

IN BRIEF

Industry

- » Consumer Products & Services

Challenges

- » Slow website performance during peak traffic periods
- » Customer frustration due to website downtime and unresponsiveness

Solution

- » Riverbed Stingray Traffic Manager

Benefits

- » Improved website performance with maximized uptime
- » Superior online customer experience
- » Solution was cost-effective, easy to configure, and extremely quick to deploy



STA Travel

STA Travel's Website Performance Flies with Riverbed

Global travel specialist STA Travel offers a unique combination of flights, accommodations, tours, and expeditions for students and young people. With over 400 branches worldwide and over 6 million travelling passengers each year, the company's website receives around 5,000 page hits per minute, from the EMEA region alone.

Access to its website was slowing down and peaks in web traffic from promotional campaigns had become difficult to manage. The company needed help, so they turned to Riverbed® for support. The Riverbed Stingray™ Traffic Manager was swiftly deployed, immediately improving STA Travel's website performance, maximizing uptime, and ensuring that customers received superior service.

Geographical distance made STA Travel's website slow

STA Travel's global websites are hosted in the UK, which meant that Australian users experienced major latency issues when connecting to the UK datacenter. At the same time, higher volumes of web traffic from promotional campaigns meant that STA Travel's existing infrastructure couldn't cope, resulting in downtime, slow web pages, poor website performance, and considerable customer frustration.

"The detailed monitoring and reporting metrics gives us powerful insight into traffic patterns, buying behavior, and key trends. Riverbed also helps to detect if our websites start to run too slowly."

Andy Mills, CIO, STA Travel

The search for an intelligent solution

So how would a web traffic management solution help? Andy Mills, CIO at STA Travel Group, explains, "We had major issues with our website, and know that customers won't hesitate to go elsewhere if their needs can't be met quickly and efficiently. STA Travel has built a reputation for being the one-stop shop for every student's travel needs, so we need a high-performance website to match.

"We had a competing hardware product in place, but to add extra modules was extremely expensive, so it wasn't an option for us. We also considered an open source solution, but we felt the lead times in getting up to speed would take too long. Riverbed was the obvious choice."

Control, flexibility, and huge cost savings

"STA Travel conducted a proof of concept with Riverbed Stingray Traffic Manager for a month and it made a big difference to our website performance. Because Riverbed provides a software solution, it's cost-effective, easy to configure, and extremely quick to deploy, which was a major advantage for us," says Mills.

"Riverbed's unrivalled programming language, Riverbed Stingray TrafficScript, gives us total flexibility, allowing us to manage and prioritize web traffic just the way we need to. The caching feature has reduced the load on our back-end infrastructure and provided much more control, allowing us to conduct smoother maintenance updates. We haven't needed to purchase additional web servers, giving us huge cost savings.

“The detailed monitoring and reporting metrics gives us powerful insight into traffic patterns, buying behavior and key trends. Riverbed also helps to detect if our website starts to run too slowly, recognizing and prioritizing our most valuable customers to ensure they receive the best possible service.”

Due to the successful impact that Riverbed has had on its websites, STA Travel has now deployed Stingray Traffic Manager on its internal systems. For example, an internal communications website needed to be accessed by all branches but they were unable to restrict wider entry.

50 percent performance increase with Riverbed

Mills explains, “After deploying Stingray Traffic Manager we saw a 50 percent increase in our website performance for Australian users, and it has more than halved the load on our web servers. If Riverbed hadn’t resolved our issues we would have needed a new data center in Australia. So, without the need to buy additional hardware, duplicate licenses and recruit more technical staff, we have saved ourselves significant sums of money.

“100 percent of the front-end of our website is cached through Stingray Traffic Manager, and while our current cache hit rate is 92 percent, we would like to reach 95 percent. We are now seeing the full potential and the flexibility it can offer. The sky’s the limit with what you can do with Stingray Traffic Manager installed.

“Our website is now capable of handling peaks in website traffic way beyond our needs, transactions are completed swiftly, and customers experience an online service that exceeds their expectations.”

About STA Travel

STA Travel is a global travel specialist with 30 years experience advising young people on holidays and adventures abroad. They offer a unique range of flights, accommodation, tours and expeditions in 90 countries and send over six million passengers away each year. STA Travel has over 400 branches worldwide. Visit www.statravel.com for details on all products and services.

“Since deploying Stingray Traffic Manager, we have seen a 50 percent increase in website performance for Australian users and it has more than halved the load on our web servers.”

Andy Mills, CIO, STA Travel

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.



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