riverbed

Sub-Zero Group, Inc.

Riverbed Application Performance Platform accelerates Office 365 and other applications, and delivers network visibility for a successful IT consolidation at Sub-Zero.

Sub-Zero Group, Inc. is the leading manufacturer of luxury appliances, including the Sub-Zero line of refrigerators and freezers and the Wolf line of cooking products. The third-generation, family-owned company recently celebrated its 70th anniversary. It is based in Madison, Wisconsin, where it was originally founded.

In Brief

Challenges

Ensure a successful IT consolidation with consistently fast application performance over the distributed network and centralized management and troubleshooting

Improve HD video end user experience for customers at remote showrooms delivery across network to improve showroom experience for customers

Solution

- SteelHead™ CX
- SteelHead™ CX for Virtual
- SteelHead™ SaaS
- SteelCentral™ NPM solutions
  – SteelCentral™ NetProfiler
  – SteelCentral™ NetShark
  – SteelCentral™ Flow Gateway

Benefits

- Reduced WAN traffic by 50%
- Accelerated Office 365 performance; file save time shrunk from 10 seconds to 2 seconds
- Improved customer experience at showrooms
- Cut application troubleshooting times to less than a minute
- Built foundation for future infrastructure improvements

Consolidation's success required great application performance and application-aware network visibility

Today, most of Sub-Zero's business-critical applications have been centralized in its Wisconsin datacenter and are delivered to end users over an MPLS network, while several other applications, such as Microsoft Office 365 and the InContact VoIP system, are hosted in the cloud and accessed via the Internet.

But that wasn't the situation Erika Ferrell found when she became Sub-Zero's director of IT. There were no cloud-based applications and each of Sub-Zero's six affiliated distributors had its own IT environment, including on-site IT staff as well as phone, email and office applications hosted locally.

Ferrell kicked off a consolidation initiative that entailed centralizing IT and managing the distributed environment from the primary data center at the Wisconsin headquarters, standardizing applications and providing a uniform end-user experience across all of Sub-Zero's facilities. Their Hybrid WAN consists of an MPLS network that links all of the company's operations, including manufacturing facilities in Wisconsin and Arizona, the company's Wisconsin headquarters and primary data center, a DR facility in Arizona, six affiliated distributors located in major cities across the U.S., and 12 show rooms.

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Erika Ferrell
Director of IT, Sub-Zero Group, Inc.

Ferrell knew that, in the eyes of the end users accustomed to local app performance, only similar performance over the WAN would allow the consolidation effort to succeed. "When I gave the marching orders to consolidate, one of the requirements was to make it positive for everybody involved," Ferrell explains. "So one of my requirements was speed. Whatever [application or file share] people accessed at the remote sites, I wanted it to feel like they were sitting at corporate."

Among the 350 applications that would be centralized, Ferrell considers 150 of them primary. These include the Infor XA ERP system, Solidworks design software, the Microsoft suite of office software, as well as a number of web-based ordering and other showroom applications.

Because Ferrell's plan included consolidating the IT staff in Wisconsin and managing the IT infrastructure remotely, another important requirement was end-to-end visibility into network performance. The company had a network performance management (NPM) solution at the time, but it was clear that it wouldn't provide the end-user, app-first viewpoint Sub-Zero needed for remote troubleshooting across their complex, distributed environment.

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Erika Ferrell
Director of IT, Sub-Zero Group, Inc.

Consolidation successfully accomplished; stage is set for future IT improvements

Realizing that much of the success of the consolidation effort rested on application performance, Eric Niebuhr, Sub-Zero's IT supervisor and network engineer, started researching WAN optimization. After evaluating products from Cisco Systems and Riverbed Technology, easier setup and simplified management led him to purchase Riverbed® SteelHead™ solutions.

Sub-Zero deployed a mix of physical and virtual SteelHeads across their facilities with SteelHead SaaS to accelerate Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) apps such as Microsoft Office 365.

"By just turning on the Steelheads with minimal configuration, we were able to provide a better user experience. Working with office files and other documents was improved because of the acceleration of the shared storage that's located in our data center," says Niebuhr.

With SteelHead solutions in place, application performance meets Ferrell's goal for consistently fast app performance for all users - at headquarters and across the hybrid WAN to any location. "We set this very high bar as far as application performance, and with SteelHead, we met it," she says. Office 365 has seen particularly impressive improvements.

Without SteelHead SaaS, for example, it could take 10 seconds to save a file to OneDrive. Now, it only takes two seconds. "With SteelHead SaaS, people are now happy with the performance of Office 365, and definitely notice when it's turned off," adds Niebuhr. "There are hesitations and delays with Office 365 that aren't there when acceleration is turned on."

SteelHead has reduced the amount of data going over the network by an average of 50%, which frees up bandwidth for more data-heavy applications. For example, SteelHead delivers HD videos from the datacenter to the distributors with great performance for a better customer experience in the showroom.

Sub-Zero chose to replace its previous NPM product with Riverbed® SteelCentral™ performance management solutions, including SteelCentral NetProfiler for proactive network monitoring, reporting and analytics, and SteelCentral NetShark for high-speed packet capture. The end-to-end network visibility provided by these solutions speeds the troubleshooting process by clearly indicating the source of an issue. Says Niebuhr, "Being able to type in a host name and time window to get a report within minutes allows us to narrow in and focus on root causes of system, network, or application performance at our various sites. And because this is an always-running service, we are given insights into historical traffic."

Ferrell has additional plans to improve Sub-Zero's IT environment, such as transitioning more applications to SaaS where it makes sense. With Riverbed, she has a foundation for the environment she envisions. "With Riverbed, I'm confident that we're ahead of the curve, and that we've set ourselves up nicely for the future," she says.

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>
> Eric Niebuhr
> IT Supervisor and Network Engineer,
> Sub-Zero Group, Inc.

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 27,000+ customers include 97% of the *Fortune* 100 and 98% of the *Forbes* Global 100. Learn more at riverbed.com.

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