

RSM Australia



Riverbed Application Acceleration and Network Visibility Enables Successful Azure Cloud Migration

RSM Australia is a full-service national accounting firm with more than 90 years local experience delivering expert corporate financial and advisory accounting services to clients across diverse industry sectors. The company has 29 offices in Australia and a global network of 760 offices across 120 countries.

Challenge: Cost, complexity and concerns over speed

When RSM began investigating how to centralise its document management system (DMS) from 29 disparate servers to just one, it became clear that migrating the system to Microsoft Azure would be the best option for the business.

Adopting a cloud-first approach would not only give RSM greater capacity to scale, particularly during peak demand at financial year end, but would also reduce the complexity, risk and financial obligations of centralising the system to an onsite data centre.

“We looked at running it in our own data centre, but that design would have brought in extra complexity and meant a far greater financial investment in terms of our data centre operations team, heating and cooling, as well as the real estate,” says Sam Mannix, Business Engagement and Architecture Manager at RSM. “Not only would it have

cost us far more, but from a disaster recovery perspective, we would have also been susceptible to power fluctuations and outages which meant we’d essentially need two data centres.”

With RSM’s entire workforce of more than 1,000 people relying on the system to do their jobs, there was concern about the potential impact on performance and end-user experience when employees would access DMS from the Microsoft Azure cloud.

“From the outset, our number one concern was speed. Our accountants charge in six-minute units, so for them to sit there and have to wait for a document to download would have been unacceptable—the project would have been a failure,” Mannix notes.

“As we were going to have users from all of our Australian offices accessing the data nationally, it was a no-brainer for us to leverage the rest of our Riverbed investment and opt for SteelHead’s cloud version, SteelHead CX for Microsoft Azure, to optimise all our documents going in and out of the cloud.”

Sam Mannix
Business Engagement and Architecture Manager, RSM

In Brief

Challenges

- Migrate business-critical document management system to the Microsoft Azure cloud without disrupting business or affecting end-users
- Ensure both scalability and performance, particularly during peak business periods
- Improve network control and management for better future planning
- Reduce rising operational costs due to increasing bandwidth needs

Solution

- The Riverbed Application Performance Platform, comprising:
 - Riverbed SteelHead CX for Microsoft Azure, for cloud performance
 - Riverbed SteelHead, for WAN optimisation
 - Riverbed SteelCentral Controller for SteelHead, to simplify and manage optimisation
- Riverbed Professional Services, for project success

Benefits

- Centralised 29 disparate servers into a single nation-wide document management system in Microsoft Azure with zero impact to employee accessibility
- Achieved superior performance during peak business periods
- Simplified management and monitoring to improve capacity planning
- Reduced network bandwidth costs with a 2x reduction in WAN traffic

Solution: Cloud acceleration and streamlined management from the Riverbed Application Performance Platform

The first step in RSM's cloud migration project was to deliver optimum performance across its entire wide area network (WAN). The second step was to ensure secure service-level delivery for its business critical applications.

The company replaced its aging fleet of 29 Citrix Branch Repeaters with Riverbed SteelHead appliances, and deployed Riverbed SteelCentral Controller for SteelHead to understand traffic levels and how often documents were sent between offices. This also gave Mannix insight into the type, and at which specific locations, the documents were being shared.

The next step was to find the right solution for cloud optimisation.

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The DMS was migrated to Azure and in less than an hour SteelHead was deployed and optimising traffic between RSM's offices and the new cloud-based DMS.

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Mannix says the breadth and depth of capabilities that Riverbed's Application Performance Platform offered, together with the expertise from Riverbed's Professional Services, ensured the success of the project. He says the platform ensured all risk factors were identified in the initial stages, that the migration itself encountered zero complications and ensured the ongoing performance was second-to-none.

"Riverbed has an exceptional technical team and my team has relied on them since the early stages," Mannix says. "During the first phase, SteelCentral Controller gave us metrics we needed to see how frequently documents were transferred between the offices. Together, we were able to use these insights from our local servers to scope our future planning."

The insights gained from SteelCentral Controller's monitoring and analytics enabled more accurate capacity planning, so that Mannix and his team could proactively monitor network performance and capacity rather than constantly reacting to performance issues.

"As we're a managed MPLS network, we're limited by what we can do to future-proof the network, but having Riverbed SteelHead enables greater options as it allows us to provide the best network for our business by enabling our sites to proactively direct traffic over the best path."

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This was particularly important as the alternative option of increasing the bandwidth of the WAN links to Azure—which is one way to increase application speed—was not only cost-prohibitive, but did nothing to prepare RSM's architecture for a future hybrid WAN strategy. In a hybrid WAN, Internet links are used along with a company's private MPLS links to deliver apps and data, which increases capacity and reduces costs but also increases complexity and security concerns.

"As we're a managed MPLS network, we're limited by what we can do to future-proof the network, but having Riverbed SteelHead enables greater options as it allows us to provide the best network for our business by enabling our sites to proactively direct traffic over the best path," Mannix explains.

"I have been able to standardise the same solution nationally while expanding it outside of our premises, and Riverbed SteelCentral's metrics and reports gives me the ability to help diagnose and fix problems quickly while ensuring the service-level delivery of business critical applications."

Sam Mannix
Business Engagement and Architecture Manager, RSM

Benefits: Optimum performance, lower costs, greater scalability

As an accounting firm, the end of the financial year places the greatest strain on RSM's resources. Before the migration started, RSM executives mandated that performance during these peak periods had to be, at a minimum, the same in Azure as it had been on-site.

According to Mannix, the cloud-based solution has been tested at the highest levels required during peak demand and there has been no degradation in performance.

"Not only have we been able to maintain the same performance, but we have lowered our operational costs because we're seeing a 2x reduction in traffic—we're sitting at 58 per cent of traffic compared to what it would have been without SteelHead," Mannix says.

"To be honest, I wasn't expecting a 58 per cent reduction—the solution has delivered everything we had hoped for and more," he continues. "To put this into context, in one week there were 30.4 gigabytes of data removed from the WAN link and we're not even at full rollout of the project yet."

Although RSM's more than 1000-strong workforce will have all documents, emails and correspondence automatically saved in Azure's offsite data centre, Mannix has more insight and control than when the system was on-premises. This is due to the combination of Riverbed SteelCentral Controller for SteelHead, which provides greater monitoring and maintenance capabilities, with SteelHead Solutions for application acceleration on-premises and to the cloud—cornerstones of Riverbed's Application Performance Platform.

"I have been able to standardise the same solution nationally while expanding it outside of our premises, and Riverbed SteelCentral's metrics and reports gives me the ability to help diagnose and fix problems quickly while ensuring the service-level delivery of business critical applications," Mannix concludes.

About Riverbed

Riverbed, at more than \$1 billion in annual revenue, is the leader in application performance infrastructure, delivering the most complete platform for the hybrid enterprise to ensure applications perform as expected, data is always available when needed, and performance issues can be proactively detected and resolved before impacting business performance. Riverbed enables hybrid enterprises to transform application performance into a competitive advantage by maximizing employee productivity and leveraging IT to create new forms of operational agility. Riverbed's 27,000+ customers include 97% of the *Fortune* 100 and 98% of the *Forbes* Global 100. Learn more at riverbed.com.

The Riverbed logo consists of the word "riverbed" in a lowercase, bold, orange sans-serif font.