Riverbed Remote Office/Branch Office IT Survey

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Traditionally, the central office has been the center of gravity for most business IT organizations. After all, that's where the data center is and that's where most of IT's staff works. But that's changing as businesses move more and more of their operations to remote locations. These locations are crucial because that's often where business happens.

But supporting remote offices and branch offices (often called ROBOs) is tough for IT. It is expensive, resource-intensive and opens up businesses to security and disaster related risks.

To better understand how businesses are grappling with these ROBO IT issues, Riverbed commissioned a survey at EMC World in Las Vegas.
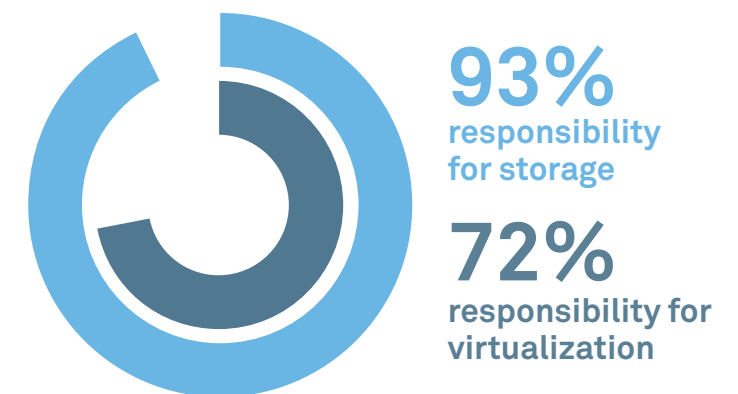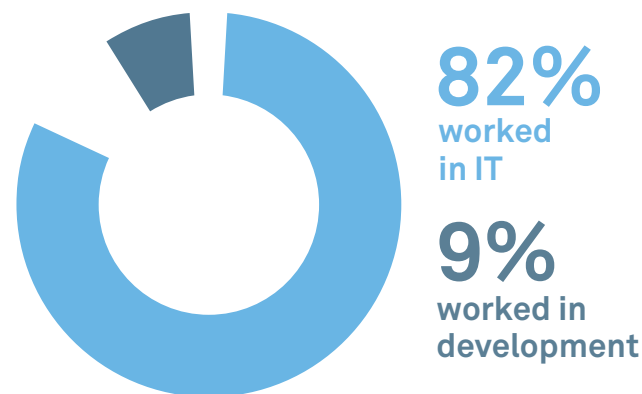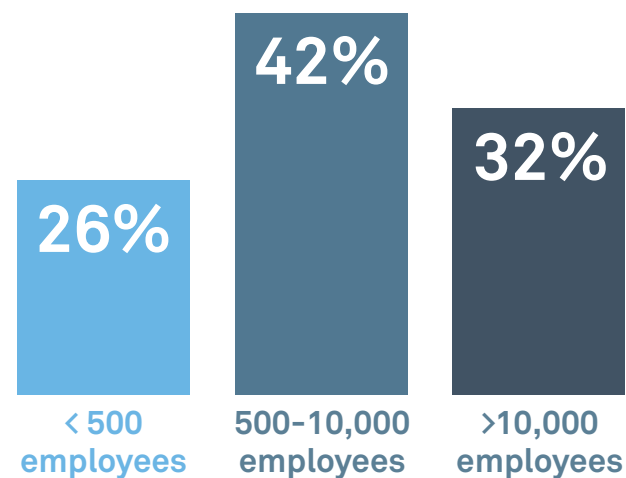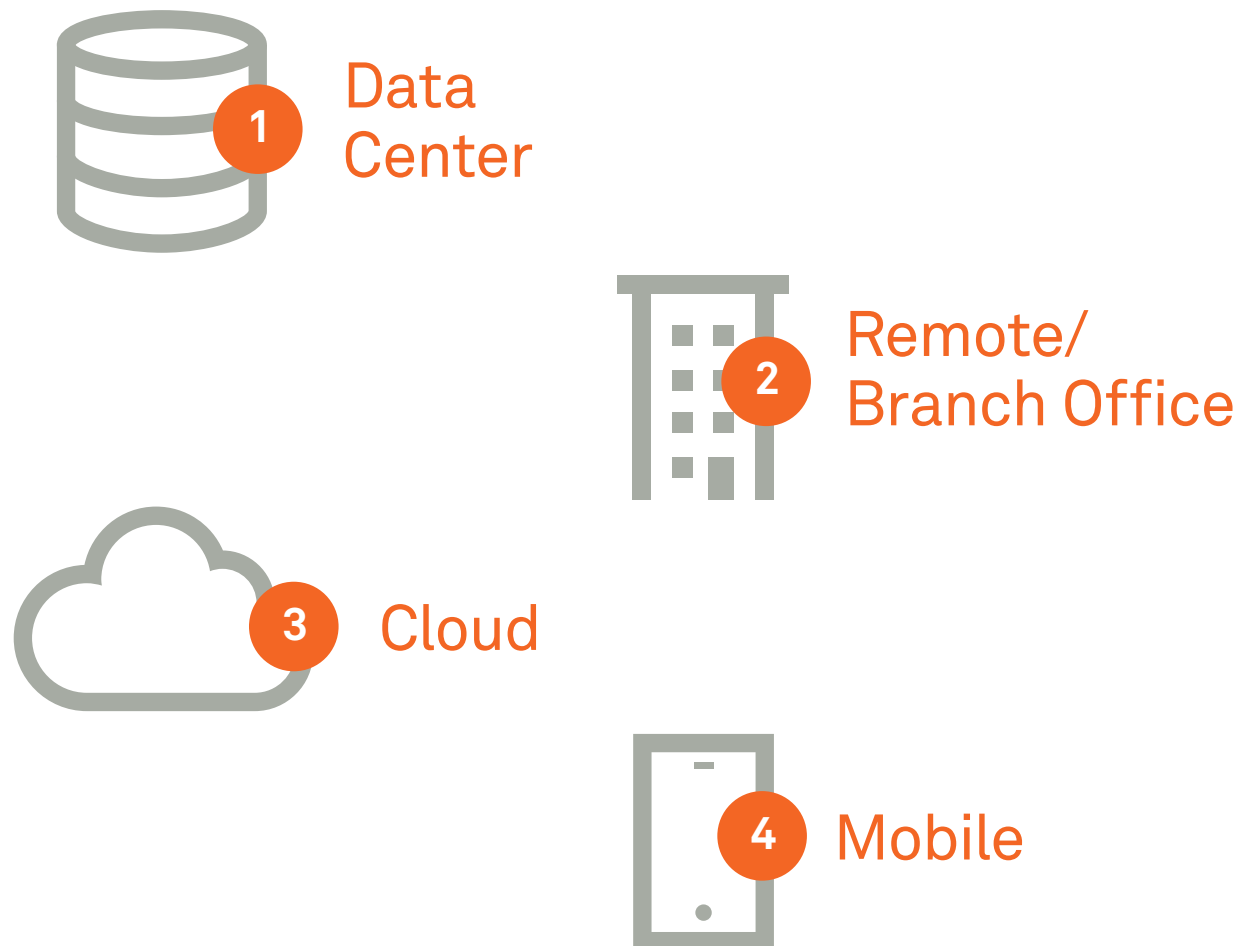
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Who We Spoke To

