremely short deadlines when producing financial reports. After migrating Oracle Applications from Tru64 on Alpha (which reached its end of life) to a new platform, availability rates decreased sharply, especially during times when the restaurants connected to send their information (at 7:00 am and 11:00 pm).

The IT department began looking for an upgradeable, centralized and comprehensive solution to ensure high availability of applications accessed by remote users and workers at the head office, and that also offered flexibility for times for front-end server maintenance.

Easy to roll out and use, plus an extremely competitive price

Load balancing is not a new concept for Groupe Flo. Since 1999, the traffic of the group's websites (hosted on Linux servers) has been balanced using HAProxy Open Source solution, used and enriched by Exceliance for its own load balancers. To improve availability and performance of its business applications, Groupe Flo chose to work with Exceliance engineers who had a good grasp of its IT environment and economic constraints.

"We wanted to acquire a solution that offered more features and was easy to rollout, but still affordable. Exceliance suggested we tested its ALOHA solution. Our team quickly became familiar with and mastered it very quickly," said Jean Landron, Groupe Flo Systems Manager. *"Additionally, the graphical administration interface was more user-friendly and simpler for the IT management team than the command line."*

Groupe Flo selected ALOHA 2K (2 load balancers in a single 1U rack) in active/passive mode in December 2009. In addition to its features, the decisive factors for Groupe Flo were its competitive price, low energy consumption (7 W) and capacity for future upgrades.

A flexible solution

The ALOHA load balancer kept all its promises. It provided a marked increase in the availability rate for all applications, for users at the head office and the restaurants, including during times when there is a high load on the Oracle Applications servers. Its ability to reroute traffic during maintenance now enables IT teams to work during the week, and not at night or on weekends, without interrupting services.

To reduce IT costs, Groupe Flo is gradually centralizing all of its infrastructure at the head office. Applications used at its restaurants, that are currently available in client/server mode, will be migrated to Citrix XenApp, so that will be accessible by Web browser. Access will be guaranteed by ALOHA for better response times and 24/7 availability.

Project Overview

Summary

Since December 2009, Groupe Flo has used ALOHA load balancer to provide over 1,000 users – located at the head office and at over 300 restaurants – with access to the information system 24/7, during peak business periods and during maintenance.

Challenges

- Guarantee application availability, especially during year-end closing of accounts
- Ensure continuity of service during maintenance
- Acquire a tool that is easy to rollout, upgradable, and suitable for the group's IT environment as well as its budget constraints

Key benefits

- Fast implementation and control by the IT team
- Marked increase in the availability rate of applications accessed from restaurants, including during activity spikes at the head office
- Server maintenance and updates now completed during the week instead of at night or on weekends.



Exceliance offers a full line of load balancers to improve performance, guarantee quality of service and ensure the availability of critical business applications.

Developed using HAProxy open source load balancing software, Exceliance solutions are known for their processing performance, reliability and wealth of features. Offered at more affordable prices than other commercial solutions, they cover 100% of the needs of 95% of companies and are easy to deploy and to administer. They are available in two different formats: rackable hardware appliance and virtual appliance.

Headquartered in Jouy-en-Josas (Yvelines, France) has around 100 customers in the banking, retail groups, energy and e-commerce industries and the public sector. Exceliance solutions are also used by many hosting providers.

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