



IN BRIEF

Industry

» Healthcare

Challenges

- » Poor performance of critical applications over the WAN resulted in reduced employee productivity
- » Desire to avoid increase in bandwidth costs

Solution

- » 58 Riverbed Steelhead appliances
- » Riverbed Central Management Console (CMC)

Benefits

- » Avoided costly bandwidth upgrade of ZAR 5,000,000 (US\$ 657,000) per annum
- » 3x increase in bandwidth utilization
- » 80% improvement in file download speeds resulting in increased employee productivity
- » Recovered capital investment in 11 months



Medi-Clinic Southern Africa

Healthcare company selects Riverbed to improve employee productivity and avoid costly bandwidth upgrade

Medi-Clinic (www.mediclinic.co.za) is an established leader in the private hospital industry and operates on three platforms: Medi-Clinic Southern Africa, which comprises around 13,000 employees and over 50 multi-disciplinary hospitals in South Africa and Namibia; Medi-Clinic Switzerland, where Hirslanden, the largest private hospital group in Switzerland owns 13 hospitals; and Medi-Clinic Middle-East, with a controlling share in EHL Management Services, which operates the largest private healthcare group in the UAE.

Medi-Clinic's core business is to provide patients with cost-effective healthcare. It does this by offering a wide range of specialized services, ensuring that medical practitioners are provided with the best possible infrastructure in the form of custom-designed facilities, state-of-the-art equipment and above all, excellent nursing care, focusing on the needs and satisfaction levels of its patients.

Challenge: Improve application performance while avoiding costly bandwidth upgrade

Medi-Clinic Southern Africa had adopted a private cloud strategy and centralized certain critical IT systems to its data center. While this strategy enabled cost savings in terms of reduced management overhead, users soon began to complain that it was taking too long to access critical applications and documents over the wide area

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network (WAN). Deon Myburgh, group ICT operations manager for Medi-Clinic Southern Africa explains further. "Staff outside our head office was no longer using the intranet and complained about the performance of other critical centralized applications due to the length of time taken to access these systems."

Myburgh and his team calculated that in order to improve application performance they would need to double their current bandwidth, which would cost an additional R5,000,000 (\$671,000) per annum. "In South Africa bandwidth is very expensive, and outages are a common occurrence. We needed to find a solution that was cost effective, would support our cloud strategy and improve employee productivity by enabling our employees to access data in a matter of seconds, rather than minutes."

Medi-Clinic Southern Africa has 93 sites across South Africa and Namibia. These sites consist of hospitals, practice management units, nursing recruitment agencies, a hospital equipment manufacturing site and regional offices. Medi-Clinic Southern Africa employees rely heavily on SQL applications including systems such as patient and pharmaceutical administration, hospital events management, infection control and emergency center administration. Other systems include practice management, HR management and financial systems. In addition a data warehousing system is hosted on IBM i-series servers running DB2.

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Solution: Riverbed demonstrates greatest positive impact on the user

Myburgh and his team conducted their own investigations into WAN optimization and selected a number of products to test. The tests were conducted over an 11-month period on a 128Kbps bandwidth connection. The team tested the time taken to download a variety of applications and files including the intranet, print files and a change management application called Teamtrack.

The Riverbed solution outperformed the competition as Myburgh notes. "While some other alternatives looked good in terms of statistics provided, the users saw no improvement in file access times. Riverbed delivered the best performance results, easiest implementation and more importantly users saw a real difference in the time taken to access files." He continues, "After completing a pilot project at one of our sites, the improvement in user experience was so astonishing that users were willing to pay for the implementation of Steelhead appliances out of their own pockets."

Benefits: Recovered capital investment in 11 months and improved application download speeds by 80%

Following a successful trial, Medi-Clinic Southern Africa has now installed 58 Riverbed Steelhead appliances across all of its hospitals and main sites, and is managing the appliances with the Central Management Console (CMC). "The entire deployment was completed within three weeks and we have reached the point where a new implementation takes only 10 to 15 minutes. In our experience someone with little knowledge of the Steelhead appliances can roll these devices out quickly and easily," explains Myburgh.

Medi-Clinic has seen a 3x improvement in bandwidth utilization and an 80% improvement in file download speeds on some applications. One of the biggest users of bandwidth capacity was printing due to the processes involved in the print procedure. While the larger hospitals have an IBM i-series server on site, the smaller hospitals access those servers over the WAN. Each print job could be as much as 10 - 12Mb in size, as an overlay would be produced for every page printed. With Riverbed only one overlay was produced so reducing the size of the print file to 147Kb," notes Myburgh.

Riverbed is now a critical component of our organization and our decision to use Riverbed has delivered significant returns

Employee satisfaction has also improved dramatically. "Critical to the company is our enhanced user experience. In our annual internal customer satisfaction survey based on information gathered from 1,700 of our users, network performance, which year-on-year always received the worst rating, did not receive a single complaint this year," says Myburgh.

The CMC enables Medi-Clinic to manage and monitor the Steelhead appliances, and Myburgh has found the information available to be very useful. "Thanks to Riverbed I now have access to accurate information on bandwidth usage, bandwidth compression and I also have visibility into any attempted port scans or virus attacks. Monthly reports and presentations for the management team are now far easier to complete. In addition, the technical staff is finding it very easy to manage and configure the Riverbed solutions."

The Riverbed solution has also accelerated IBM DB2 data. "Every night we update the hospitals with the latest pharmaceutical product updates and any fund price changes. These prices can change daily so it is critical that these updates get to the hospitals. Riverbed has allowed us to slash these update times from seven or eight hours to less than one hour."

Finally, within 11 months of installing the Steelhead appliances Medi-Clinic Southern Africa has recovered its capital investment, as Myburgh explains, "We've seen a 3x improvement in bandwidth. This means to get the same end user experience we would have had to triple our bandwidth costs, so in terms of hardware costs the Riverbed solution paid for itself in less than 11 months. We are extremely satisfied with our investment. Riverbed is now a critical component of our organization and our decision to use Riverbed has delivered significant returns."

About Riverbed

Riverbed Technology is the IT 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.



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SUMMARY

Medi-Clinic had adopted a selective private cloud strategy as a result of increased business growth and the requirement to manage a growing number of applications. However, productivity began to suffer as employees struggled to access critical files and applications over the WAN due to slow application download speeds.

By implementing a WAN optimization solution from Riverbed, Medi-Clinic Southern Africa has experienced a 3x increase in bandwidth utilization and an 80% reduction in file download speeds. Employees can now access data in a matter of seconds, thus improving employee productivity. Medi-Clinic Southern Africa has also avoided further bandwidth upgrades and the Riverbed WAN optimization solution has delivered a return on investment within four months.