

FrontBridge counters spam attacks with IBM and Linux hosted solution.

Overview

■ Challenge

FrontBridge needed to implement a continuous upgrade program for the company's IT infrastructure to insure scalability, flexibility, and contain IT costs

■ Why Become an On Demand Business?

The company needed an affordable, resilient solution that would allow it to quickly respond to the dynamic needs of its customer base, while lowering operating costs

■ Solution

FrontBridge implemented an open standards-based business platform that enables it to deliver a cost-effective, hosted e-mail security solution that protects enterprises from spam, viruses and network attacks in realtime

■ Key Benefits

500 percent annual revenue growth; 50 percent reduction in leasing costs; 100 percent network availability allows company to meet service level agreements; standardized infrastructure supports continued revenue growth



Backed by IBM technology, FrontBridge is earning a name for itself as a leading provider of spam filtering solutions.

More than annoying, spam is costly, a drain on corporate productivity and resources, and a threat to security.

As the spam problem spreads, it is expected to cost American corporations nearly \$10 billion in 2003 or about \$14 per user, per month, according to Ferris Research¹. This has made anti-spam and anti-virus efforts a vital, rather than optional, budget expenditure for most businesses.

In response, a nascent industry has sprung up, providing a range of services including spam filtering,

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– Steve Jillings, CEO, FrontBridge

Resilient and responsive open standards-based platform helps enable On Demand Business

On Demand Business Benefits

For FrontBridge

- 500 percent annual revenue growth
- 100 percent network uptime allows company to meet and exceed service level agreements
- xSeries saves 50 percent in leasing costs due to smaller footprint and delivers four times the performance
- Enhanced ability to block spam and virus attacks has improved the company's ability to respond to customer and market demands
- Inherent scalability of hosted solution enables service to manage explosive growth in spam volumes

For Customers

- Legal firm Gray Cary estimates a gain of US\$186,000 per month in improved productivity by outsourcing spam filtering to FrontBridge
- Kyocera Wireless estimates realtime spam protection saved it nearly US\$225,000

virus protection, disaster recovery, content filtering and policy enforcement for corporate e-mail. Global revenues from anti-spam services alone are expected to top US\$1 billion by 2008¹, and companies around the world are scrambling to capture a piece of the market.

A leading player in this lucrative arena is FrontBridge Technologies, Inc. (www.frontbridge.com), headquartered in Marina del Rey, California. FrontBridge, with almost 100 employees, provides hosted e-mail security and message management services. By creating a safe bridge between the Internet and corporate networks, its services allow only legitimate business communications to flow through to the customers' networks. Established in 1999, the company has quickly accumulated more than 1,000 customers from nearly every business sector, including companies such as Bausch and Lomb, Meredith Corporation, Reebok, Sovereign Bank, Sprint, Sunkist, Sybase, Toshiba and Waterpik.

As the company continued to grow, however, FrontBridge saw potential problems with the IT infrastructure on which FrontBridge's hosted solutions were built. The company's non-standardized existing infrastructure was expensive, difficult to maintain and incapable of scaling to meet the rapidly growing demand for FrontBridge's services.

"The rapid growth of our business was starting to test the limits of our IT systems," says Steve Jillings, CEO, FrontBridge. "If we didn't address our infrastructure needs with a proactive long-term plan, we were at risk of not being able to provide adequate service to our customers."

Resilience and responsiveness are key criteria for new solution

The company needed an affordable, highly scalable infrastructure solution that would allow it to provide comprehensive services at a competitive price point. The new platform also would have to be resilient and responsive, as FrontBridge needed the ability to meet its customers' changing service requirements and guarantee the availability of its solution. "We sign contracts with our customers promising pre-determined levels of service," says Jillings. "If we don't meet those agreements, we stand to lose significant revenue from penalty costs."

To achieve its objectives, FrontBridge implemented a new, easy-to-manage, open standards-based business platform, enabling it to provide customers with a cost-effective, hosted e-mail security solution that protects enterprises from spam, viruses and network attacks in realtime. The high scalability of the system enables it to grow in affordable increments to meet future demand, and to easily

handle sudden spikes in e-mail traffic during periods of peak usage. In addition, the solution integrates seamlessly with virtually any customer infrastructure and offers remote management functionality.

