

SUCCESS STORY

MyBuys

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pulse Secure transforms data center networking with open, virtual, and automated solutions that empower organizations to maximize their investments for the New IP

Challenges

- Deliver personalized web content and emails flawlessly, even during the hyperbusy holiday shopping season

Solution

- Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager virtual appliances for load balancing
- Tools for monitoring web server performance
- TrafficScript customization language
- Pulse Secure runs on common off the shelf servers based on Intel's x86 architectures

Benefits

- With 100% up-time, MyBuys exceeds SLAs
- Company has been named a top provider of personalization solutions every year since 2009
- Scalable load balancing solution supports company's growth
- Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager creates a worry-free environment
- Real-time traffic tracking and historical activity maps provide valuable performance data
- TrafficScript rule addressed scaling problem in 3 weeks, versus 6 months without scripting functionality

Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager Helps Ensure 100% Up-Time on Black Friday, Cyber Monday and Through the Holiday Shopping Season

MyBuys provides coordinated personalization solutions for display ads, email, websites and mobile devices to retailers, brands and agencies. The company automates and delivers billions of targeted offers each day using its Active Shopper Database, which is comprised of the behaviors and purchase intent of 250 million consumers matched to 1 billion active devices.

Challenge: Perform Perfectly During Cyber Monday and Other Traffic Peaks

MyBuys serves up personalized content to online customers of many well-known organizations, including Major League Baseball, GNC, FTD, UGG, ECCO, Skechers, Yankee Candle, and Brooks Bros. According to the IR 500 Guide, which ranks North American retailers based on annual online sales, MyBuys counts among its clients 77 of the top 500 Internet retailers (IR), which is 15% more than the next closest provider, and 133% more than the third-place provider.

MyBuys recognizes shoppers (anonymously) across all their devices, targets them across every channel, and ensures that each individual has a unique, consistent, personalized

shopping experience every time and everywhere they shop. The result is more customers, higher repeat rates, and overall increased site revenues by as much as 10%.

After starting out on servers hosted by Rackspace, MyBuys later set up its own data centers in co-lo facilities to have control over its own IT infrastructure. Web servers handle thousands of requests per second across three data centers. Incoming traffic consists of data reflecting the browsing behavior of the shoppers in the database; outgoing traffic is the personalized ads, emails, and web site customizations, which are determined by the company's algorithms.



Why Pulse Secure

“These things failover so fast that even if we have a few-second blip, it’s not relevant. The Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager can definitely provide 100% up-time.”

— Risto Kotalampi, Senior Director of Operations at MyBuys

Server traffic varies according to the time of day. Most MyBuys clients are in the US and traffic is highest in the afternoon and early evening across the country. Traffic also varies by season, with holiday shopping drawing the most traffic. Black Friday increases traffic by 2X, for example, while Cyber Monday drives it up by 3X.

Ensuring flawless performance during the holiday season is a big part of Risto Kotalampi’s job. He is the senior director of operations at MyBuys. “Preparing for the holiday shopping season is basically half of the work my team does,” Kotalampi explains. “We start in Q3, and by Cyber Monday we know how well we did.”

Kotalampi’s team must meet its service level agreements, and load balancing is a critical element of that. When MyBuys was making the move from Rackspace, Kotalampi used the opportunity to upgrade to a new load balancer with more functionality.

Solution: The Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager

MyBuys continues to use some open-source load balancers for its office environment, but “they are not up to par for the highly available production environment that our main business activity requires,” Kotalampi explains. His team also ruled out hardware-based load balancers, such as offerings from F5 and Cisco, and instead chose the Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager, the industry’s leading virtual application delivery controller (ADC).

In the Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager, Kotalampi found the additional functionality he needed. For example, the Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager includes tools for monitoring web server performance, something he particularly values. “The real-time tracking is brilliant,” Kotalampi says. “When we are doing maintenance, we might failover traffic from one data center to another. From here [using Pulse Secure], we can look at how we’re doing and see when all the traffic is gone so we can start the maintenance.”

The Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager also lets users create historical activity maps, which Kotalampi has used for presentations to management about system performance during the holiday shopping season.

Another huge advantage of the Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager is the TrafficScript customization language, which makes it possible to create rules for managing application traffic, automating tasks that used to be done manually and allowing Kotalampi’s team to make changes that would otherwise be too time-consuming or require action by clients.

The fact that the Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager is a software-based solution is an additional advantage in that it allows for very easy scalability, which supports MyBuys’ growth. “When we add a client we get more traffic, and the Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager definitely helps to grow the traffic.” MyBuys simply upgrades its Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager

licenses, which it has done frequently. “We’re definitely handling a more-than-10X-increase in traffic from where we started,” Kotalampi adds.

Benefits: 100% Up-Time Exceeds SLA; Huge Time Savings With TrafficScript

This year’s busy shopping days “went perfectly. We had no problems whatsoever,” says Kotalampi. The company has consistently met its SLAs, and actually achieved 100% up-time over a period of several months that included Cyber Monday and Black Friday. Kotalampi sees no reason for this to change. “These things failover so fast that even if we have a few-second blip, it’s not relevant. The Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager can definitely provide 100% up-time.”

MyBuys has been named a top provider of personalization solutions every year since 2009, and meeting and exceeding the SLA plays into this. “If the content we’re serving is not available, consumers are impacted and our clients’ revenues are impacted,” Kotalampi says. “From an up-time perspective, the Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager is one of the critical components.”

As an example of the benefits of TrafficScript, Kotalampi explains that MyBuys’ applications are very memory-intensive so that content can be rapidly delivered. “At some point we came to a bottleneck where memory in an underlying web node could not be vertically scaled any further,” he says. “So we came up with a new design where we assign our clients to different server groups. We wrote that traffic rule using TrafficScript, which was simple to do because the client name is passed in the request.”

Doing this “provided us a lot of scaling, way beyond where we bottlenecked previously,” Kotalampi adds. An important advantage of handling the issue this way was that the necessary changes could be made much sooner than if MyBuys had had to ask its clients to make the changes individually on their ends. “If we had to tell clients, ‘Company A, you point yourself to this IP, Company B, you to point yourself to this other IP,’ and so on, doing this kind of change retroactively to existing clients would have been extremely painful,” he says, adding that it might have taken six months to accomplish all of that. Using TrafficScript required only two weeks of engineering time and one week to deploy.

The Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager delivers all of this functionality in what Kotalampi describes as a “hands-off, worry-free environment.” To anyone looking at load balancers, he advises, “If you have a serious business where you want to scale and provide up-time, and have advanced functionality like real-time traffic tracking and TrafficScript, I would definitely recommend the Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager.”

Summary

MyBuys delivers personalized content to online shoppers, so Cyber Monday is a good test of its IT infrastructure. Server traffic goes up by a factor 3 on that day; the rest of the holiday shopping season sees an increase of 2X over normal. The company took the opportunity to upgrade its load balancer when it left Rackspace for its own co-lo data center.

The Pulse Secure Virtual Traffic Manager delivers flawless load balancing along with additional functionality, such as real-time web server monitoring and the TrafficScript customization language, that isn’t available from other products. This past holiday season, MyBuys exceeded its SLAs, delivering 100% up-time. The scalability of this solution supports company’s growth, and its reliability helps the company maintain its reputation as a top provider of personalization solutions since 2009.

For more information, visit www.pulsesecure.net.

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