

## Why SharePoint Needs Riverbed's WAN Optimization Solutions

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**Abstract:** Microsoft SharePoint is quickly becoming a “must have” application. But while it fosters collaboration within increasingly distributed workforces, IT does not appear to have much control over it. Many SharePoint implementations are mission critical, yet access to these sites is often thwarted by poor network performance. Similar to Microsoft Exchange and other collaboration applications, companies deploying SharePoint can benefit from WAN optimization solutions, including those offered by Riverbed, to ensure that they make the most of its productivity and information sharing capabilities.

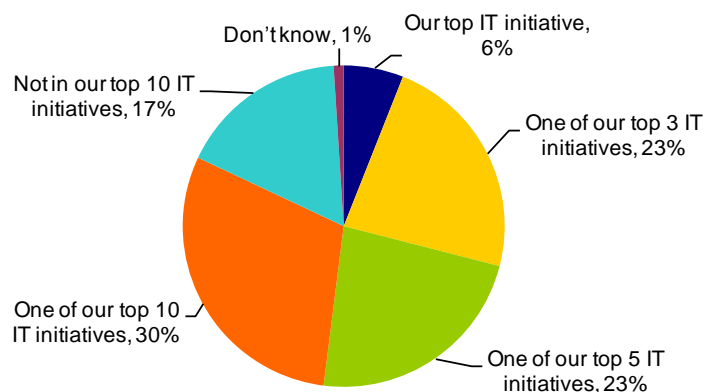
### Introduction

Corporate departments ranging from customer service to research & development are adopting SharePoint in order to centralize information and improve collaboration. As a result, SharePoint sites and instances are proliferating across enterprise data centers as well as branch and remote offices. This expansion to remote locations is in direct opposition to attempts in many organizations to consolidate services and applications into centralized data centers.

A hidden challenge in SharePoint deployments will be to ensure that end-users are able to access and edit files when connected via wide area networks (WAN). A positive user experience will be critical to the success of these deployments, regardless of a user's location. In order to guarantee that positive experience, IT must find a way to cost effectively deliver LAN-like performance over the WAN, allowing for centralization and better management of all SharePoint instances. This should be resolved sooner rather than later, as more than half of the IT executives surveyed by ESG Research<sup>1</sup> indicated that implementing SharePoint was among their top five IT initiatives (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1. SHAREPOINT IS A CRITICAL APPLICATION**

How would you rate the overall importance of implementing SharePoint based on all of your organization's IT initiatives over the past 12-24 months? (Percent of respondents, N=339)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2008

<sup>1</sup> Source: ESG Research Report, *SharePoint's Impact on IT Infrastructure and Information Management*, 2008

## SharePoint's Relevance Increases

Just as with other applications, like Exchange or ERP, that have become integral parts of enterprises, businesses are now beginning to fully understand the value to be gained from SharePoint deployments. While many companies have been using the application for more than a year, it is still early on in the SharePoint maturity model. Early adopters have leveraged SharePoint to create:

- **A platform to enable collaboration.** Companies are using SharePoint to replace inefficient file shares and create centralized document storage. Particularly attractive is its ability to share information between remote offices and mobile workers.
- **Information portals.** Companies are building internal portals and individual “mysites” for employees to share and search for information easily.
- **External websites.** More advanced users are leveraging SharePoint to share information with their customers, partners, and suppliers.
- **Better workflows and version control.** SharePoint provides the ability to create internal workflows for document creation, editing, and publishing. Additionally, SharePoint eliminates the need to keep renaming each new version of a file.

