

Bill Barrett Corporation



Riverbed SteelFusion Transforms Remote Site IT Infrastructure at One-Third the Cost of Traditional Site-In-A-Box Solution

Bill Barrett Corporation is an oil and natural gas exploration and development company headquartered in Denver, Colorado, with properties located throughout the Rocky Mountain region.

Challenge: Aging hardware and inconsistent backups at remote sites

“When Jerry Vigil took on the role of IT director at Bill Barrett Corp., one of the items on his to-do list involved upgrading hardware at the company’s remote offices. “I inherited aging, failing servers at the remote sites,” Vigil explains. One of the key challenges in remote sites involved data backup. Although some had backup systems in place, others did not. And backup practices were inconsistent, to the point that field data files were occasionally corrupted and lost—to the great frustration of those who had to recollect it.

Part of the problem was that there was no IT expertise at the remote locations. “We were trying to leverage the folks in field to do backups and to be our hands when we needed to work on servers remotely, but that wasn’t working,” Vigil says. “They are not IT people. It’s not what they do.” The company hired a third party to provide IT support to the remote sites, but site visits by IT professionals took place only once or twice a month. Vigil’s predecessor had solicited proposals for a hardware refresh at the remote sites. “The vendors were proposing a traditional half-rack of equipment—a site-in-a-box solution,” says Vigil. The solution included switches and servers for each site, along with a disk storage unit and tape backup system—at a cost that seemed high for a solution that was not addressing all of the company’s problems.

Aside from the cost, Vigil saw another problem with this approach: he still wouldn’t have IT resources out there to handle backups and to maintain that equipment. And there was still another issue. An MPLS circuit serves each site, but field operations involve the collection of so much SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) data that replicating it back to the company’s co-location site across the WAN had become problematic. “I had set the expectation that I was going to have to increase bandwidth to the remote sites,” Vigil says. Most sites had a single T1 line and adding bandwidth meant doubling the cost.

In Brief

Challenges

- Remote sites in need of costly hardware refresh
- Inconsistent backup practices for field data
- Limited IT expertise outside headquarters

Solution

- SteelFusion storage delivery
- SteelHead EX appliance with Virtual Services Platform (VSP), WAN optimization, and QoS

Benefits

- Smaller hardware footprint at remote sites
 - One-third the cost of a traditional half-rack solution
 - Less IT support needed at remote sites; bandwidth upgrades avoided
 - Disaster recovery plan in place
 - IT framework in place for future expansion
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Solution: SteelFusion appliances with VSP and WAN optimization

Between the cost of the additional bandwidth and the proposed half-rack of infrastructure, the IT improvements for the remote sites were looking to be very expensive. Vigil proposed a delay to give himself time to research other options.

From his IT partner, Trace3, Vigil learned of a simpler and more cost-effective approach to remote site architecture: SteelFusion™ appliances from Riverbed Technology. SteelFusion enables the consolidation of remote servers and storage while giving remote users local performance. The solution consists of SteelFusion™ Core, a physical or virtualized appliance that resides in the data center alongside the company's centralized storage, and SteelFusion™ Edge, a service that runs in the branch on a Riverbed® SteelHead™ EX series branch office box, which also features WAN optimization and the VMware vSphere-based Riverbed Virtual Services Platform (VSP).

"I thought, 'If this thing works the way Riverbed says it does, I should be able to bat 1000,'" says Vigil. By virtualizing the servers and having them run on the SteelHead EX appliance, this approach dramatically shrinks the hardware footprint at the remote sites while SteelFusion provides the ability to work with data locally while managing storage and capturing backups in the central co-location site.

Vigil proposed the idea to his engineers, who worked with Riverbed to perform an on-site evaluation. "Riverbed made it very easy to engage in a proof-of-concept. They brought in brand-new equipment right out of the box," he says. "Then after we made a mistake on sizing the box for our needs, Riverbed made it very easy for us to get a larger unit and keep moving with the proof-of-concept."

