

### Lloyds Pharmacy prescribes Nebulas Security for Improved System Performance

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**Andrew Shaw, Solutions Architect, Lloyds Pharmacy Ltd.**

#### » Lloyds Pharmacy Ltd

Lloyds Pharmacy Ltd is the largest community pharmacy operator in the UK, with over 1,500 pharmacies located primarily in the community and health centres. The company is a key participant in the NHS' major IT Programme, Connecting for Health, set up to deliver the UK's National Programme for IT and bring modern computer systems into the NHS to improve patient care and services. Over the next 10 years, the National Programme for IT will connect over 30,000 GPs in England to almost 300 hospitals and give patients access to their personal health care information. A central element of that is the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS), to which prescribers and dispensers in primary care in England are gradually being connected. By 2007, GP surgery, community pharmacy and other dispensers are expected to have access to the service.

#### » The Challenge

Lloyds Pharmacy has invested considerable time and resource in its role as a pioneer of the EPS, reconfiguring all its systems, software and networking to meet the demanding performance and security criteria of the EPS network.

*"We had a good idea of what to expect in terms of network traffic, once our connection to the EPS went live,"* comments Andrew Shaw, Solutions Architect with Lloyds Pharmacy. *"Even so, the sheer volume of messages travelling between our branches and Head Office processing systems is enormous."* With around seven messages required to process every prescription (including receipts, acknowledgments and confirmations), the 100 million prescriptions written annually generate nearly 1 billion items of network traffic – just under 3 million per day. Lloyds Pharmacy's share of this traffic will result in about 250,000 messages per day when the system is fully live. The challenge of this large and growing traffic volume is compounded by its spiky pattern. As Andrew Shaw explains: *"Traffic will experience huge surges after morning and afternoon surgeries during weekdays. Weekends and night times are quieter, meaning that our processing resources range from strained to idle."*

The increased volume and unpredictable pattern of network traffic created an immediate need for better traffic management, to improve system performance and achieve better utilisation of the network resources. Lloyds Pharmacy carried out its research and began to look closely at F5 Networks application delivery networking solution, visiting F5 at a major IT exhibition. Greeted by personnel from F5's UK partner, Nebulas Security, the Lloyds Pharmacy team was able to explain its challenge in considerable detail. *"The Nebulas Security team listened carefully, and was clearly familiar with F5's products,"* recalls Shaw. *"They were able to explain which of F5's products would suit us, how these would work with our setup and what benefits we could expect immediately, and in the long run. We were impressed with their expertise and eventually agreed to see a demonstration."*



#### » Customer needs met

- » Extreme peaks and troughs of data smoothed into a more manageable flow
- » More efficient usage of available network resource
- » Bandwidth freed up and priority applications guaranteed access
- » Long term cost reduction due to reduced system complexity and less frequent need for hardware upgrades

#### » Deployed Solutions

- » F5 Networks BIG-IP 6400 Local Traffic Manager



### » The Solution

Within days of that meeting, Nebulas Security implemented a pilot of F5's BIG-IP 6400 Local Traffic Manager. Located in an organisation's data centre in front of servers, firewalls and gateways, this device applies a set of customer-defined rules and infrastructure optimisation capabilities to all network traffic and applications. It also results in a far smoother traffic flow, with priority applications and packets receiving guaranteed bandwidth even during peak activity. Processing effort is distributed automatically across all available servers. Application performance is accelerated, even across a mixed-mode network, and bandwidth availability is increased.

*"The BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager not only shapes and smoothes our network traffic, it can also inspect and filter it, adding an extra layer of security,"* comments Andrew Shaw. *"Now our servers perform far better at all times, and we've eliminated system slow-downs, as well as the brief but costly downtime incurred by having to redirect traffic to a different server."*

### » The Future

The power of the BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager has made it a central control point for the entire Lloyds Pharmacy network. A real workhorse, it handles address distribution and crypto-offload (the encryption and decryption of high speed network streams) along with standard data management in a highly secure environment. More efficient data handling means a general reduction in complexity, more bandwidth and less pressure to upgrade hardware.

*"Nebulas Security's expert knowledge and rapid response to all our requests means we completed the implementation of this project quickly and efficiently,"* concludes Andrew Shaw. *"We achieved all our objectives and created a robust network well capable of handling our rapidly growing workload. Ultimately, this will contribute to the gradual elimination of paper from the entire prescribing system, and a smoother transition to the Electronic Prescription Service."*

### » Nebulas Security

- » Nebulas Security is a leading provider of advanced IT security, mobility and compliance solutions.
- » Since its formation in 2001, the company has developed partnerships with customers to build their IT security infrastructures and protect their sensitive data. This is supported by the company's extensive implementation experience, close relationships with key security technology vendors and detailed product knowledge.
- » Nebulas Security's customers include many blue chip and FTSE 250 organisations operating in financial, media, retail, legal and healthcare sectors
- » Based in London, Nebulas Security is a division of the Nebulas Solutions Group, the security, acceleration and virtualisation specialist.
- » The Group's combined expertise helps organisations maximise the efficiency and security of their infrastructure, as well as reducing operating costs.
- » For further information, visit [www.nebulassolutions.com](http://www.nebulassolutions.com)

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