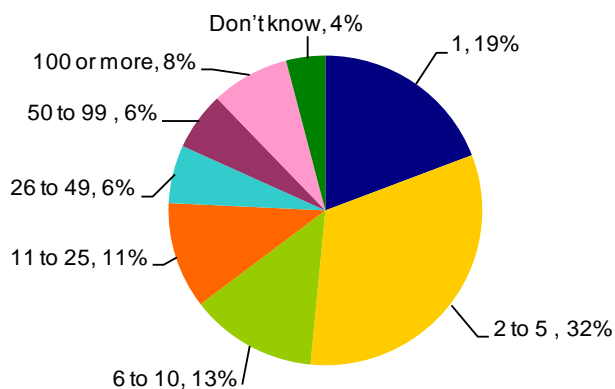
## The Ideal Application for a Distributed Workforce

Today's work environment extends far beyond the four walls of an office—it is not uncommon for a virtual team of employees to work closely on the same project. SharePoint provides the structure and collaboration features to enable document or file sharing for multiple users at multiple sites while still maintaining data integrity. The ability for remote workers to quickly access and find files in a central repository will increase productivity. Additionally, SharePoint enforces internal workflows and processes to remote workers.

SharePoint sites are not limited to the data center. In fact, ESG research<sup>2</sup> shows that the vast majority of companies have deployed it at more than two sites and 44% have deployed it at more than six sites (see Figure 2). As more departments within an organization recognize SharePoint's value, the number of sites will only continue to grow.

**FIGURE 2. MOST COMPANIES HAVE MULTIPLE SHAREPOINT LOCATIONS**

To the best of your knowledge, in how many physical locations is SharePoint currently deployed across your entire organization? (Percent of respondents, N=339)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Source: ESG Research Report, *SharePoint's Impact on IT Infrastructure and Information Management*, 2008.

### Application Owners Need to Work Closely With IT

SharePoint is designed to give more people easier access to information, but this cannot happen if application response times are slow or if the application times out completely. More and more employees are working from home and, noting that not all branch offices have high speed connections, experiences accessing SharePoint over the WAN can vary greatly. In order to ensure that SharePoint can be used as an effective enterprise tool, application owners need to work more closely with IT to ensure the application is supported properly.

Distributed SharePoint implementations can be very costly to an enterprise, but without sufficient bandwidth, users may feel that they don't have an option. Not only do these implementations require additional server and storage hardware (with the associated power and cooling for each remote site), they also require often-untrained personnel at the remote locations to manage and backup each of these environments. Ensuring that these sites are secure and protected is also very important.

