

## IN BRIEF

### Industry

- » Travel & Leisure

### Challenge

- » Customers had to wait more than 30 minutes while vacation ownership contracts were processed because of network latency
- » Improve application performance and file transfer times among various locations

### Solution

- » Riverbed Steelhead wide-area data services appliances deployed in Japan, Hawaii, Guam, Las Vegas, Orlando and New York

### Benefits

- » Contract approval process reduced from 30 minutes to a few minutes
- » Centralized accounts payable business processes
- » Employee productivity and morale has gone up
- » Customer satisfaction has been greatly improved



**Hilton**  
**Grand Vacations Club**



# Hilton Grand Vacations Club

## Wide-Area Data Services Helps Hilton Grand Vacations Close More Vacation Ownership Deals

Timeshares, more commonly known as vacation ownership today, are a fast-growing part of the travel and leisure industry. People want to maximize their time off, and one way to do that is to buy into a vacation ownership plan, which gives them annual vacations for life at a greatly reduced cost compared to paying for hotel accommodations.

Because vacation ownership is so popular, companies such as Hilton Grand Vacations, a wholly owned subsidiary of Hilton Hotels Corp., are experiencing a surge in business. Hilton Grand Vacations is seeing exponential growth in the number of customers they serve and contracts they process each year.

Rapid growth is complicated by the fact that Hilton Grand Vacations has offices and properties all over the world, making communication among sites over the corporate WAN a bigger challenge each day.

### Challenge: Reducing File Transfer Times

Hilton Grand Vacations operates sales offices in New York, Osaka and Tokyo, Japan, Guam, and Orlando, FL and has resorts in places such as Oahu, New York, Orlando, Las Vegas, and the Big Island of Hawaii. According to Rich Jackson, vice president of technology operations at Hilton Grand Vacations, the company has chosen to centralize their technology operations primarily in its Orlando, FL office.

"Our approach has been to centralize our IT operations for several reasons. First, it reduces the amount of servers, parts, and IT personnel needed to support the business. Second, it allows us to maintain strong configuration management and change control standards. Third, it reduces the overall cost of the technology needed to deliver services to the business. And last but not least, it enables us to provide higher service levels to our customers, which has resulted in overall higher customer satisfaction," says Jackson.

"One challenge of a centralized IT structure is you have to have solid and reliable connectivity to the main data centers," Jackson continues. "A tough problem to overcome is network latency. Because of our structure, we began to see delays in some business processes because of latency."

"Getting contracts approved is a time-consuming process that involves pushing large amounts of data to our central office in Orlando," he says. "In Asia, the contract process is more complex and requires more bandwidth than it does in the United States. Since it wasn't possible to duplicate our main business systems and processes in our Japanese offices, it was taking up to 30 minutes to complete the IT portion of the contracts process."

This extended the sales process and made it more difficult for salespeople to satisfy prospective customers. "As you can imagine, with the customer is sitting in front of you while you are waiting on a computer process, it's not an ideal situation," Jackson says. "When you're processing a contract, time is of the essence. You don't want delays due to technology issues."

**"The contract process has been reduced from more than 30 minutes to just a minute or two. It has a huge effect on customer and employee satisfaction."**

*— Rich Jackson, senior director of technical operations, Hilton Grand Vacations*

**Solution: WAN Optimization Check In**

Jackson and his team looked at an array of solutions, and concluded that WAN optimization would solve the business problem. When researching solutions to network latency and file transfer issues, Jackson came to Riverbed® Technology and its Steelhead® WAN optimization solutions. His resulting success has made him an All-Star of Application Acceleration.

Jackson was impressed with Steelhead's data reduction capabilities and its ability to take a chunk of TCP packets and tag them individually. "The local tags mean you can change a file but still have all the advantages of application acceleration," he says. These data reduction capabilities have reduced the company's bandwidth utilization up to 80 percent. That not only helps defer future bandwidth costs, but also reduces and eliminates latency due to retrieving files over a WAN connection.

The evaluation process took less than a month, and Jackson says the deployment was surprisingly easy. "The deployment literally took minutes, not hours or days," he says. The first Steelhead appliances were deployed in the Osaka and Tokyo offices, where many of the bottlenecks were taking place, and then rolled out to other locations.

**Benefits: Increase Business Workflow**

Jackson says employee reaction to the optimized WAN has been incredibly positive. The contract process has been dramatically reduced from 30 minutes to just a minute or two. "The time spent waiting for contracts to process has been greatly improved, which has had a huge effect on customer and employee satisfaction," he says.

Employees in branch offices are also appreciate that their Microsoft Exchange e-mail and Microsoft Windows file services are faster. In addition, the company has benefited from an increased ability to process accounts payable. "Previously, AP was a much more distributed process. Now we are able to centralize this process due to the technology."

Because Riverbed helps Hilton Grand Vacations more efficiently use the bandwidth it has, the company is saving significant money on bandwidth, especially in Asia where bandwidth is at a premium. "Along with routers and switches, Steelhead is now a part of our standard product set when we setup remote offices. It has really improved our ability to deliver quality data services to our remote offices without having to install servers in every location," says Jackson.

Jackson offers this advice to other companies looking to improve application delivery over the WAN: "Examine the features sets of the different products out there and look at the differentiating factors," he says. For Jackson, it was clearly the rich capabilities of Riverbed Steelhead that set it apart from the roar of the crowd and helped Hilton Grand Vacations become an all-star in the world of luxury accommodations.

**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](http://www.riverbed.com)



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