



Expand Your Client's Business – WAN Optimization

The next time your client is looking to expand their business to another region and is planning on investing in additional bandwidth consider offering them a WAN (Wide Area Network) optimization solution instead. By opting for this technology your client can not only save money that would have otherwise been spent on buying more bandwidth, they can also get equal bandwidth access across the entire corporate WAN, regardless of where the branch office is. In a slowdown situation it is measures and technologies like these that companies are looking out for to help their businesses grow.

“In the current economic climate, enterprises are seeking to reduce costs by leveraging WAN Optimization technology to consolidate IT infrastructure and streamline business processes. By deploying such technologies, SMBs can cut costs, make application access faster and realize better ROI on all the IT investments they make, thereby streamlining the business and preparing it well for the future,” elaborated Souma Das, Area VP, Citrix, India Subcontinent.

Citrix WAN optimization solution-Branch Repeater accelerates application delivery to branch office users while significantly reducing WAN bandwidth requirements and simplifying branch IT infrastructure.

Tapping the requirement

Identifying the type of business that ideally requires this technology, Sumit Mukhija, National Sales Manager-Data Center, Cisco India & SAARC said, “An up-scaling business essentially will require WAN optimization. With growth becoming an imperative factor of every organization today, scaling up is a usual trend and hence WAN optimization becomes a basic necessity. Especially with respect to branch offices, WAN optimization becomes crucial as although offices become remote the IT infrastructure in most cases remain consolidated. Hence, to maintain performance of application across cities WAN optimization solutions become important.”

Defining a typical branch office, Das of Citrix explained, “It can be anything-a manufacturing unit, a clinic, a small corporate office or even a coffee shop. There are 23 million branch offices globally, which is putting a strain on IT. 32 percent of IT budgets are now being allocated to branches, and 20 percent of servers are installed at branches.

For Riverbed, any organization with more than one branch is a potential customer. “The reason being, an organization having multiple branch offices is plagued by connectivity issues over the WAN. And today, companies are becoming increasingly distributed, thereby finding the need to have a solution like the Riverbed Steelhead Appliance,” stated Vivek Singh, Regional Director, India/SAARC, Riverbed Technology.

Rise in adoption

With the number of regional offices increasing in India, the need for WAN optimization solutions is simultaneously increasing. Solution providers who are currently not into this technology should consider getting into it as it is touted to be among the top technology trends adopted by SMBs in 2009.

Talking of the opportunities of WAN optimization solutions in India, Mukhija of Cisco said, “In today's business environment, branch offices are enjoying unprecedented productivity, decision making authority, and innovation. IT administrators feel the dire need for tools which can support application performance uniformly across all centers. In addition, branch-office communications requirements are evolving to embrace collaborative applications, video, and Web 2.0 technologies. These developments are also placing greater performance demands on the branch office and WAN. One of the best ways to address branch office requirements is to adopt WAN optimization solutions.”

Das added, “Deployments have largely been limited to larger businesses with greater financial muscle compared to the budget conscious SMEs given the perceived high cost of WAN optimization technologies in a recession hit economy. Many businesses have realized significant cost savings by centralizing their applications and desktops in data centers using virtualization. Now companies want to move on to the next phase of IT optimization-consolidating the servers that provide essential services in the branch office.”

As the realization that this technology can help SMBs cut costs, make application access faster and get better ROI on IT investments, businesses are sure to consider adopting it.

SP advantage

For solution providers offering technologies that are need of the hour is crucial in giving their businesses an edge over others. Speaking about the opportunities for SPs in this segment, Mukhija said, “By understanding and positioning the benefits of Cisco Wide Area Application Services (WAAS), partners will be in a great position to provide an innovative and strategic solution to customers and to expand their existing relationships. Up-sell and cross-sell opportunities are endless with Cisco WAAS. While WAAS is a network device, its primary function is to optimize applications and that opens doors to a new breed of prospects.”

Dax Networks works closely with its system integrators through a program called Authorized Dax Solution Providers (ADSP). “The ADSP channel strongly addresses the booming and diversified SMB market (in addition to addressing other verticals) with the joint marketing support of Dax sales team. The back-end pre-sales, training and toll free support of Dax further adds value. A strong customer-centric service and support offerings, easy accessibility to principal vendors, customers' direct access to principal's helpline support, Live chat option on our website etc turn out to be the differentiators for Dax,” claimed Subhashini Prabhakar, Chief Technology Manager, Dax Networks.

The basic criteria Riverbed looks for in potential partners is that they should have the pre requisite resources for sales and pre sales. “We are inclined to sell value proposition which cuts across integration, consolidation, remote infrastructure management, and managed services solutions,” commented Singh.

Promising

verticals

Basically, any organization/company that has a requirement for multiple offices and has various employees working on the go is potentially a client for WAN optimization solutions.

Among the growth verticals in this space are BFSI, BPOs, retail and telecom. “The banking sector with its various remote branch offices wants better application connectivity across the branch network and BPOs catering to clients across the globe are the early adopters of this technology. Banking and financial services, manufacturing, government, telecom, and retail are the verticals, which have high adoption levels. Big companies are not the only ones adopting these measures to transform their branch office networks. Even SMBs are joining the cause to save costs and make things more efficient,” stated Das.

Singh of Riverbed claimed that their Steelhead Appliances have already been deployed across verticals like banking and finance, government, telecom, manufacturing and legal. He added that in India, the concept of optimizing the WAN is still at its nascent stage. “Increasing the bandwidth is still considered to be the way out to enhance poor application performance over the wide area network. But on the flip side, some of the deployments in India have been extremely successful with CIOs of the respective organizations having shown immense faith in our solution. Another trend that we have seen in India is that companies are increasingly going mobile. To suit this particular segment, Riverbed Steelhead Mobile has received great traction from the mobile workforce. This explosion in mobility and the increasing number of ways to connect with the corporate network has created an IT environment that is very difficult to manage and that leads to inconsistent user experiences. Mobile WAN optimization can help overcome these challenges by improving the performance of critical enterprise applications, which lowers the cost of effectively supporting mobile workers and eliminates the need for many organizations to pursue expensive upgrade strategies,” said Singh.

While there are quite a few challenges in this space, the main one seems to be changing the mindset of clients that WAN optimization solutions are expensive and it is better to invest in additional bandwidth.

Another challenge is securing the data that is stored locally in the branch offices. But vendors like Cisco have already overcome that hurdle with the launch of Cisco IOS Intrusion Prevention System (IPS), which provides full stateful firewall inspection for all traffic, including accelerated traffic. Cisco WAAS also allows Cisco IOS IPS to perform network virus scanning for accelerated traffic, preserving and enhancing the security of data in transit,” explained Mukhija.