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Kai Müller  
Head of IT  
AUTOonline

## AUTOonline Boosts Booming B2B Portal with F5 WebAccelerator and BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager

### Industry

Online B2B exchange for salvage and used fleet vehicles

### Challenges

- Manage increasing website traffic
- Guarantee maximum application availability worldwide
- Accelerate performance and reduce latency
- Ensure scalability

### Solution

F5 BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™ with WebAccelerator™ module

### Benefits

- Total security, application availability and web acceleration—all on one platform
- Excellent user experience
- Scalability to meet future demands

### Overview

AUTOonline (www.autoonline.com) is a B2B Internet portal that enables professionals in the salvage vehicle industry not only to calculate the residual value of vehicles that have been in accidents, but also to offer these vehicles—as well as used fleet vehicles—on the market and sell them to other commercial users. AUTOonline's client portfolio includes insurance companies, experts, fleet operators, and purchasers, as well as repair shops and car dealers.

The company, which was founded in 1996 and is headquartered in Neuss, Germany, has a workforce of more than 45 in Germany and has 20 branch offices both within Europe and worldwide. In 2007, AUTOonline listed more than 600,000 vehicles on its website, making the company Germany's largest salvage exchange. Every day, almost 3,000 additional vehicles are posted on the exchange. The 2,000 or so registered professional car buyers can then bid for these vehicles.

By implementing F5 BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager with WebAccelerator module, AUTOonline delivered high performance and availability for its website and ensured the scalability of its systems as it continues to grow its business worldwide.

### Challenges

For several years, AUTOonline used Microsoft's Network Load Balancing (NLB) technology to balance traffic to their web server clusters. However, as the company and its server farm continued to expand, it became ever more apparent that new paths had to be considered in order to maintain and increase application availability.

"It was simply a case of us needing greater flexibility," says Kai Müller, Director of IT at AUTOonline.

"Software-based load balancing is pretty capable, but it's not good enough for our needs. Since our business is growing so rapidly and we have to cover several time zones, we need a far more robust rules engine and are heavily reliant on trouble-free monitoring of the web servers."

With the level of expansion the company is enjoying, Müller also had doubts about the system's future scalability. "Apart from our international expansion, we are also experiencing markedly increasing traffic volumes on our domestic servers," Müller explains.

All of these factors led the IT team at AUTOonline to try out a number of high-end optimization and web acceleration systems on a web server farm with six physical servers. This server farm was designed to support applications and services of critical importance to the company's operations. The





demands with respect to application availability, security, and performance were therefore very high.

### Solution

Müller looked at various load balancing and web acceleration solutions, testing them under real-life conditions. "It was BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager with WebAccelerator from F5 that came through our trials with straight A's. The ability to deliver load balancing, background process monitoring, web acceleration, and reduced latency on one platform guarantees security, performance, and availability," Müller says. "The other products we tested simply couldn't keep up. The solution is exceedingly scalable, and we are planning to deploy it even more widely."

It was precisely this scalability that convinced AUTOonline to go with the F5 solution. Müller explains, "We are currently working on a large project that covers, among other things, the networking of several data centers. So it's good to know that F5 offers us a sound and future-proof solution that can grow with our company and adapt to our

changing technological requirements."

The company intends to kick off the data center networking project in 2008 and, with the aid of other solutions from F5, plans to guarantee effective optimization of its applications across all its data centers.

### Benefits

F5's BIG-IP architecture is designed to overcome exactly the kind of challenges AUTOonline faces. On one hand, it offers a platform for "always-on" applications, while on the other it provides the opportunity to reduce web server costs by optimizing application availability around the clock and across borders. As a result, AUTOonline anticipates requiring fewer web servers and reduced energy costs.

Supporting the operation of its systems and applications with BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager and WebAccelerator helps AUTOonline live up to its corporate slogan "Every Car's a Winner." Promoters, insurers, purchasers, and repair shops that use the system are guaranteed a smooth and successful handling of their transactions.

Using F5 technology, Müller and his team can now define and model the rules that coordinate and monitor web traffic going to and from their web servers. In light of the increasing complexity of the infrastructure at AUTOonline, this flexibility is of key importance, especially as it directly influences the way the system is presented to users.

"Because AUTOonline is a B2B market, the commercial success of our clients depends on how simply and quickly they are able to sell their accident-damaged and used fleet vehicles through our site," explains Müller.

AUTOonline also benefitted from trouble-free installation and implementation—attributes that helped F5 stand out in today's crowded platform market.

"We were extremely happy with installation and configuration of the BIG-IP platform, which couldn't have gone more smoothly," reports Müller. "The F5 team was first rate. They were always on hand whenever we had any questions or needed advice."

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