

A. Schulman



Manufacturing Company Improves Employee Workflows and Productivity While Benefitting From Large IT Cost Reductions

A. Schulman (www.aschulman.com) is a global company with manufacturing and support facilities across America, Europe and Asia. It provides semimanufactured plastic goods to various sectors including the automotive industry, and also supplies machinery and packaging to the food industry. industry, and also supplies machinery and packaging to the food industry.

Challenge: To improve employee productivity by enabling fast and reliable access to centralized data

Like many global businesses, A. Schulman is divided into regions. A. Schulman's three main regions are the Americas, EMEA, and Asia-Pacific, with each region managed locally. Regional autonomy is a sound business strategy, but the danger is that organizations can become fragmented or disconnected. A. Schulman wants to work towards consolidation and harmonization globally to ensure good service delivery throughout the entire organization, explains Roel Fonteyn, network, security, and telecom administrator EMEA at A. Schulman Plastic, "Our strategy was to maintain the regional structure, but at the same time have greater interaction between the regional offices and associated workflows. This created a need to have data readily available at all remote locations."

Many employees travel and work in different offices, and one of the key applications they use is Lotus Notes. Lotus Notes workflows are used for various operations, such as approving invoices generated by the finance department. These invoices are processed by several employees for approval. Lotus Notes was stored on a network of local servers, but there were issues. "Employees working in remote sites often couldn't access the Lotus Notes local servers, and we received a lot of complaints that it took too long to download files. It was often more than five minutes before people could resume their activities," says Fonteyn. A. Schulman also wanted to centralize Lotus Notes at its data center, but bandwidth issues made this impossible.

A. Schulman was also using video conferencing over a Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) network for communication between regional offices. Video conferencing is a bandwidth-intensive application, and even with quality of service (QoS), there were issues. "There simply wasn't sufficient bandwidth for video conferencing to function properly," notes Fonteyn, "Network latency meant we were getting a lot of complaints about the sound and video not being synchronized. Our network was clearly unable to provide the business services we needed."

These issues, coupled with a strategy to consolidate more of the company's applications and services, meant that A. Schulman need to upgrade its IT infrastructure. "The question was: what tools did we need in order to improve our IT services?" says Fonteyn.us to implement new systems, whatever they are, and have them work well right away."

In Brief

Challenges

- Enable workers fast and reliable access to centralized data
- Improve the video conferencing facilities to meet the business requirements
- Avoid a costly bandwidth upgrade
- Centralize Lotus Notes

Solution

- Riverbed® SteelHead™ solutions provide a WAN optimization solution that accelerates application performance and reduces bandwidth utilization

Benefits

- Average 60 percent reduction in bandwidth utilization
- Annual cost savings of \$37,000 alone through Lotus Notes centralization
- ROI less than 12 months
- Enhanced video conferencing
- Improved employee collaboration and productivity

Solution: Riverbed WAN optimization solution delivers improved

A. Schulman considered doubling the bandwidth at each location in order to accelerate applications and workflows. But this was an expensive option and might not resolve the issue of network latency. The company decided to explore a wide area network (WAN) optimization solution. A. Schulman ran a proof-of-concept with an alternative product on the market, but it did not deliver the results A. Schulman required.

“Riverbed Technology was a solid name within the industry, and other companies and IT professionals recommended Riverbed,” says Fonteyn. Working in conjunction with an IT partner, A. Schulman set-up an evaluation in Germany, where its European data center is based. The evaluation lasted one month and used SteelHead. The Riverbed solution resulted in an average 60 percent reduction in bandwidth utilization, and accelerated application performance. As a result, A. Schulman deployed SteelHead solutions in the majority of its European locations.

SteelHead solutions are also deployed in some of the company’s larger US offices, and the company plans to install more at its smaller offices. “Deploying SteelHead appliances is very easy,” says Fonteyn. “It’s one of those products that you can install and then forget about, because there’s no ongoing work to do. The only time people notice is when we remove the appliances from the network, because then everything starts to slow down.”

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Roel Fonteyn
Network, Security and Telecom Administrator EMEA
A. Schulman Plastic

Benefits: Employee productivity improved, expensive bandwidth upgrade avoided, cost savings through centralization

The Riverbed WAN optimization solution has had a significant impact on application speeds, download times, workflow, and costs, says Fonteyn, “We’ve reduced bandwidth utilization at a number of locations and seen an enormous reduction in network traffic. We’ve also made large cost reductions by avoiding additional bandwidth costs.”

According to Fonteyn, employee productivity has also improved. He adds. “It used to be difficult for employees in remote offices to download emails and files quickly, and use workflows efficiently. But now there are no issues with latency or download speeds. It doesn’t matter if employees are working at head office or at a remote location; they have the same advantages when it comes to application speed and performance.” As a result, A. Schulman’s mobile workers can work even more effectively.

The improvement in bandwidth utilization has enabled A. Schulman to centralize Lotus Notes and make considerable cost savings by removing local servers and simplifying IT management, “Lotus Notes centralization alone has saved us around \$38,000 a year,” says Fonteyn, “and our return-on-investment for Riverbed is less than 12 months.” The SteelHead solutions have freed up so much bandwidth that QoS is no longer required on the MPLS network during video conferencing, “We can now use video conferencing efficiently and effectively,” adds Fonteyn.

A. Schulman has also received strong service and support from Riverbed. “Riverbed guided us through the process of implementation and helped us with the scaling of some of the sites,” says Fonteyn. “The Riverbed website is clear, informative and very user-friendly – it’s very easy to find documentation and make upgrades. We are very happy to have chosen Riverbed.”

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Summary

A. Schulman wanted to achieve greater employee interaction between its regional offices, improve download times and workflow efficiency, increase applications speeds, and centralize resources. By deploying a Riverbed WAN optimization solution consisting of SteelHead solutions, A. Schulman has reduced bandwidth utilization and data traffic, accelerated download times, improved application performance, enhanced video conferencing, centralized key resources, and increased employee productivity. The company has also greatly reduced costs by avoiding an expensive bandwidth upgrade.

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 bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters are a vibrant orange color. The "i" and "e" have small white dots, and the "d" has a small white tail. The logo is positioned on the right side of the page, below the "About Riverbed" section header.