

FM Logistic



Riverbed helps FM Logistic improve application management to support business growth.

FM Logistic is one of the leading players in warehousing, transportation and co-packing businesses. Independent and family-owned, the group is recognised as an expert in the consumer goods, retailing, perfume/cosmetics, industrial and health markets. With a workforce of 21,800 based in 13 different countries, FM Logistic has increased its revenue by 2.9% (at constant rate) this financial year, reaching 1.034 billion euros by 31 March 2016.

Challenge: Improving application performance to drive business growth

FM Logistic has ambitious targets. It aims to reach €2 billion in annual revenues by 2022, with annual growth of 10%. To do this, it must nearly double in size over the next six years.

The targets are likely to be met through organic growth in addition to acquisitions and driven by innovation such as the recent completion of Europe's largest warehouse facility (3,300,000 sqm worldwide), the roll-out of cross docking (where in-bound deliveries are loaded straight onto outbound trucks) and the trial of electric delivery vehicles to beat congestion in Rome.

IT efficiency plays a major role in both innovation and cost control. "We have to be agile," says Michel Boulay, Enterprise Network Architect, FM Logistic. "We aim to match our client needs." Michel's team completed a major upgrade of the network in 2011, using 71 Riverbed® SteelHead™ appliances to optimise WAN efficiency and deliver a five-fold increase in bandwidth, as well as providing end-to-end visibility of all applications.

"I needed flexibility, now I have it with Riverbed. You would not get this with basic routing."

Michel Boulay
Enterprise Network Architect, FM Logistic

FM's WAN optimisation project was extremely valuable to the organisation but as the business grew and the amount of application traffic increased, they needed an additional solution that would further improve network performance, redirecting traffic to more appropriate network links to eliminate congestion.

"The world evolves," says Mr Boulay. "Users would complain of a slow network but it wasn't the network, it was the applications. I was also concerned with backups and outages. Being disconnected for even 1-2 minutes can mean users lose 15 minutes reconnecting and recovering the lost data. That can create a huge impact when you're talking about 1,000 users."

In Brief

Challenges

- Issues around application speeds and unsustainable network costs, particularly in new markets
- Provide cost-efficient bandwidth to accommodate new applications
- Create a flexible, secure and cost-efficient network, with faster backups and fewer outages

Solution

- Riverbed allows FM Logistic to simplify IT administration, improve application response time and reduce bandwidth utilisation
- The Riverbed solution allows FM Logistic to identify and map every application, establishing an agreed hierarchy and relieving the strain on the MPLS network

Benefits

- Improved bandwidth and return on investment within 12 months
- A flexible, secure network with the ability to offload applications to the VPN quickly and simply, with priority for critical applications on the MPLS network
- 80% decrease in MPLS loading for each endpoint
- Increase in application performance and improved user productivity across the business

Solution: Creating an application hierarchy

FM Logistic has 700+ applications running on its network and in 2014, again turned to Riverbed to help optimise network performance. “The more centralised applications you have, the more important the network,” says Mr Boulay. “We need a network that is reliable, has the bandwidth to keep pace with our ambitious growth targets, and the flexibility to cope with each application’s varying needs in terms of latency, bandwidth and onset time, for example.”

FM Logistic embarked on a second project, this time leveraging Riverbed’s Path Selection capabilities.

This solution views physical links such as internet, VPN or MPLS as paths. Its automated functionality can then be used to map applications into business-relevant groups that can be customised as needed. This meant that FM Logistic did not have to manually categorise each of its 700+ applications.

Once applications were mapped, Mr Boulay’s team was then able to create a hierarchy based on their criticality to the business. “The warehouse management system being one of the most vital, for instance, with mail and file sharing less important.”

“With the Riverbed Path Selection capabilities we have more bandwidth for less money.”

Michel Boulay
Enterprise Network Architect, FM Logistic

Path Selection then uses this information to tell each application which network path to use. The system is intelligent because if a path is down, it automatically steers traffic to a pre-defined alternative path and so avoids congestion. This ensures that performance business-critical traffic is assured even if network conditions change.

FM Logistic chose to use MPLS for the most critical applications, where latency mattered most, offloading less important applications to backup VPN links which were previously unused.

Mr Boulay began with a Proof of Concept in four sites, before a global roll-out. “The solution was so intuitive that I was able to deploy it myself with the user guide,” he says. “I also have a great relationship with the Riverbed engineering team to help overcome any technical challenges if necessary.”

Benefits: Efficiency, flexibility and reliability

Fully implemented, the Path Selection project has created a more efficient, flexible and reliable network. Mr Boulay estimates cost savings of more than 20% and a payback period of 12 months: “With Riverbed’s application-centric Path Selection capabilities, we have more bandwidth for less money.”

“Previously, network costs could have made some new applications unacceptable. Today, with Riverbed we have bandwidth to spare, so I can accommodate new applications quickly and at a high quality.”

Michel Boulay
Enterprise Network Architect, FM Logistic

The process of mapping every application to a business-relevant application group has left Mr Boulay with a complete view of the application estate: “We captured even the smallest applications, nothing slipped through the net. I can now see what we have, how it’s being used and who is using it. We have significantly decreased the load on each MPLS endpoints by up to 80%.”

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

Mr Boulay continues: “The cost savings come from being able to offload existing applications to the cheaper VPN. For instance, 1Mbps of MPLS access in Russia costs the same as 100Mb of internet. Previously, network costs could have made some new applications unacceptable. Today, we have bandwidth to spare, so I can accommodate new applications quickly and at a high quality.”

“We route applications and not just packets.”

Michel Boulay
Enterprise Network Architect, FM Logistic

Network outages have been almost eliminated, including ‘gold ticket’ escalations to senior management. “The business recognises the improvement, even if it is not aware of the work involved,” says Mr Boulay. “We certainly don’t have complaints around slow application speeds any more.”

For Mr Boulay, as a network engineer with 16 years’ experience, the real beauty of the improved network is flexibility: “I needed flexibility, now I have it. You would not get this with basic routing.”

The Riverbed logo consists of the word "riverbed" in a lowercase, bold, orange sans-serif font.