Silver Peak

LOAN GUARANTOR

CUSTOMER PROFILE

LEADING GUARANTOR GUARANTEES BUSINESS CONTINUITY WITH SILVER PEAK

QUICK COMPANY FACTS

- The first private, nonprofit student loan administrator in the United States
- Main data center in Boston; dedicated disaster recovery site in NJ (24x7 operations)
- Loan approval, debt collection, web eCommerce, and file services replicated across WAN
- Trouble replicating large volumes of information in near real-time
- 20 minutes to query SQL database; 5 minutes to perform web transaction; Telnet broken across WAN

SILVER PEAKS RESULTS

- 20 minute transfer reduced to 6 seconds (200x improvement) with certain applications
- 10-20x average improvement across all applications
- Over 90% reduction in WAN traffic

BACKGROUND

"The Guarantor" is the nation's original private, nonprofit student loan administrator. It is the oldest and one of the largest federal family education loan (FFELP) guaranty agencies in the country – celebrating more than 50 years of service.

"In our business, we have to take data protection very seriously. We are obligated to ensure that financial information remains secure, and that it is always accessible when needed."

— NETWORK MANAGER FOR THE GUARANTOR

The Guarantor's mission is to make loans more accessible, manageable and successful for students, schools and lenders. That means working with the Federal government's Department of Education (DOE) to further the country's education access goals, providing lenders with the resources they need to build their student loan business, serving college financial aid offices with comprehensive tools and expertise, and helping borrowers successfully apply for, manage, and repay their student loans.

"In our business, we have to take data protection very seriously," said the Network Manager for the Guarantor. "We are obligated to ensure that financial information remains secure, and that it is always accessible when needed."

To ensure business continuity, the Guarantor established a dedicated disaster recovery site in New Jersey to provide 24x7 hot backup to their main data center in Boston. The company requires "near real-time" data replication between these data centers, which requires the constant transfer of several Gigabytes of information across hundreds of miles.

In addition, as part of their disaster recovery plans, the Guarantor requires remote access to several business critical applications located within the New Jersey facility, including custom developed loan approval and debt collection systems, web eCommerce services, and Windows file services.

IN NEED OF AID

From the beginning, there was concern that the volume of information being transferred between Boston and New Jersey, coupled with high latency on the WAN link, would make it difficult to reliably replicate data in near real-time. Furthermore, the company was not convinced that their WAN could support full operations in the event of a disaster. These fears were confirmed in December of 2005 when the Guarantor conducted a series of disaster recovery tests.

"What we saw before installing Silver Peak was not encouraging," said the Network Manager. "It was taking 20 minutes to query an SQL database in our disaster recovery facility, and up to 5 minutes to perform a web transaction. Telnet was literally broken across this WAN link."

The Guarantor quickly realized that its WAN was potentially jeopardizing the company's business continuity objectives. As a result, the IT department set aside budget to correct the problem. The challenge, however, was determining which acceleration solution was best for the Guarantor environment.

After working with a local disaster recovery partner, Focus Technology, the Guarantor realized that the best way to overcome its data replication and disaster recovery challenges was to use data reduction to minimize the amount of traffic traversing the WAN. By delivering information locally from data stores in WAN acceleration appliances, data reduction promised to increase WAN capacity and speed up application performance across the WAN.

GETTING A HIGH YIELD

The Guarantor decided to evaluate data reduction solutions from two vendors – Silver Peak and Juniper.

"Of the different data reduction solutions we evaluated, Silver Peak impressed us with the range of applications they supported and the fact that they secured data stored in their appliances using encryption," said the Network Manager. "For comparison, we also looked at Juniper's WXC family of appliances. As a Juniper firewall and IDS customer, the company was pushing hard to also win our WAN acceleration business."

After performing a paper evaluation, the Guarantor decided to trial the Silver Peak solution in April of 2006. After placing Silver Peak NX Appliances in both data centers, the results were immediate.

With certain applications, a 20 minute transfer was reduced to 6 seconds – a 200x improvement. On average, the Guarantor was routinely seeing 10-20x improvements across all applications, with over 90% data reduction across the WAN. In addition, telnet was working at "near local speeds", according to end users that participated in the trial.

"After seeing Silver Peak's performance numbers, we didn't feel the need to trial the Juniper solution," said the Network Manager. "Silver Peak's performance gains more than justified an investment in WAN acceleration. Given the importance of disaster recovery to the Guarantor's business, this was one of the easier decisions I've had to make."

When it comes to guaranteeing business continuity, one of the largest guarantors in the United States, the Guarantor, turned to Silver Peak for secure and reliable WAN acceleration.

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471 El Camino Real, Santa Clara, CA 95050 408.935.1800 www.silver-peak.com