

Udajuicer - Threat Report

December 13, 2023

Introduction

This project serves to address issues with an insecure web application at Udajuicer - a very big juice shop in the world. The site would constantly go down and the people at Udajuicer weren't sure what the issue was.

Two things to note are these: web applications tend to be rated as the best attack vector for an attacker, primarily for two things:

- Web applications are difficult to build securely (without proper knowledge of all the moving parts that constitute a web application)
- Web applications found provide access to sensitive data found in an internal network segment.

As a security analyst from a world-renown cybersecurity consulting firm, I will get to the bottom of the issue and find out why the Juice Shop site keeps going down.

- I will build a threat model for Udajuicer's website.
- Using an internal threat model template provided, I will go through the process of helping Udajuicer mitigate their current issue and build a secure application.

1 Assessment

Despite being a big company, it is quite alarming that the system architecture at Udajuicer is poorly designed as shown in FIG 1.

1.1 Asset Inventory

The first part of our threat model is being able to identify all the assets at Udajuicer. Looking at the architecture diagram, we can identify three components of the architecture: Web Server, Database Server and Application Server.

1.1.1 Web Server

A web server is a software application or hardware device that stores, processes, and serves website content to users over the World Wide Web, using the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) to communicate. Key functions of a web server include:

- **Processing Requests:** Web servers handle incoming requests from clients (typically web browsers) and respond by serving the requested content.
- **Storing Content:** Web servers store website files, such as HTML documents, images, CSS stylesheets, and other multimedia files.
- **Communication:** Web servers communicate with clients using the HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol) or its secure version, HTTPS. HTTP defines how messages are formatted and transmitted, and HTTPS adds a layer of security through encryption.

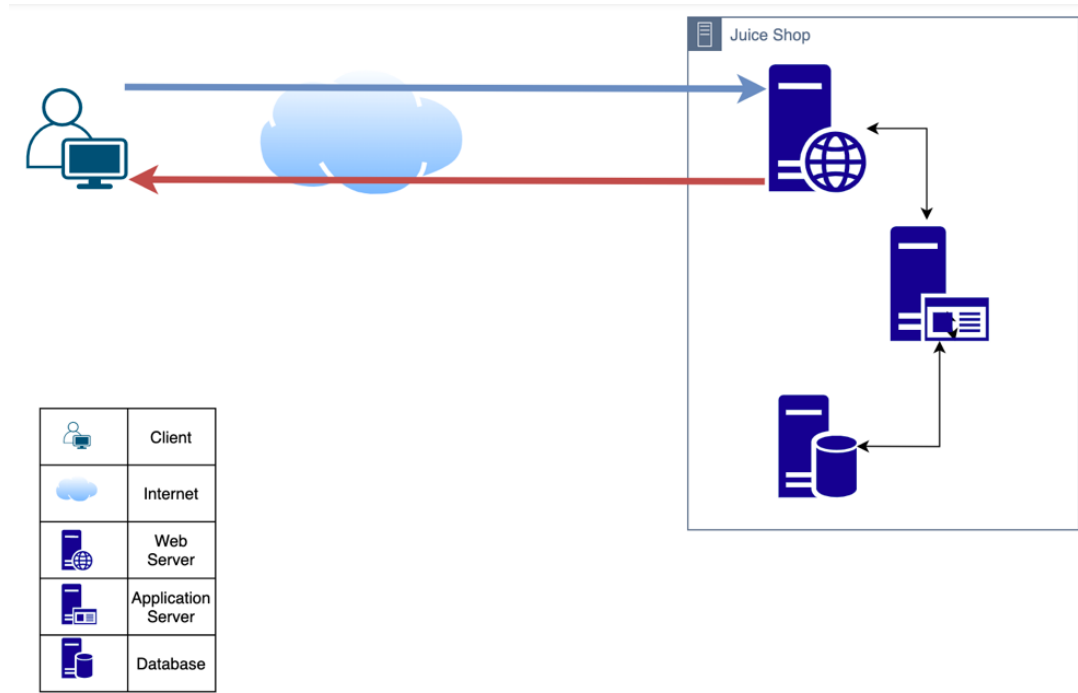


Figure 1: Udajuicer's Poorly Designed Architecture.

- **Hosting:** Web servers host websites and make them accessible to users on the Internet. Websites can be hosted on dedicated servers, virtual private servers (VPS), or through cloud-based services.

These dynamic functionality makes web servers an interesting target for attackers. Web servers are very common, and anyone can set one up, but doing it correctly without leaving doors open for attackers is a challenge.

