11:26am
protects the network and preserves security

5:32pm
protects the goal and ensures the win

Real IT: Setting a goal and defending it

How an IT admin sped up the network, eliminated downtime, rolled out a few thousand tablets — and got his head back in the game

DELL

On his way to soccer club practice, Eddie Mansour received a cellphone alert from the software that monitored his school district's network.

"Not again!" Eddie lamented.

The district's firewall had gone down in the half-hour since had had left the office. Yes, again.

Firewall blues

He phoned his boss Alex – who was still at work -- and asked him to reboot the firewall.

"I think it's time to throw in the towel on this firewall," said Eddie

"Not worth trying a couple more things?" inquired Alex.

Eddie took a deep breath. "Nah, I really think we should quit hunting for fixes and hunt for a better firewall. Students can't access materials, teachers waste class time on 90-second page loads, and it takes a reboot and more downtime to block a site or set up a user. Let's fire up that eval box we ordered from Dell tomorrow."

"It can't hurt," said Alex.

Eddie worried the transition to a new firewall wouldn't be easy. Budgets were limited and he'd have to explain why he'd recommended the old firewall to begin with. He's now learned he shouldn't base his selections on following the crowd.

Too distracted to play

Eddie knew he had other changes to make off the job – in another field that had nothing to do with network security.

He was goalie for his local soccer club, just as his father and grandfather had been. Soccer was a tradition in his family, and family members from three generations made the time to cheer him on in his matches. But with the long hours and firewall outages distracting him from his game, Eddie was blowing easy saves in front of the net.

After the latest match ended in a loss, Eddie had pulled his coach aside to apologize. "I can't believe how I've been playing lately," he said. "Things have been out of control at work and I've lost a bit of focus. But I promise you that I'll give 100 percent for the regionals that start in two days."

"I don't doubt it for a second, Eddie," said his coach. "Soccer's in your blood and you'll get back on track. You're the best goalie this team has ever had, but don't tell your dad I said that!"

Eddie appreciated his coach's kind words, but he also knew he had to do something about the firewall and get his head back in the game or he'd let his team – and the family tradition – down.

No worries

On his drive into the office the next morning, Eddie got a call from Alex.

"You see the email from the district?" asked Alex.

"Not yet," said Eddie. "What's up?

Eddie took a deep breath.
"Nah, I really think we should quit hunting for fixes and hunt for a better firewall."

DELL

"The student tablet rollout got pushed up. We need to start load-testing for 4,000 additional SSL connections this week. That's on top of the 5,000 connections we already have."

Eddie's stomach sank. He knew the current firewall couldn't effectively handle that many simultaneous SSL connections.

"I'm on it," he said.

He got to the office only to find the firewall had crashed yet again. After a couple hours of fix attempts and reboots, he'd gotten it back up, but page loads were slow on computers and nearly crawling on a tablet he was testing. At this rate, he'd have to pull an all-nighter, miss his soccer practice, and risk getting benched for the big game.

"I can't do this anymore," thought Eddie. His eye traveled to the Dell firewall evaluation unit.

He decided it had to work better than the current appliance. He sent out a planned-downtime notification, disconnected the old firewall and connected the SonicWALL SuperMassive 9000.

Almost immediately, page-loads on the tablet dropped to better than normal. Stats were off the charts compared to a half-hour before. He runs dozens of speed tests to verify a huge performance boost.

Eddie was nearly late for soccer practice, but not for the usual, frustrating reasons. Confident that the SuperMassive would stay up and handle the load, he played well for the first time in months — blocking, diving and saving all practice long.

The tablet rollout

The network remained stable all night and through the next morning. At lunch Eddie told Alex that the usual tasks — changing application access, adding users, unblocking websites — took just a few seconds on the SuperMassive instead of 15 minutes on the old box.

"You rock," said Alex. "Four schools got their tablets today. Let's schedule load testing for 4:30 to 5:00."

That would be **dangerously close to game time** if something goes wrong, Eddie thought, but better to know sooner than later.

Starting at 4:30, Eddie watched the number of SSL connections steadily rise, hitting a peak of 9,100. He sent an email to Alex confirming that the SuperMassive was handling the load without redlining.

That evening, Eddie felt good to be completely wired into his soccer game, instead of distracted by network performance problems. His teammates could tell the difference when he blocked three goal attempts. And his family cheered louder than anyone in the stands.

"I knew we'd see the old Eddie when it counted," his coach told him afterwards. "Thanks, coach," replied Eddie. "It's the old Eddie because I got a new firewall."

Network defense intact: Check

The next morning, Eddie asked Alex what he'd heard about the load test.

"The district wants us to light up the rest of the tablets over the next couple of weeks."

"No problem!" said Eddie.

"It's no problem because of you," said Alex. "You made the right call in the nick of time with that SuperMassive. Keep up the good work."

"Sure," said Eddie. "Like soccer, it's all about keeping your eye on the ball."

Learn how you can get more time to do the things you love at software.dell.com/network-security-solutions/.

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"Real IT" stories are based on actual circumstances our customers have faced in their IT environments as well as imagined circumstances in their personal lives.