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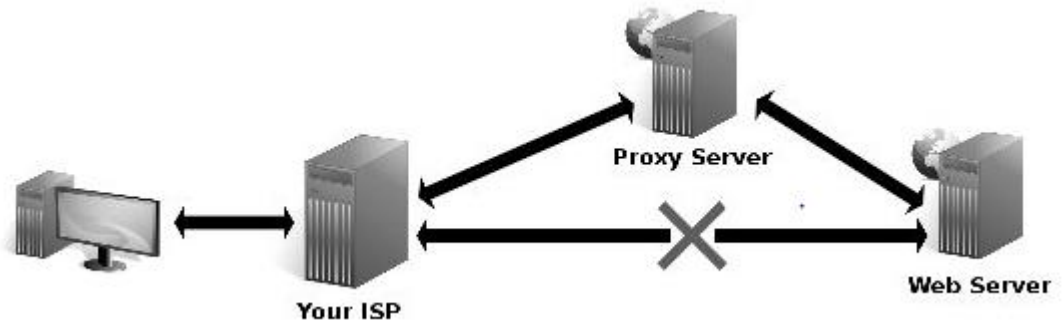
Web Proxy Servers

Web proxy servers are used for many purposes in the modern website. They allow channeling of traffic and proxy content from internal servers without exposing these servers to external customers or attackers. Many web servers are presented as a single consolidated website.

Here's a general picture of how a proxy server operates within your network:



Some of the benefits of Proxy servers are:

- Caching. This speeds up the presentation of content. One of the better ones available is Squid: http://www.squid-cache.org/. This proxy is free to download and easy to setup
- Hide back end servers and make all appear as a single host. This keeps all the back end servers anonymous, mainly for security.
- Reduce bandwidth on heavily used servers or frequently accessed content.
- Log and audit connections. A proxy server can keep centralized logs for your entire site and allow for easy audits.
- Malware and virus scanning.
- Outbound limiting of website access
- Outbound limiting of data transmittal for loss prevention
- Allows websites from multiple application servers to act as a single server.

For our needs, we primarily use a reverse proxy web server to:

1) Obscuring the underlying platform
2) Presenting many websites as a single entity and IP address

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Reverse proxy Configuration in Apache is straight forward. To setup a website so that 3 website are seen as a single entity, there's a couple quick stanzas to add to your configuration. Here's an example of setting up a www.abc.com website with two subsites that will be accessed through a directory (/foo and /bar) on the main site. There are 4 machines in use. One for the RP server and one each for the 3 websites.