**FIGURE 3. DISTRIBUTED SHAREPOINT LOCATIONS**

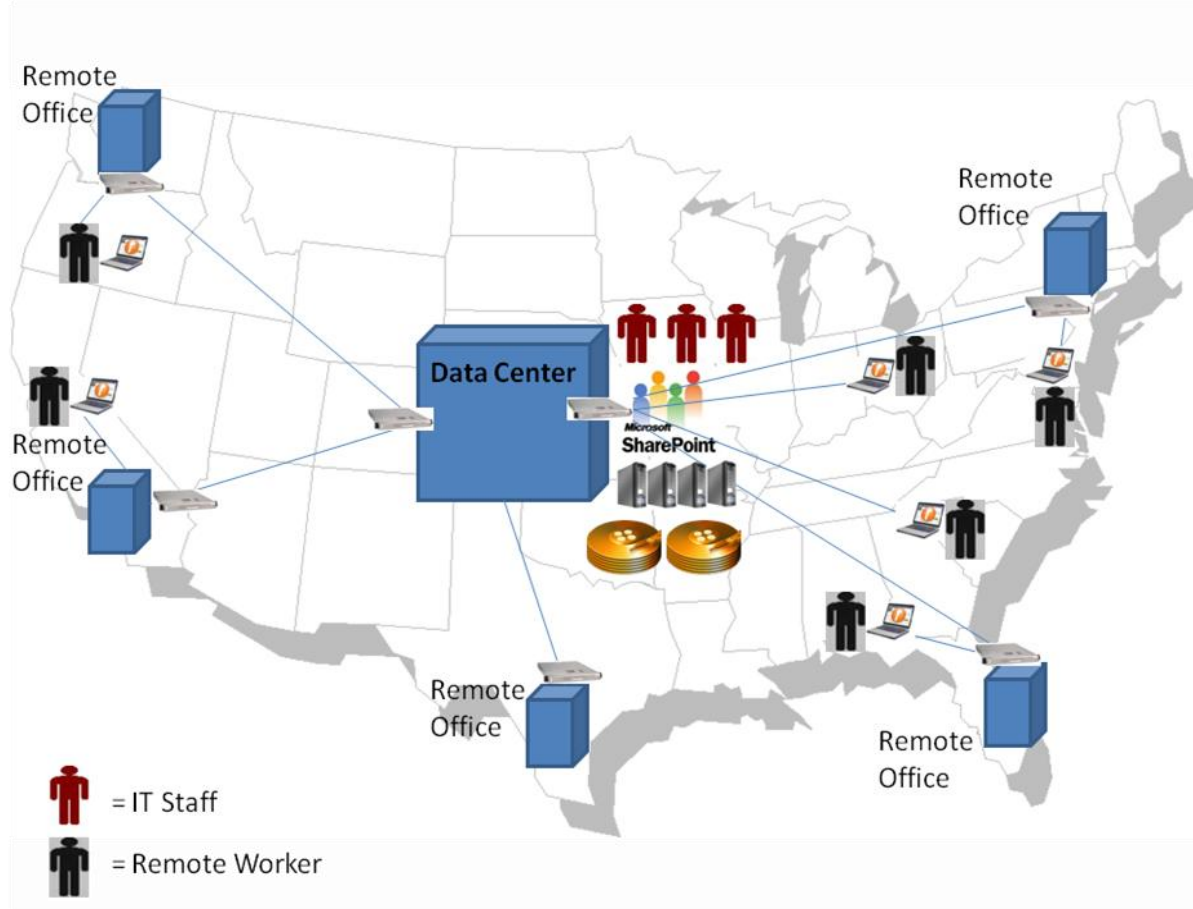


Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2008

Network performance will be critical as employees typically collaborate on files from within SharePoint—the data constantly moves back and forth over the network. These files can range from sales presentations to confidential data like budgets and product roadmaps, so it is also important that remote users have proper authentication in order to keep the data is secure, especially when in transit. IT needs to be aware of these implementations and better address potential network issues.

Faced with flat or shrinking budgets, IT needs to find cost effective solutions that enable it to centralize SharePoint implementations but still provide the performance, protection, and security required. For many organizations, this will be a familiar scenario and one that they have already gone through with Exchange, ERP, and many other applications. One of the keys to prior successes was leveraging WAN optimization technology to enable applications to be consolidated in a centralized data center, while still maintaining LAN-like performance. These consolidation efforts reduced network costs as companies did not have to procure incremental bandwidth and eliminated the need to deploy and support additional application servers at remote sites.