1.1.2 Application Server

An application server is a software framework that provides an environment for running and managing applications. Key functions of an application server include:

- **Middleware Services:** Application servers often provide middleware services, such as messaging services, transaction processing, and connection pooling, to facilitate communication and coordination between different components of an application.
- **Application Execution:** They host and execute application code, allowing developers to deploy and run their applications in a controlled and managed environment.
- **Security:** They implement security features, including authentication and authorization mechanisms, to control access to applications and sensitive data. **Integration with Databases:** Application servers often integrate with database servers to retrieve and store data, providing a seamless connection between the application layer and the database layer.

Application server supports various communication protocols, such as HTTP, HTTPS, and others, making them suitable for web-based applications.

1.1.3 Database Server

A database server is a computer system that is dedicated to managing, storing and retrieving data from databases, and providing access to a database. Key characteristics and functions of a database server include:

- **Data Storage:** The database server stores data in a structured format, typically using a relational database management system (RDBMS) like MySQL, PostgreSQL, or Microsoft SQL Server.
- **Data Retrieval:** It allows users or applications to retrieve and manipulate data stored in the database through SQL (Structured Query Languages) queries and transactions.

In a typical architecture, applications or services interact with the database server to store and retrieve data. The database server manages the underlying data storage, indexing, and retrieval processes, providing a centralized and organized structure for efficient data management.

How A Request Goes from Client to Server

The general purpose of the Udajuicer's insecure web application is to allow users to make online orders for delivery or pickup. This process typically involves several components working together. Let us give a simplified overview of the how a request gets from client to server and back. There are three components to a web application: the front-end client-side, back-end or server-side.

The interaction between the client, web server, application server, and database server in a web application typically follows a multi-tier architecture. Here's a step-by-step overview of how these components interact:

The Client-Side: This is the device that is being used to connect to the web site. It includes the client's device and web browser.

- **Client Interaction (Client side):**
 - The user with an active internet connection from an Internet Service Provider (ISP), Wi-Fi, or a mobile data, launches a web browser on their device (such as Chrome, Firefox, Safari, or Edge).
 - The user enters the Udajuicer's URL into the address bar of the web browser. A URL is a human-readable web address that identifies the location of a resource on the internet. It typically starts with "http://" or "https://," followed by the domain name.
 - The DNS (Domain Name System) translates the domain name into an IP address, which computer can understand. This is the network address of the web server that is hosting Udajuicer's online application.
 - The browser constructs an HTTP (or HTTPS) request, including the IP address and the path specified in the URL and sends it to the web server associated with the obtained IP address.
- **Web Server Interaction (Web Tier):**
 - The web server receives the HTTP request from the client and processes it. It locates the requested resource based on the path in the URL and any additional parameters.
 - The web server may handle static content (like HTML, CSS, and images) directly and generates a HTTP response to the client's request for such resources.
 - The web browser receives the HTTP response and renders the web page or resource, displaying it on the user's device.
 - The user can now interact with the displayed web page, click on links, submit forms, and perform various actions.
- **Dynamic Content and Application Logic:**
 - If the request involves dynamic content or requires application logic (which is our case), the web server forwards the request to the application server.
 - The application server hosts the business logic of the web application and processes the request.
- **Application Server Interaction (Application Tier):**
 - The application server interacts with the database server to retrieve or update data as needed for the request.

- It may perform tasks such as user authentication, authorization, and execution of application-specific business logic.
- **Database Server Interaction (Data Tier):**
 - The application server sends queries or commands to the database server to retrieve or update information stored in the database.
 - The database server processes these queries and returns the requested data to the application server.
- **Application Server Response (Application Tier):**
 - The application server formulates a response based on the processed data and application logic.
 - The response may include dynamic content, such as user-specific information, order details, or any other relevant data.
- **Web Server Response (Web Tier):**
 - The application server sends the response back to the web server.
 - The web server receives the response from the application server and sends it back to the client as an HTTP response.
- **Client Response:**
 - The client's web browser receives the response and updates the user interface accordingly.

Throughout this interaction, various protocols come into play:

- **HTTP/HTTPS:** Used for communication between the client and both the web server and application server.
- **Database Protocol:** Specific to the type of database system (e.g., MySQL, PostgreSQL, MongoDB) and used for communication between the application server and the database server.

2 Architecture Audit

Now that we've identified all the components that make up Udajuicer's web application, let's conduct an architecture review. FIG 2 is an example of a secure architecture. We will use it as a baseline for addressing the flaws in Udajuicer's architecture.

