

IN BRIEF

Industry

- » Real Estate

Challenges

- » Deliver mission-critical applications and information to real estate professionals in 200 remote offices, while retaining a centralized IT infrastructure
- » Increase productivity and improve customer satisfaction
- » Handle ever growing volumes of data without spending more on bandwidth

Solution

- » 200 Steelhead appliances were deployed nationwide to help application performance

Benefits

- » Avoided numerous costly network bandwidth upgrades to 200 remote offices
- » 20x performance improvement across a broad range of applications
- » Improved worker satisfaction and productivity

Sentinel 



Sentinel Real Estate Corporation

Riverbed® Steelhead® Appliances Improve Application Speed for National Real Estate Firm

Sentinel Real Estate Corporation (www.sentinelcorp.com) has 38 years experience as an institutional investment manager focusing exclusively on real estate. Sentinel has \$5 billion in real estate assets under management for domestic and international investors in pooled and separate accounts. Sentinel is the real estate advisor to 64 institutional clients including banks, public funds, corporate funds, Taft-Hartley pension plans and endowment funds. Sentinel is one of the largest holders of rental apartment properties in the United States, with over 156 properties in 29 states, also managing an extensive portfolio of commercial real estate assets. Sentinel also has a ten-year track record of successful global real estate securities management.

Challenge: Improving Performance of a Mission-critical Application

Headquartered in New York City, with more than 1,100 people across the United States in 200 offices, Sentinel relies on Yardi, a popular real estate asset and property management application for managing most of its operations. Over time, the performance of this web-based tool had become unacceptably slow, hampering productivity and frustrating workers.

“It was as simple as plugging it in and letting it work. That’s all.”

Emile Rashkovich, senior vice president and CIO, said he was routinely called by management, and it was often the same thing, “My people can’t do the job that they were hired to do, and what are you doing about it? We need those people productive, and they are reporting that performance is such that it’s nearly unusable.”

IT Environment: HP x86 in Remote Offices Connected by Cable Internet

Sentinel runs a largely HPWintel x86 environment, delivering applications across the WAN, including Yardi, various portals, HR-related systems, Internet-based third party services, file access, and email. They use two production and one test VMware ESX servers to run approximately 30 virtual servers. SSL is also a requirement to protect sensitive information.

“Our performance gains were hard to believe. And this is not just my measurements and IT’s perception, this is what users are telling us.”

Rashkovich said “Now even though bandwidth is not everything – latency is clearly another important component of the performance at the remote location... We average between 3 and 10 megabits per second but it doesn’t mean that we have all this bandwidth and performance is great. It is not.”

“We needed a solution that would help overcome the latency challenges our users and applications typically faced,” continued Rashkovich.

Solution: Steelhead Appliances Improve Application Performance

Sentinel evaluated Riverbed alongside offerings from Cisco and Brocade, but concluded that Riverbed’s performance, simplicity, affordability, and customer service were superior.

Rashkovich said the deployment went very smoothly: “As soon as the Steelhead appliance would show up at our office, somebody from IT would call the local branch manager and walk them through the hookup. We had a picture drawn showing exactly where we wanted the Steelhead appliance to go in their LAN and it was as easy as inserting some Ethernet cables into the switches that they’ve got and letting the device do its job.”

Sentinel noted that "Maintenance is very easy. The Steelhead appliances are virtually maintenance-free. We do have a server in New York that's a management console and it manages software upgrades on the devices. This server also gives us great visibility into the network and shows us which devices are on, and the service levels on them."

"Well, in this case, we were expecting a miracle and I think we got a miracle, and that's really all I can say."

Benefits: Productive Staff and Bandwidth Cost Savings

Sentinel found a 20x improvement in performance of key applications for their predominantly remote workforce, a result that was so positive some found it unbelievable. "They are clocking their own downloads, and they are measuring their own performance, and they are telling us 'Look, this thing is a godsend,'" notes Rashkovich, where before "frustration mounted and phone calls and emails flowed to management, and complaints."

"I think everyone who is using the Steelhead in their office, which is everyone really at this point, are much more productive ... they don't have to wait and wait for every little thing."

The current cable internet network connections are proving to be more than adequate after deploying Steelhead appliances for application acceleration and WAN optimization. This means that Sentinel now doesn't need to purchase numerous expensive network infrastructure upgrades for its 200 remote offices. Rashkovich declares, "while we kind of toyed with the idea [of upgrading the network connections], it was quite frankly cost prohibitive because getting

higher speeds in a wide area network is still very costly, and having a Riverbed Steelhead appliance on site clearly showed us that this upgrade was not necessary; it was not necessary for us to upgrade and spend all that money."

Using Riverbed removed the WAN performance penalty from its mission critical applications, which allowed the company to focus efforts on serving clients and efficiently managing their real estate assets and properties. Sentinel's IT staff "took the wide area network performance latency out of the equation, which was a very important victory for us."

About Riverbed

Riverbed Technology is the IT infrastructure performance company. The Riverbed family of wide area network (WAN) optimization solutions liberates businesses from common IT constraints by increasing application performance, enabling consolidation, and providing enterprise-wide network and application visibility – all while eliminating the need to increase bandwidth, storage or servers. Thousands of companies with distributed operations use Riverbed to make their IT infrastructure faster, less expensive and more responsive. Additional information about Riverbed (NASDAQ: RVBD) is available at www.riverbed.com



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SUMMARY

Sentinel Real Estate Corporation (Sentinel) needed to improve performance of its web-based mission critical asset and property management software, as well as other applications such as email and file sharing, all running over their wide area network (WAN) to 200 remote locations.

Bandwidth and latency were causing significant productivity problems for more than 1,100 workers in these remote offices, but Sentinel found it was prohibitively expensive to upgrade the network connections to all of their offices and even with the network upgrades, they'd still suffer from latency issues.

After a painless deployment of Riverbed Steelhead appliances, Sentinel immediately experienced a 20x improvement in performance, enabling workers to be far more productive and satisfied. Sentinel has found the solution to be virtually maintenance-free. Sentinel's IT staff reported an additional advantage of greatly increased visibility into the network.