**FIGURE 4. CENTRALIZED SHAREPOINT DEPLOYMENT LEVERAGING WAN OPTIMIZATION**



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2008

### Riverbed Technology Improves SharePoint Implementations

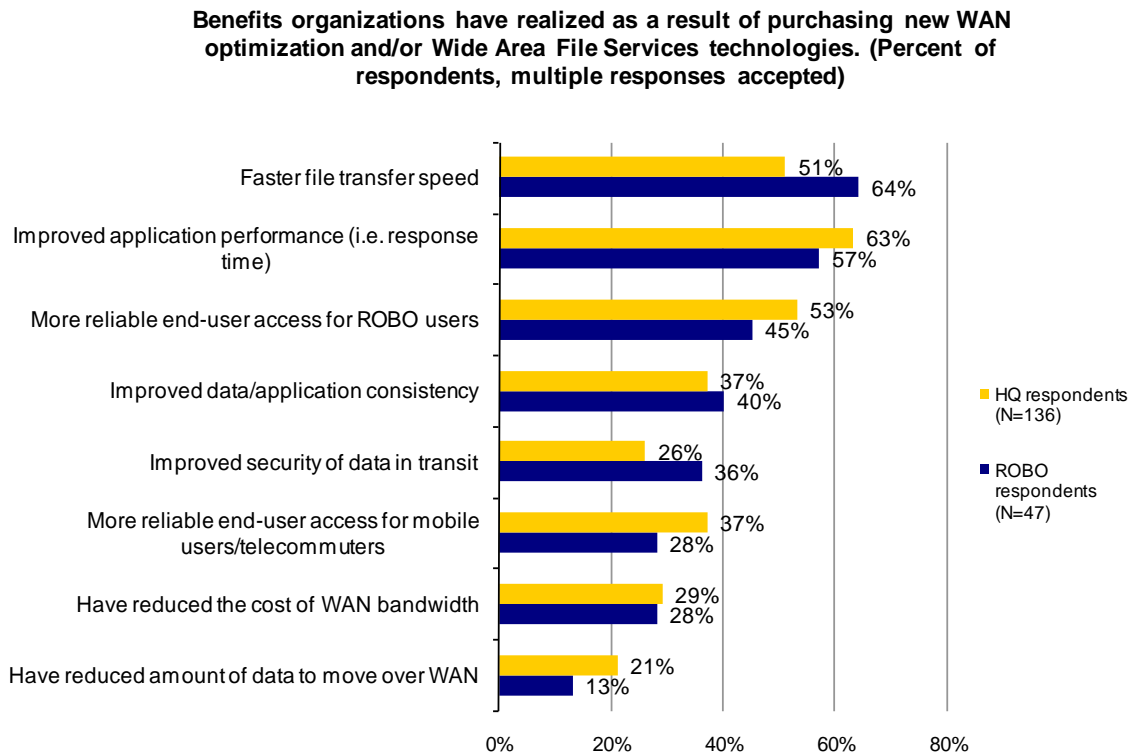
Riverbed Technology is a leading provider of WAN optimization technology (branch office, data center, and mobile worker acceleration). Solely focused on providing customers with solutions that enable faster, more efficient IT infrastructure, Riverbed has already helped more than 5,000 customers improve their business and accelerate critical business applications. With more than 50,000 Steelhead appliances shipped, Riverbed has experience with almost every major application and deployment scenario and provides solutions that range from the mobile/home worker (Steelhead Mobile), through remote/branch offices, and up to enterprise data centers (Steelhead appliances).

Riverbed WAN optimization solutions enable enterprises to maximize the benefits of SharePoint across a distributed environment by first and foremost providing a more satisfying and productive user experience when accessing SharePoint over a WAN. Riverbed appliances and software leverage a host of technologies—like protocol optimization, deduplication, and compression—that result in consistent high performance connectivity over the WAN. In addition, policy-based quality of service (QoS) and load balancing guarantee that specific applications can be given priority for available bandwidth.

Riverbed technology reduces costs related to SharePoint implementations. By optimizing the performance of SharePoint over the network, users can defer adding more bandwidth to support SharePoint and may even be able to leverage a smaller and less expensive network connection. Depending on the distances involved, this could result in significant savings. Riverbed also can help maintain a centralized SharePoint deployment that serves distributed workers. This can result in hardware, software, and IT maintenance savings. Additionally, Riverbed released its Riverbed Services Platform, or RSP, enabling remote offices running Steelhead appliances to host additional applications running on virtual machines. This results in additional hardware, power, and cooling savings.

Not only will SharePoint implementations benefit from Riverbed solutions, but any applications that need to be accessed remotely will improve as well. Steelhead appliances have also been instrumental in providing robust data protection and disaster recovery environments, including the enhanced security of encrypting data in flight. According to ESG research, end-users have seen numerous benefits after deploying WAN optimization technology, as highlighted in Figure 5.<sup>3</sup>

**FIGURE 5. MOST COMPANIES HAVE MULTIPLE SHAREPOINT LOCATIONS**



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2008

## The Bottom Line

SharePoint is a powerful collaboration tool proliferating throughout enterprises that promises enhanced workflow and better structure for previously unstructured data. One of the keys to its success will be end-user adoption. If accessing old files or uploading new ones takes too long, users will revert back to older, less productive methods for collaboration. WAN optimization technologies may be the key to the continued adoption of SharePoint and the delivery of LAN-like performance over the WAN.

Riverbed, as an innovator and industry leader, is distinctly qualified to provide WAN optimization solutions that will make SharePoint a success. With solutions that range from a software client for mobile users to enterprise-class systems for data centers and a focus on application acceleration, an investment in Riverbed can be justified based on its maximization of a SharePoint deployment, which can then be leveraged to drive productivity and enhancements across other applications.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: ESG Research Report, *Branch Office Optimization*, 2006.