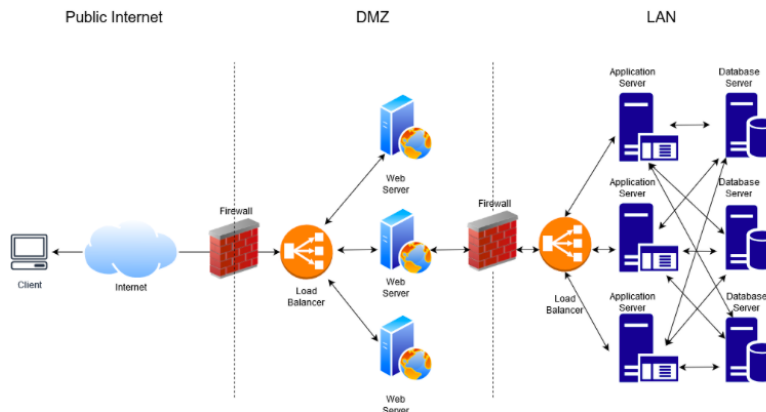


Figure 2: Example of a Secure Infrastructure

2.1 Architecture review

Adopting the concept of network segmentation, I have identified four tiers for Udajuicer's web application.

1. **Public Tier:** There's a public part of the architecture which includes the internet. Resources that reside on the internet cannot be trusted and, therefore, represent a tier of high-risk and trust.
2. **Semi-public (DMZ):** This include the web servers housing Udajuicer's online application and DNS servers necessary for translating resources into corresponding IP addresses. DMZ systems are a great risk of compromise by the nature of being connected to a public tier.
3. **Middle Tier:** This includes the application server which separates the two ends of a communication, ensuring that the web server cannot communicate with database server and vice-versa.
4. **Private Tier:** This refers to the internal network segment – the company's database. This system represents critical functionality and should have no direct connection between them and the internet. It is of higher trust and lower risk.

2.2 Udajuicer's Architecture Flaws

The overall goal of an architecture design should be to protect internal network from external attacks, provide defense-in-depth through a tiered architecture, and control flow of information between systems. The following flaws have been discovered:

- **Firewalls:** The architecture has no Firewalls. Network segmentation helps to separate critical infrastructures from the environment, resulting in a reduced capacity of communication and connection. This can be achieved using a firewall located:
 - Between the internet and other networks (the web server).
 - Between the semi-public (web server) and private network (database and application server).
 - Between tiers of varying trusting levels.
- Whether it is host-based or network-based, different types of firewalls exist. Web application firewalls and email filtering.
- **Content Delivery Network (CDN):** The architecture has not adopted CDN system. A CDN is a distributed group of edge servers that serve cached content from the origin. Using this, traffic never hits your original server, instead are handled by edge servers. Thus in the event of DDoS attack, the edge servers handle the incoming request even if one gets down, there are multiple others still available. This makes the site or application highly available.
 - **Load Balancer:** Devices that act as intermediary; distributing network traffic evenly from client devices to servers.
 - It can handle incoming traffic and ensures no server gets over loaded.
 - This gives increased redundancy, less downtime and increased stability.
 - In the event of an attack that aims to overload the web application server, a load balancer can handle the traffic and ensures it is distributed or dropped altogether.

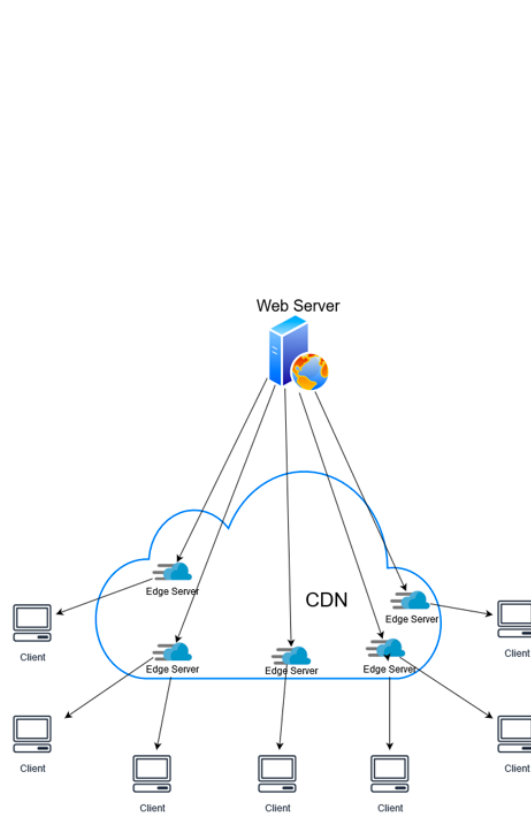


Figure 3: Secure Infrastructure : CDN

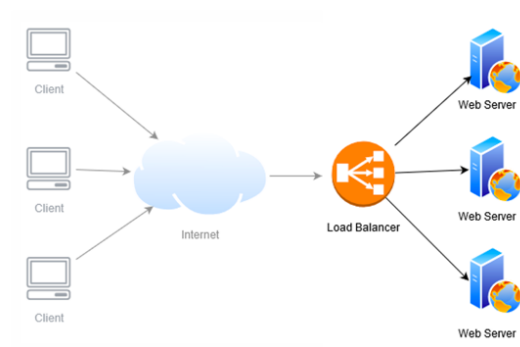


Figure 4: Secure Infrastructure : Load Balancer