

IN BRIEF

Industry

- » Investment Services (Financial)

Challenges

- » Improve client service by centralizing information and documents to enable corporate-wide access
- » Accelerate application performance in branch offices
- » Consolidate file servers for security and ease of management

Solution

- » A Steelhead appliance was deployed in each of 4 offices

Benefits

- » Payback in 7 months
- » 35 times faster access to remote file servers
- » File servers eliminated in each remote office
- » Users can access any company data, regardless of location



Allied Capital Corporation

Riverbed Steelhead® Appliances Enable Investment Services Company to Consolidate File Servers and Accelerate Applications

Allied Capital (www.alliedcapital.com) is a private equity investor with a portfolio currently composed primarily of mezzanine and equity investments in middle market companies. Allied has participated in the private equity capital markets since the company was founded in 1958 and has financed thousands of companies nationwide. Listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol ALD, Allied Capital offers its investors the opportunity to participate in the U.S. private equity industry through an investment in the company's publicly traded stock. Allied Capital has paid consistent or increasing annual cash dividends to its shareholders since 1963.

Allied has an extensive network of relationships within the private equity industry and believes the combination of their experience and these contacts provide a competitive advantage to them and to their portfolio companies.

Challenge: Creating a Streamlined, Consolidated IT Environment

Allied Capital's business is built on information. Its employees depend on digital information to make decisions about what companies to invest in, and how to best leverage its competitive advantages to guide its investments. With the speed of business ever increasing, Allied realized that its IT infrastructure, the lifeline of inter-office collaboration, needed to keep pace with its accelerating business environment.

“The Steelhead appliance's broad-reaching benefits have created significant ROI for Allied Capital.”

The Allied Capital WAN uses a frame relay network that provides T1 connectivity to the Washington, DC., headquarters and 768K connectivity to New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Latency ranges from 30 milliseconds to 100 milliseconds. Windows file servers were deployed in each remote office, in order to provide fast access to frequently used files.

This setup, however, seemed to be reaching its limitations. “We knew we needed an infrastructure that was designed to provide LAN-like access no matter where our employees were located,” noted Peter Papas, SVP and Director of IT. “Yet centralized applications, including our email server, Microsoft SharePoint document library, and our Pivotal CRM system experience very slow application response time over the WAN. Slow applications mean lost productivity and frustrated users.”

“By consolidating our file servers, we eliminated significant overhead associated with maintaining and backing up remote infrastructure.”

William Cowdrick, Allied Capital Infrastructure Lead added, "In addition, we wanted to eliminate the need for employees to hunt around on servers near and far for the 'right document.' Data sprawl was beginning to become an issue that was taking up users' and IT cycles. We knew we needed to consolidate our file servers into HQ, yet still provide fast access to key documents."

Solution: Steelhead Appliances Overcome Network Limitations

Papas and Cowdrick first considered adding more bandwidth. "Looking at network traces however, showed us that we were only utilizing 6 - 10% of our network capacity, even when doing large-scale backup transfers," said Cowdrick, "so we knew that latency had to be the issue."

"Maintaining a centralized infrastructure also allows us to ensure that our data is located in just one place – we no longer have data sprawl in our network."

In doing due diligence, Cowdrick compared the Riverbed Steelhead appliance with products from Peribit and Tacit Networks. "Tacit Networks' product is a caching product. We were really concerned about the approach. Even if we consolidated our file servers, Tacit forces us to have multiple copies of

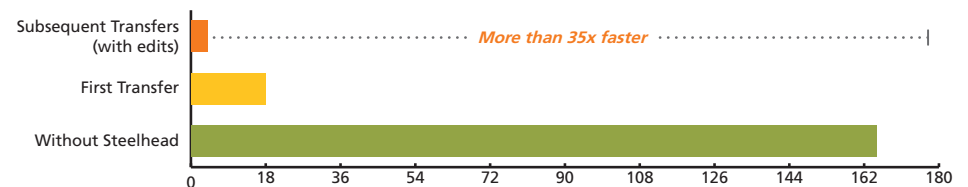
files in multiple locations again. Along with the management difficulties of caching, the product would introduce new security and compliance issues. Tacit's product is simply not a viable solution," explained Cowdrick.

"In doing further research and due diligence, we felt that Riverbed had really built a best-of-breed solution based on innovative technology. They became number one in this market in a short period of time, which was a good sign," added Papas.

Benefits: Faster Applications and Simpler IT Infrastructure

Riverbed Steelhead appliances have accelerated Allied Capital's key applications across the WAN by 35x. Steelhead appliances also enabled the consolidation of file servers into one location, reducing IT expenditures and administrative costs.

Access Time for a 10 MB Excel file (in seconds)



Papas began, "The Steelhead appliance's broad-reaching benefits have created significant ROI for Allied Capital. Working with Riverbed, we estimated the payback period of the deployment to be just 7 months. The product has helped us accelerate applications across the WAN, but also consolidate our IT infrastructure in an easy-to-use appliance."

Cowdrick recalled, "We were impressed with Riverbed's products from the moment we began the deployment process. For example, in our Chicago office, we didn't even send an IT administrator out. We were able to physically set up the appliances by just talking our office manager through it over the telephone. I think I could have had someone off the street set up the device, once we did the initial configuration in the HQ. The Steelhead appliance is really plug and play."

“Within a matter of 24 hours, we were able to prove that we had significantly accelerated performance across the network. For example, opening a 10 MB excel file from DC to New York was reduced from 2 minutes and 59 seconds to just 5 seconds. Users even noticed performance increases in email downloads and CRM access,” recalled Cowdric. “Similarly, Microsoft SharePoint access across the country is as fluid as if the server were in the room.”

“Also, we saw an increase in our bandwidth utilization – which was a good thing for us. Whereas before we could only use 6 - 10% of the bandwidth, with Riverbed our average utilization jumped to 77%. We could really take advantage of our network investment,” continued Cowdric.

“In doing further research and due diligence, we felt that Riverbed had really built a best-of-breed solution based on innovative technology.”

“In addition, Riverbed Steelhead appliances had a tremendously positive impact on our IT infrastructure. By consolidating our file servers, we eliminated significant overhead associated with maintaining and backing up remote infrastructure. Now our servers can efficiently be backed up in our central data center. Maintaining a centralized infrastructure also allows us to ensure that our data is located in just one place – we no longer have data sprawl in our network.”

“At the same time, users have fast access to fresh data. They no longer have to hunt in multiple file servers around the company for the file that they need. What a difference Steelhead appliances made for us.”

SUMMARY

Allied Capital needed to optimize its WAN in provide faster access to key applications and consolidate servers. At the same time the company wanted to ensure that employees could always access the freshest data, regardless of their location.

By deploying Steelhead appliances, Allied Capital employees can access information 35x faster. Data and infrastructure is centralized, easing IT management and ensuring a more secure environment.



Think fast.™

About Riverbed

Riverbed Technology is the IT infrastructure performance company. The Riverbed family of wide area network (WAN) optimization solutions liberates businesses from common IT constraints by increasing application performance, enabling consolidation, and providing enterprise-wide network and application visibility – all while eliminating the need to increase bandwidth, storage or servers. Thousands of companies with distributed operations use Riverbed to make their IT infrastructure faster, less expensive and more responsive. Additional information about Riverbed (NASDAQ: RVBD) is available at www.riverbed.com



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