

# Hilton Grand Vacations Club



## Riverbed® SteelHead™ Helps Hilton Grand Vacations Close More Vacation Ownership Deals

Time shares, more commonly known as vacation ownership today, are a fast-growing part of the travel and leisure industry. People want to maximize their time off, and one way to do that is to buy into a vacation ownership plan, which gives them annual vacations for life at a greatly reduced cost compared to paying for hotel accommodations.

Because vacation ownership is so popular, companies such as Hilton Grand Vacations, a wholly owned subsidiary of Hilton Hotels Corp., are experiencing a surge in business. Hilton Grand Vacations is seeing exponential growth in the number of customers they serve and contracts they process each year.

Rapid growth is complicated by the fact that Hilton Grand Vacations has offices and properties all over the world, making communication among sites over the corporate wide area network (WAN) a bigger challenge each day.

### In Brief

#### Challenges

- Improve network latency – Customers had to wait more than 30 minutes for vacation ownership contracts to process
- Improve application performance and file transfer times among various locations

#### Solution

- Riverbed® SteelHead™ appliances

#### Benefits

- Contract approval process reduced from 30 minutes to a few minutes
- Centralized business processes for accounts payable
- Increased employee productivity and morale
- Greatly improved customer satisfaction

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## Challenge: Reducing file transfer times

Hilton Grand Vacations operates sales offices in New York; Osaka and Tokyo, Japan; Guam; and Orlando, Florida and has resorts in places such as New York; Las Vegas; Orlando; Oahu, Hawaii; and the Big Island of Hawaii. According to Rich Jackson, vice president of technology operations at Hilton Grand Vacations, the company choose to centralize their technology operations primarily in its Orlando office.

“Our approach has been to centralize our IT operations for several reasons. First, it reduces the amount of servers, parts, and IT personnel needed to support the business. Second, it allows us to maintain strong configuration management and change control standards. Third, it reduces the overall cost of the technology needed to deliver services to the business. And last but not least, it enables us to provide higher service levels to our customers, which has resulted in overall higher customer satisfaction,” says Jackson.

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“The contract process has been reduced from more than 30 minutes to just a minute or two. It has a huge effect on customer and employee satisfaction.”

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“One challenge of a centralized IT structure is you have to have solid and reliable connectivity to the main data centers,” Jackson continues. “A tough problem to overcome is network latency. Because of our structure, we began to see delays in some business processes and applications because of latency.”

“Getting contracts approved is a time-consuming process that involves pushing large amounts of data to our central office in Orlando,” he says. “In Asia, the contract process is more complex and requires more bandwidth than it does in the United States. Since it wasn’t possible to duplicate our main business systems and processes in our Japanese offices, it was taking up to 30 minutes to complete the IT portion of the contracts process.”

This extended the sales process and made it more difficult for salespeople to satisfy prospective customers. “As you can imagine, when the customer is sitting in front of you while you are waiting on a computer process, it’s not an ideal situation,” Jackson says. “When you’re processing a contract, time is of the essence. You don’t want delays due to technology issues.”

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## Solution: SteelHead for Optimization

Jackson and his team looked at an array of solutions and concluded that WAN optimization would solve the business problem. When researching solutions to network latency and file transfer issues, Jackson came to Riverbed and its SteelHead solution for WAN optimization. His resulting success made him an all-star of delivering superb application performance.

Jackson was impressed with the data reduction capabilities of the SteelHead solution and its ability to take a chunk of transmission control protocol (TCP) packets and tag them individually. “The local tags mean you can change a file but still have all the advantages of application acceleration,” he says.

These data reduction capabilities have reduced the company’s bandwidth utilization up to 80%. That not only helps defer future bandwidth costs, but also reduces or eliminates latency when retrieving files over a WAN connection.

The evaluation process took less than a month, and Jackson says the deployment was surprisingly easy. “The deployment literally took minutes, not hours or days,” he says. The first SteelHead appliances were deployed in the Osaka and Tokyo offices, where many of the bottlenecks were taking place, and then rolled out to other locations.

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## Benefits: Increase business workflow

Employee reaction to the optimized application performance has been incredibly positive, according to Jackson, as the contract process was dramatically reduced from 30 minutes to under 2 minutes. “The time spent waiting for contracts to process has been greatly improved, which has had a huge effect on customer and employee satisfaction,” he says.

Employees in branch offices also appreciate that their Microsoft Exchange email and Microsoft Windows file services are faster. In addition, the company benefited from an increased ability to process accounts payable. “Previously, AP was a much more distributed process. Now we are able to centralize this process due to the technology.”

Riverbed helps Hilton Grand Vacations use its bandwidth more efficiently and ultimately save on costs, especially in Asia where bandwidth is at a

premium. “Along with routers and switches, SteelHead is now a part of our standard product set when we set up remote offices. It has really improved our ability to deliver quality data services to our remote offices without having to install servers in every location,” says Jackson.

Jackson offers this advice to other companies looking to improve application delivery over the WAN: “Examine the feature sets of the different products out there and look at the differentiating factors,” he says. For Jackson, it was clearly the rich capabilities of SteelHead that set it apart from the roar of the crowd and helped Hilton Grand Vacations become an all-star in the world of luxury accommodations.

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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).

