

Austin Bank

*Austin Bank Expands, Leverages
New Virtual Environment.*



Overview

Austin Bank has 30 locations in 21 cities and 10 East Texas counties. The bank has undergone exceptional growth due to several recent mergers while its online and mobile banking operations have also grown based on increased customer traffic.

Austin Bank's goal is to build a strong Internet customer service capability and consequently has worked closely with KEMP Technologies and implemented its load balancers to manage its increased traffic and maintain high availability of web infrastructure. Most recently, Austin Bank has deployed KEMP's Virtual LoadMaster (VLM) and LoadMaster DR in its data centers to work in conjunction with its existing appliances.

When something works, stick with it

Stability and trust are important aspects of the Austin Bank mindset and that extends to its IT infrastructure and load balancers as well. For the 110-year old bank, one of its goals is to "increase customer loyalty through lasting relationships by providing exceptional service, innovative products and services," which is also a core goal for KEMP Technologies, an application delivery controller company.

Austin Bank first purchased KEMP's hardware-based LoadMaster application delivery controllers in 2005 in order to manage server traffic for Web-based banking. To support its most recent growth, the bank purchased KEMP's Virtual LoadMaster (VLM) and LoadMaster DR to work in conjunction with the existing physical boxes.

The VLM is KEMP's software version of its server load balancer, running in a virtualized environment. The VLM closely integrates with VMWare and Microsoft Hyper-V, which enables organizations that leverage server virtualization to streamline and optimize their application delivery. With the LoadMaster DR, bank clients are ensured to connect to the fastest performing datacenter or server for reliable and continuous connectivity and when a primary site is down, traffic is still diverted to the disaster recovery site. Both models enable multi-datacenter high availability at an affordable cost.

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Currently, the bank has two physical data centers—one in Whitehouse and one in Longview, TX, which are about 40 miles apart. By using the LoadMaster DR, Austin is able to have a hot standby that can handle daily traffic and also be available in case of failure at the second data center location. The bank did experience one failure on a busy Friday with its Exchange server and KEMP’s LoadMaster quite aptly handled all the additional traffic that was routed to it. In addition to its hardware appliances, the bank decided to deploy a virtual solution in order to simplify its network architecture and to keep its external traffic separate from internal traffic. The external traffic from bank customers is now being handled by KEMP’s VLM. Using the LoadMaster, Austin Bank can avoid having to take a server down to do maintenance. Online banking traffic is heaviest in the evening—a time of day during which maintenance tasks are usually scheduled therefore it is not conducive to doing scheduled maintenance on physical servers or the network in the evening.

New IT products support online growth

The bank also found initial installation of the VLM to be quite simple. They were up and running in less than two days without having to take the network out of service. All that was required for installation was a port assignment and setting up the VMware. The IT staff was able to do the set-up on their own without help from KEMP Technologies. The quick set-up without service disruption was important to the bank as the installation occurred in December—a busy online shopping time when retailers and individuals are using the banking network in high volume.

According to Jeff Sowell, Austin Bank vice president in charge of network support, “there is never a good time to do backbone work, but with the VLM the work is seamless and non-intrusive.” The bank felt secure in knowing that the load balancers would work immediately without risk to everyday traffic. The VLM is the first virtual application for the bank and they are quite pleased, adds Sowell and they even recommended the product to a sister bank that is currently deploying it for itself.

Using the LoadMaster DR also has many advantages including the ability to make changes to the website more quickly and eliminating the need for DNS changes. The bank has 22,000 online banking customers and has recently implemented mobile banking. All mobile traffic flows through the LoadMaster DR. As a result, the bank is better able to manage all its traffic, while previously certain business customer traffic could not be load balanced.

Austin Bank is very pleased with KEMP Technologies and its products. Sowell explained that there was no reason to look at any other vendors when it needed to add additional load balancers. The selection team knew that KEMP offered the right price and the right features unlike competitors. He also noted that the bank has barely tapped the potential of the LoadMaster products despite a time of enormous growth for the bank, having added 70 employees and more branches after two recent bank mergers as well as an increase in online and mobile customers.

With KEMP Technologies, Austin Bank can continue to be a medium-sized bank and offer the capabilities of a big bank.