

# IAT Group



## Insurance Company's Agents and Investigators Increase Productivity 4x with SteelHead WAN Optimization

IAT Group consists of eight licensed insurance companies and one reinsurance company, with its headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina, and 18 offices across the US.

### Challenge: Improve poor performance of business-critical insurance application

To consolidate its sprawling IT infrastructure, IAT Group centralized software applications in three large data centers (in Omaha, Raleigh and a suburb of Chicago) as well as a number of smaller ones. These apps are accessed by 750 to 800 employees, including agents in the offices and investigators in the field, as well as up to 100 contractors and business partners, all via a private WAN.

Business-critical applications include Microsoft Exchange, AS/400, AcroSoft and Vertafore's ImageRight. The latter, which is housed in the Omaha data center, is particularly critical to the business because it is insurance-specific software that agents use for tasks like processing claims and writing policies.

ImageRight did not perform well initially as a centralized application. "ImageRight is not network-friendly. It's very chatty," explains Ryan Smith, a network engineer at IAT Group. "We had an underwriter in LA who told us that it used to take her 90 minutes to two hours to write a policy and most of that time was spent waiting for the system to transmit information."

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## In Brief

## Challenges

- Improve poor performance of centralized systems at remote offices such as email, AS/400, Microsoft SharePoint portals, AcroSoft and ImageRight, which were affecting agents' ability to do business

## Solution

- SteelHead WAN optimization appliances in data centers and branch offices
- SteelHead Mobile software licenses for remote employees

## Benefits

- Agents write policies in 20 to 30 minutes vs. 90 minutes to 2 hours previously
- Field investigators spend less time uploading files
- SQL files copied to headquarters in minutes, compared to hours previously
- Employees can spend time doing higher-value work
- 9 to 10-month ROI for the SteelHead deployment
- Potential to use Riverbed Virtual
- Services Platform and SteelFusion

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## Solution: SteelHead WAN optimization; SteelHead Mobile Software

Smith and IAT Group's systems engineer, Joe Bohelski, learned from Vertafore that some ImageRight customers were solving their performance problems by installing Riverbed® SteelHead™ WAN optimization appliances. That appealed to IAT Group more than adding bandwidth because purchasing appliances would be a more cost-effective solution than paying for larger circuits on an on-going basis.

Smith considered evaluating Cisco products, but when Cisco didn't react promptly to his inquiry, along with the fact that Cisco's products were more costly to the business, he ruled them out. "And from all the research I was doing, it looked like Riverbed and SteelHead were ahead of all the competitors," he adds.

IAT Group purchased 12 SteelHead EX appliances for its larger branch offices and SteelHead 5050-H appliances for its data centers. The company also purchased 10 licenses of SteelHead Mobile, which have been installed on the laptops of investigators who work remotely and a SQL database administrator who frequently works from home.

Riverbed helped with the deployment of the first two SteelHead appliances, but after that Smith and Bohelski took over. They found the deployment to be easy, and have nothing but good things to say about the appliances' performance and Riverbed technical support. "We've placed a few calls to support. Your support is fantastic," says Bohelski. "The support is great. The knowledge base is great. And these things work just about flawlessly," Smith adds.

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Ryan Smith  
Network Engineer  
IAT Group

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## Benefits: Policies writted in 20-30 minutes; admin tasks that took hours now take minutes

The SteelHead appliances had the desired effect on ImageRight performance, starting by compressing ImageRight data by 80 to 99%. “It’s now a dream to use ImageRight across the WAN,” says Smith, adding that the agent in Los Angeles who formerly needed up to two hours to write a policy now completes the task in 20 to 30 minutes. “That means we’re doing business more efficiently,” he adds.

Although the need to improve ImageRight performance drove the purchase of a WAN optimization solution, other applications benefit as well. “ImageRight was the catalyst for getting Riverbed in here. But we’ve reaped the benefits for all the other WAN-enabled software,” Smith notes. And the overall result throughout the company is that people are spending less time on computer-related administrative tasks, freeing them for more important work.

For example, field investigators, who upload a lot of data, are spending much less time on this task now. Most of their WAN traffic is Exchange data, which is compressed 50 to 80%, so the uploads go much faster. “The investigators have seen a big difference,” Smith says.

Similarly, a SQL database administer who does a lot of copying of CIFS files between his home and his office at headquarters says copying tasks that used to take hours now take a few minutes. Another employee, who uses Information Builders WebFOCUS to analyze data on the AS/400s, finds that jobs that previously took several hours to run are now completed in minutes.

None of IAT Group’s branch offices have needed bandwidth upgrades since the SteelHead appliances were deployed. By avoiding these costs, Smith estimates that the SteelHead appliances paid for themselves after only nine or 10 months.

IAT Group is very happy with its SteelHead appliances, even though the company currently taps only a fraction of their potential. (IAT is only using the WAN optimization functionality of its SteelHead EX appliances for branch offices, which also have the Virtual Services Platform and ability to run SteelFusion for branch office converged infrastructure.) Says Bohelski, “Even after two years, Ryan and I are still amazed by what a great product this is. The benefits are tremendous.”

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## Summary

When IAT Group centralized applications, one of the most critical ones (ImageRight) didn't perform well initially over the WAN. It was taking the company's insurance agents 90 minutes to two hours to write a policy and most of that time was spent waiting for the application to transmit information.

Rather than add bandwidth, IAT deployed SteelHead appliances in the data centers and branch offices, and SteelHead Mobile software on investigators' laptops. The investment paid for itself in nine to 10 months. More importantly, the SteelHead implementation completely solved the problem with ImageRight performance, significantly improving the productivity of the agents, who can now write policies in as few as 20 to 30 minutes. Other work done over the WAN, such as uploading and copying files to headquarters, also takes a fraction of the time it did previously.

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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](http://riverbed.com).

The Riverbed logo consists of the word "riverbed" in a lowercase, bold, orange sans-serif font. The letters are closely spaced, and the overall appearance is clean and modern.