

**IN BRIEF**

**Industry**

» Retail

**Challenges**

» Improve application transaction times over the wide area network without increasing bandwidth capacity

**Solution**

» 70 Riverbed Steelhead appliances

**Benefits**

- » Avoided a costly bandwidth upgrade
- » 2-3x improvement in file download times
- » 50% reduction in bandwidth utilization
- » Improved employee collaboration and productivity



# Waltons

**Riverbed Steelhead appliances accelerate application performance over the WAN for major retail organization**

Waltons was founded in 1949 and is currently the largest and only national office products supplier in Southern Africa. In 1960, Waltons pioneered the stationery distribution industry in South Africa by establishing a network of branches in commercial and industrial areas and introducing the concept of delivery on account. In 1997, Waltons became part of the Bidvest Group – one of the largest South African owned industrial companies listed on the JSE Securities Exchange South Africa.

**Challenge: Users unable to access critical applications over the WAN**

Waltons has five regional offices and over 100 branch offices located across South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique. Each regional office provides a range of services - including IT services - to 15 to 40 branch offices. The company had embarked upon an IT consolidation project and centralized Microsoft Exchange and SharePoint to the five regional offices. Following this consolidation program users at Waltons' local branch offices began to experience severe delays when attempting to access html, ERP, Microsoft Exchange and SharePoint files via the wide area network (WAN).

**“The Steelhead appliance was a simple in-line ‘plug-in’ solution and worked immediately with almost no downtime”**

Waltons identified that to overcome the problem it would need to upgrade the bandwidth links for almost 90% of its offices. “Bandwidth is very costly in South Africa, and upgrading 90% of our bandwidth links was

too expensive to contemplate. We needed an alternative solution that would be cost effective and easy to implement and manage,” says Laurence Slotow, national IT manager at Waltons.

**Solution: Users notice a dramatic improvement in application performance with Steelhead appliances installed**

Waltons was keen to find an alternative to an expensive bandwidth upgrade that would yield limited results and following discussions with its IT reseller, the company decided to investigate WAN optimization alternatives from Riverbed Technology and Cisco.

Waltons quickly discounted the Cisco offering due to the complexity of installation. “We did look at Cisco as a solution, but decided not to test the product due to a number of factors; the high cost and complexity of the solution, and the requirement to make changes to our current network infrastructure which would have caused a huge amount of disruption to our organization,” comments Slotow. Instead the company ran a “proof of concept” project with Riverbed®, and installed Steelhead® appliances at four of its regional offices. “The Steelhead appliance was a simple in-line ‘plug in’ solution and worked immediately with almost no downtime,” recalls Butha van der Merwe, national WAN administrator for Waltons.

“In addition the results were immediate,” says Slotow. “Users noticed a dramatic increase in performance and were able to access applications that had previously been almost unusable. We also didn’t have to make any changes to our current network infrastructure. ”

**Benefits: 2-3x improvement in application performance and employees able to collaborate resulting in increased employee productivity**

Following the successful trial, Waltons deployed over 70 Steelhead appliances to its regional offices in South Africa, and was able to avoid upgrading bandwidth links for around 90% of its

offices, which would have been extremely expensive. The company has also experienced a 2-3x improvement in file download speeds, which has resulted in improved employee collaboration and productivity. "Prior to Riverbed, applications such as Microsoft SharePoint were practically unusable. With Riverbed in place we've been able to take advantage of the huge benefits these collaboration tools offer, and this in itself has changed the way in which we now make our decisions at a business level," notes Slotow. Waltons has also experienced a 50% reduction in bandwidth utilization, with the greatest benefits in email, http, SQL and RDP traffic. In addition, Waltons has been able to centralize Microsoft Exchange to its data center, enabling the company to remove five Exchange servers from its regional offices.

**"The Riverbed technology has allowed us to review our bandwidth usage to our advantage as well as to capitalize on existing systems"**

**Looking Ahead**

"Now that we have Riverbed WAN optimization installed, we can look to implement more projects that will deliver a range of benefits back to the business," says Slotow. In particular, Waltons plans to consolidate its ERP system, Microsoft Dynamics, back to the data center, which will allow the removal of over 100 branch office servers. This alone will deliver significant cost savings in terms of reduced management and licensing fees. Waltons also plans to move its data backup and recovery to the data center, which will improve data integrity and security. Currently data backups are carried out at a local level, relying upon branch office employees to backup data.

**"Using Riverbed has changed our mindset completely"**

applications and we can look to further consolidate systems which will deliver yet more savings back to the business. Riverbed is now an important part of our overall infrastructure."

As Slotow concludes, "Riverbed has enabled us to do so much more than just improve file download speeds. We can now use collaboration tools that enable us to make strategic business decisions, we have already begun to consolidate

**About Riverbed**

Riverbed delivers performance for the globally connected enterprise. With Riverbed, enterprises can successfully and intelligently implement strategic initiatives such as virtualization, consolidation, cloud computing, and disaster recovery without fear of compromising performance. By giving enterprises the platform they need to understand, optimize and consolidate their IT, Riverbed helps enterprises to build a fast, fluid and dynamic IT architecture that aligns with the business needs of the organization. Additional information about Riverbed (NASDAQ: RVBD) is available at [www.riverbed.com](http://www.riverbed.com).



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**SUMMARY**

Waltons employees were experiencing severe delays when accessing applications over the WAN, in particular html files, Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft SharePoint. The result was increased employee frustration and poor employee productivity levels. Waltons chose a WAN optimization solution from Riverbed, resulting in a 2-3x improvement in file download times, which has improved employee productivity substantially. Waltons was also able to avoid upgrading bandwidth for 90% of its branch offices, resulting in considerable savings for the company.