BDO Canada LLP (BDO)

BDO is using Riverbed SteelFusion as a key element of its transformation to a more agile IT environment.

Company description

With 3,500 employees, BDO is one of Canada's leading providers of professional services to clients. It is part of the BDO Global network, which is the fifth-largest accounting network in the world.

In Brief

Challenges

- Support firm's M&A strategy
- Revamp local office IT infrastructure to improve data security, ensure business continuity, and reduce need for IT presence on-site

Solution

- Riverbed® SteelFusion™
- Riverbed® SteelHead™
- Riverbed® SteelCentral™ NetProfiler

Benefits

- New offices integrated quickly into the organization
- Business continuity even when local offices experience local disasters
- Less IT time spent on travel to local offices; more time for strategic projects
- Enhanced data security at the local office level

In Canada, local offices are sometimes remote

Among BDO's 125+ offices, there are some with as few as two employees and others with more than 200. Office locations range from major urban centers (Toronto, Calgary, Montreal, Vancouver, etc.) to rural communities from coast to coast. The firm has a data center in Toronto that houses its business-critical software applications. Local offices are connected to the data center by an MPLS wide-area network (WAN).

BDO came to Riverbed Technology several years ago the way many companies do. The firm needed to improve application performance and data transfer over the network. It opted to do that by means of Riverbed® SteelHead™ WAN optimization instead of incurring the high costs of upgrading network circuits, which wasn't possible at some of the more remote locations anyway. Around that time, the firm also brought in Riverbed® SteelCentral™ NetProfiler to ensure they had the visibility necessary to address performance problems quickly.

Since the SteelHead deployment, the firm's IT strategy has continued to evolve to take advantage of new technology and trends – all with the aim of better serving a fast-growing organization. "We have very tight mergers and acquisitions timelines," explains Bruno Petitti, senior manager, IT systems and infrastructure, BDO. "Part of my job is making sure IT is agile enough to run with the business."

Petitti and his team have begun implementing a cloud-first strategy, for example, starting with Microsoft Office 365 and Azure data storage. Another initiative has been to revamp the IT strategy for the local offices.

Previously, each local office had its own servers and storage systems yet very few had IT expertise on-site. Given the remote nature of some of the offices, staff were often required to travel to these locations to keep the equipment up and running. "We're talking remote," says Giri Shanmugarajah, BDO's manager of IT systems and infrastructure. "You might have to drive four hours, take a ferry, and then drive another hour."

When a critical piece of equipment went down, revenue for that office would come to a halt while employees waited for someone from IT to arrive. If replacement parts were needed, that could add 24 to 48 hours to the downtime.

Each office backed up a large amount of information to the data center nightly. Often this process continued into the next day, leading to user complaints about application performance. In addition, enhancing security around corporate and client data was a top priority for Petitti's team. Having local offices' data stored on-site also posed problems for their continuity in the event of disasters such as fires and floods.

SteelFusion: up and running in half hour and there to keep the business running

When the IT team learned about Riverbed® SteelFusion™ software-defined edge solution, they realized it would address their local office concerns. After a four-month very successful proof of concept (POC) in five offices, BDO became an early adopter of SteelFusion and has since been migrating its local offices from SteelHead appliances to SteelFusion at a rate of about 25 offices/year.

The rollout process is a breeze compared to "the old way" of deploying infrastructure at local sites. "Once we have the SteelFusion appliance on site, someone local will go rack and stack, and then give it an IP address. Once that's done, everything else is done remotely through my team

here at our national office," says Shanmugarajah. " We deploy SteelFusion from templates and can be up and running in about half an hour."

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Giri Shanmugarajah
Manager IT Systems & Infrastructure, BDO

Since SteelFusion converges all local office data in the firm's data center, all-night backups have been replaced with quick data center snapshot updates, eliminating the early-morning application performance problems that some offices used to experience. (The snapshots are then backed up using centralized backup software.) Between that and the integrated WAN optimization within the SteelFusion appliances, application performance at the local sites is better than ever.

"If someone walks out with a SteelFusion appliance, they really don't get anything."

Claude Vezina
Manager, Network Security, BDO

Having local office data stored safely in the data center has eliminated the worry about theft. "If someone walks out with a SteelFusion appliance, they really don't get anything," says Claude Vezina, BDO's manager of network security. And SteelFusion ensures that when a local office shuts down unexpectedly, all work doesn't have to stop. "Employees can just VPN from home. For our team, it takes less than five minutes to give them access to all of their data as if they were right there in the office, enhancing our business continuity," Vezina adds.

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The IT team no longer travels to offices with SteelFusion appliances since these sites have eliminated on-site servers and storage, and SteelFusion maintenance can be done remotely. This has freed up IT time for more strategic projects.

Similarly, when mergers and acquisitions bring new offices into the company, much less IT time is required to integrate them into the standardized IT environment since SteelFusion automatically consolidates all edge infrastructure into the data center. Petitti is now exploring a way to eliminate the typical bottleneck of buying and allocating storage for new offices by using SteelFusion in conjunction with Microsoft Azure StorSimple instead of SAN storage. "The support for StorSimple is another way Riverbed is helping us improve our agility," he says.

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Bruno Petitti
Senior Manager, IT Systems & Infrastructure, BDO

About Riverbed

Riverbed Technology, Inc. enables organizations to modernize their networks and applications with industry-leading SD-WAN, application acceleration, and visibility solutions. Riverbed's platform allows enterprises to transform application and cloud performance into a competitive advantage by maximizing employee productivity and leveraging IT to create new forms of operational agility. At more than $1 billion in annual revenue, Riverbed's 28,000+ customers include 97% of the *Fortune* 100 and 98% of the *Forbes* Global 100. Learn more at riverbed.com.

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