"One nice thing about the proof-of-concept and how SteelFusion works is that we were able to very non-disruptively place it into our infrastructure." When the proof-of-concept made it clear that SteelFusion would deliver what Bill Barrett Corp. needed, the company deployed a SteelFusion.

"SteelFusion was a big with us across the boards."

Jerry Vigil
IT Director
Bill Barret Corporation

Benefits: Remote site hardware refresh for 1/3 the cost of a traditional solution; improved user satisfaction; robust disaster recovery plan

Bill Barrett Corp. was able to deploy the SteelFusion solution at one-third the cost of the traditional hardware refresh the company had considered earlier. And as Vigil notes, the price comparison doesn't account for what the company saved by not having to upgrade bandwidth to the remote sites.

"With Riverbed, we got more than we thought we would, such as WAN optimization, which was not part of the initial consideration," Vigil explains. "We consolidated and we avoided the cost of additional bandwidth to the remote sites, which turned out to be another real win." Bill Barrett Corp. was also able to cut its third-party IT service it had hired to support the remote sites. When that contract expires, it will not be renewed. "I don't need anyone at those sites now," Vigil says. "We have a competent person in each office who can help us with the appliances if necessary, but those people haven't had to do much. The appliances just run."

The SteelFusion solution has been popular with the people working at the remote sites. Previously, those remote users experienced latency when accessing SharePoint and updating their email inboxes. Now, they benefit from WAN optimization functions, which accelerate file transfers and optimize email and CIFS traffic to and from the corporate office and the co-location site. And SteelFusion delivers data stored centrally as if it were local. "That data now feels local to them. It pops up like they were here at corporate," Vigil notes.

The Riverbed appliances also help Bill Barrett Corp. manage its network resources more effectively while improving voice quality of service and disaster recovery preparedness. The QoS functionality in the SteelHead appliances supports the company's implementation of a Cisco call management system that has replaced the individual phone services each site had previously. "We're delivering VoIP services to those sites, and SteelHead QoS helps us optimize that traffic," Vigil says.

Backup issues that formerly led to lost data have been resolved, and the ability of SteelFusion to centralize data yet make it quickly available in a remote site has put a solid DR scenario in place.

"It was a big win for us across the board," says Vigil. "SteelFusion has simplified my operations. Users at remote sites are happy because their data is better protected, performance is better and we aren't asking them to help when there's an IT problem. We achieved the technical benefits we needed, but also business benefits such as cost savings. Also, the success with SteelFusion helped the IT department earn back trust, and gave me momentum to go after other projects." The success has also given Bill Barrett Corp. a blueprint for expansion into new remote sites. "SteelHead EX with SteelFusion sits at the center of that blueprint," Vigil says. "It will serve as the host for virtual machines at the sites, provide traffic optimization, and consolidate storage to protect the data. The longest lead time will be getting a circuit to the new site."

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Jerry Vigil
IT Director
Bill Barret Corporation

Summary

When Bill Barrett Corporation's remote sites needed a hardware refresh, the company initially considered a traditional, half-rack solution that was going to cost a great deal while not addressing many of the ongoing problems. It was also looking like bandwidth to those sites would need to be increased, effectively doubling that expense. The high cost of this approach was not the only drawback. There was limited IT expertise at the remote sites, and the proposed solution would require someone to manage the servers, switches, and backup equipment involved.

Riverbed SteelFusion appliances provided a much simpler and more cost-effective solution. Requiring just one piece of equipment (a SteelHead EX series appliance) at each remote site and a SteelFusion Core appliance at the company's co-location site, the approach cost one-third as much as the traditional solution and significantly shrunk the hardware footprint at the remote sites.

The appliances' storage delivery and WAN optimization functionality eliminated the need for additional storage delivery and bandwidth to those sites. Users now access centrally stored data as if it were local, there is no longer a need for IT expertise at the remote sites, and the company has a solid DR plan in place.

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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 26,000+ 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.