Swiss Post

Swiss Post Implement the Riverbed Solution to Consolidate Its IT Infrastructure

Swiss Post (www.post.ch) has 3,600 drop off points for letters and parcels and employs 61,428 people. Swiss Post operates in four markets; communications (letters, newspapers/magazines, direct marketing, information solutions and data management) within Switzerland and internationally; logistics within Switzerland and to other countries (parcels, express delivery and logistics solutions); retail finance in Switzerland (payments, investments, pensions and loans); and public transport (operation of regional, local and urban routes, system management) in Switzerland and at selected locations in other countries. In 2010 it made a profit of approximately 910 million Swiss francs.

Future plans

After their positive experience with the SteelHead appliances, Swiss Post is currently testing the SteelHead Mobile solution. This mobile client allows employees at home or on the move to access applications and data just as quickly as their colleagues based in the branch offices.

> "We had simplified our IT infrastructure, but our application performance suddenly became much worse."

In Brief

Challenges

- To consolidate IT infrastructure without compromising performance
- To improve employee productivity by accelerating data access

Solution

- Over 200 Riverbed SteelHead appliances
- Central Management Console (CMC)

Benefits

- 4x improvement in application performance
- 2 to 4x reduction in bandwidth utilization
- Increased productivity and improved customer service
- Ensured investment in consolidated IT infrastructure delivered the intended benefits
- Enabled further consolidation of IT services

Challenge: Consolidate IT infrastructure with affecting employee productivity

To make its IT infrastructure more efficient and cost—effective, Swiss Post decided to undertake a comprehensive consolidation project. The main challenge was to ensure that employees could still access all key applications and data quickly and easily. Prompt and professional customer service is of massive importance to Swiss Post, and so it is not acceptable for staff to wait to access data, particularly at busy times. "We planned to carry out the consolidation process in several stages," explains Swiss Post's network manager. "To start with, we wanted to relocate the servers from our largest branches to one central location. To this end, in this first phase, we consolidated servers from our 30 largest locations. This included removing around 80 local servers, which we replaced with 12 central servers."

However, almost as soon as this first phase was complete, problems began to arise. "We had simplified our IT infrastructure, but our application performance suddenly became much worse," explains one IT employee. In their day-to-day work, customer—facing staff use a tailor—made Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) application. This is based on CIFS and HTTP, and is used for billing purposes among other things. However, after this first consolidation stage, employees began to experience delays when accessing the application over the wide area network (WAN). Employee efficiency decreased, and customer satisfaction could no longer be guaranteed. Over time, other applications also began to suffer performance problems. Unless a solution could be found to this problem, Swiss Post would have to rethink its whole consolidation strategy.

Solution: Riverbed solution accelerates and optimizes applications and enables employee collaboration

In its quest for a suitable solution, Swiss Post tested WAN optimization products from three companies under laboratory conditions. As a result of this process, one of these three products was ruled out, as it did not achieve the desired improvements in performance. Following this, Swiss Post then ran a pilot scheme with the two remaining vendors. In the end, the comprehensive and flexible solution from Riverbed Technology outperformed the other product. "Above all, the faster CIFS offered by the Riverbed® solution was significantly better," recalls one IT manager. "There was also no problem with the OPlock feature."

Opportunistic Locking or OPlock is a system that allows the working copy of a document to be saved locally to a user's system, thereby speeding up file access. This feature, however, had its disadvantages too. OPlock prevents more than one person from editing the same document at the same time. This way of working was just not practical in the long term, so Swiss Post was looking for a solution that allowed users to work in the same file simultaneously. Riverbed was the only provider that made this possible.

Benefits: 65 per cent reduction in WAN traffic and improved application speeds result in improved customer service

Swiss Post has now installed two SteelHead® appliances at its data center and around 200 more at its post offices across the country. The company also uses the Central Management Console (CMC) to quickly and easily manage the appliances from a central location.

The IT department was particularly impressed by the ease with which the installation was completed. Other employees have also noticed a big improvement in file performance speeds. "Now many of our applications run much faster," explains the network manager. "In the past, when our employees wanted to open an accounting application, for example, they had to wait a full six minutes before they could access it. Thanks to the Riverbed solution, it now only takes 40 seconds." WAN bandwidth usage is now only 35% of what it was before the SteelHead appliances were installed. In particular, the volume of CIFS data—which accounts for around 60 percent of all network traffic—has been reduced by 75 per cent.

Employees are now more productive, and able to help far more customers. In addition customers don't have to wait as long to get served and customer satisfaction levels have increased.

The Riverbed solution has ensured that Swiss Post's investment in centralizing its IT infrastructure was not wasted. "Now that our WAN performance problems have been solved, we can proceed with our consolidation strategy," says one member of the IT department. "Because Riverbed speeds up the performance of such a wide range of applications, we won't have any problems with slow data access times when we decide to implement new software in the future. This was one of the key criteria that led us to choose Riverbed."

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Summary

To reduce the number of local servers in its numerous branches, Swiss Post decided to undertake a comprehensive consolidation project. This initially resulted in significant performance problems with employees waiting longer to access an application over the WAN. This impacted employee productivity, and consequently the standard of customer service.

To solve the problem, Swiss Post opted for the comprehensive WAN optimization solution from Riverbed, and implemented over 200 SteelHead appliances in its post offices and data center. The results impressed the company's management, IT department and frontline staff. Application performance is now up to four times faster, allowing employees to work much more efficiently and deal with customer requests significantly faster.

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.