The company can continue to provide the most comprehensive contract agreements with no worries about the system infrastructure, allowing the company to meet its industry leading service level guarantees. For example, FrontBridge promises 99.999 percent network uptime—and has a track record of 100 percent uptime since the company’s inception. Other service guarantees include updates to virus definitions every 10 minutes 24/7, and filtering of at least 90 percent of spam.

Scalable, open infrastructure fuels business growth

Designed to manage the rapid growth in business without compromising service quality, the company’s new infrastructure is based on IBM @server xSeries®. IBM xSeries 330 systems come with built-in support to work with IBM Director’s remote management platform as well as the ability to easily link systems together via IBM Cable Chain Technology. This gives FrontBridge multiple ways to monitor systems, either via Director, which can be used for hardware event management, or via a single Keyboard Video Monitor (KVM) attached to the Cable Chain for remote KVM.

“The xSeries gives us scalability on demand to meet customer requirements and fulfill our service commitments,” says Jillings. “At the same time, the xSeries is end-user infrastructure agnostic—it doesn’t matter what type of e-mail or network environment the customer is running. We integrate seamlessly with any type of e-mail software available today.”

On the software side, FrontBridge is running a customized Linux distribution. “After going through the available combinations we had no doubt that IBM @server xSeries servers running Linux was the best possible solution for us,” explains Jillings. “Because of IBM’s commitment to Linux, we were able to leverage software available in the open source community to build our infrastructure and the tools to easily manage and grow that infrastructure. We’ve lowered our total cost of ownership, helping us deliver a competitively-priced service.”

One requirement was homogeneity in the operational environment. “If you’re deploying hundreds of servers, you don’t want one kind of hardware box here, and another there,” says Jillings. “You want equipment that is dependable and has a solid service contract behind it, and has a foreseeable upgrade roadmap to which the manufacturer is committed. With IBM, you get all of this. There is a clear path along which we’ve been able to expand our network.”

Key Components

Software

- IBM Director
- Linux

Servers

- IBM @server xSeries 330

“The IBM solution provides a solid foundation for scaling our business to meet the rapidly growing anti-spam and e-mail security market and increasing demand for our services.”

–Steve Jillings

Service excellence yields measurable gains

Today, the company has a distributed, self-healing hardware environment. Its eight data centers spanning two continents—there are three data centers in California; and one each in Georgia, Missouri, Virginia, New York and London, UK. Autonomous load-balancing ensures there are no service interruptions, whether due to a failure at a data center or a customers' network.

“Due to the design and dependability of our infrastructure, we can add capacity with zero impact on our operations, which makes it seamless for customers,” says Jillings. “We are growing revenue at a brisk 500 percent annually.”

FrontBridge estimates that its new solution is saving the company 50% in leasing costs because the rack-mounted xSeries requires half the space than its previous solution and delivers four times the performance. In addition, FrontBridge can continue to guarantee its customers 99.999 percent network availability.

The benefits to the company's customers are also impressive. Consider the savings realized by Gray Cary, a California-based law firm. By calculating the time each attorney spent deleting all the junk e-mail received, the firm estimates a gain of US\$186,000 per month in improved productivity by outsourcing spam filtering to FrontBridge.

When another legal firm customer, Allen Matkins, suffered an outage at their ISP, it was without e-mail for several days. The loss in productivity and impact on customer service could have been potentially significant were it not for the FrontBridge service, which queued all legitimate e-mail and delivered it safely to the company once the ISP service resumed. Savings accrue from reduced IT costs as well. Kyocera Wireless estimates it saved US\$225,000 by relying on FrontBridge to filter spam and prevent infection from e-mail-borne viruses; further savings were realized because there was no need to deploy IT resources to clean up the aftermath of virus attacks.

“The IBM solution provides a solid foundation for scaling our business to meet the rapidly growing anti-spam and e-mail security market and increasing demand for our services,” says Jillings.

For more information

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¹ Ferris Research

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