Riverbed fielded the ROBO IT survey at EMC World in Las Vegas on May 3, 2016. The surveys were taken on the show floor by interviewers. Ultimately, Riverbed interviewed 183 show attendees.

The survey respondents were all attendees at the EMC World event in Las Vegas. While the median respondent worked at an organization with about 5,000 employees, this masks the fact that there were two distinct groups. The first group (comprising 26 percent of the respondents) worked at organizations with fewer than 500 employees. The second group had more than 10,000 employees.

Most (82 percent) worked in IT, while 9 percent worked in development. Most had responsibility for storage (93 percent) and virtualization (72 percent).

26%
42%
32%

< 500 employees
500-10,000 employees
>10,000 employees

82%
worked in IT

9%
worked in development

93%
responsibility for storage

72%
responsibility for virtualization

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ROBO Is Important To IT

1 Data Center

2 Remote/ Branch Office

3 Cloud

4 Mobile

The data center is, as one would expect, the focus of most of IT's attention. But ROBOs are second in importance to IT, beating out cloud and mobile. This makes sense given how analysts report that half of employees work in ROBOs.

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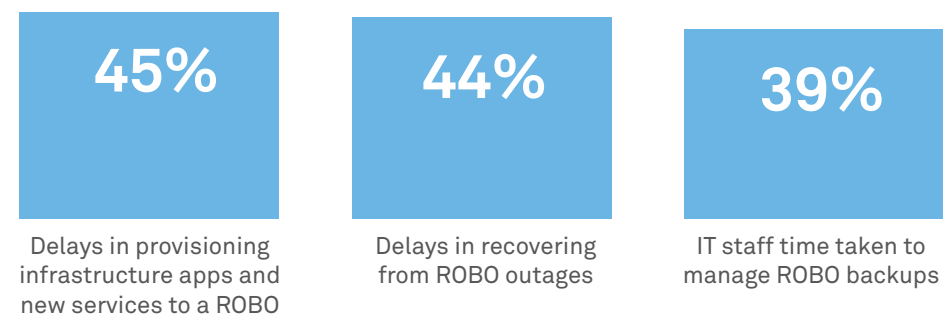
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But, ROBO IT Is Hard

Respondents indicated they had their hands full supporting ROBOs. Their biggest ROBO challenges include:

- ROBO provisioning delays (of things like ROBO infrastructure, applications and services). These delays are especially expensive to businesses as they delay the organization's ability to generate revenue.

- Delays when recovering from ROBO outages. These kinds of delays also hurt the business' ability to generate revenue, exposes the ROBO to risk from data loss and can tarnish the business' reputation.

- IT staff time spent managing ROBO backups. IT rarely has enough staff at ROBOs (often, they have NO IT staff onsite). This makes it especially difficult to supervise backups.

Please rate the difficulty posed by the following IT challenges in terms of performing IT duties for remote/branch offices (ROBO)? (Extremely/Somewhat difficult)

Handling ROBO disaster recovery	**54%**
The high costs of providing ROBO IT	**46%**
Figuring out how to supply enough IT staff to support ROBOs	**46%**
Maximizing ROBO worker productivity	**45%**
Optimizing ROBO application performance	**43%**

Rate the financial impact of each of the following (Extremely/Somewhat large)

45%	**44%**	**39%**
Delays in provisioning infrastructure apps and new services to a ROBO	Delays in recovering from ROBO outages	IT staff time taken to manage ROBO backups

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One particularly vexing challenge respondents mentioned was what to do with all the data ROBO workers need (and generate). Where one stores ROBO data is crucial to achieving operational efficiencies and high availability. Three-quarters (75 percent) of the respondents say that consolidating ROBO data back to the data center, or in the cloud, was somewhat to extremely desirable.

75%

Rate the desirability of consolidating ROBO data back to the data center, or in the cloud, as extremely/ somehwhat desireable

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How Riverbed's SteelFusion Helps Solve the ROBO IT Problem

Riverbed SteelFusion is the first and only hyper-converged infrastructure purpose-built for the efficient management of ROBO IT. SteelFusion combines storage delivery, server virtualization and industry-leading hybrid WAN optimization technologies into one, eliminating the need for physical servers, storage and backup infrastructure at ROBO locations.

There are five distinct areas in which SteelFusion helps address the challenges mentioned by our survey respondents:

Rapid Provisioning and Recovery.
Respondents said delays in ROBO provisioning and recovery from ROBO outages were their two costliest ROBO headaches. SteelFusion attacks these two problems with its unique "Zero-Touch" approach. Express ship a Riverbed appliance to the ROBO and have local, non-IT, staff plug the device in. The appliance immediately syncs with the data center, and ROBO users are up and running in minutes instead of days.

This same SteelFusion technology drives rapid restores from backups with close to zero data loss and a return to operations in just minutes.

Consolidation.
With SteelFusion, ROBO data resides in the data center. This reduces the infrastructure required at the ROBO. It also reflects the preferences of most of our respondents to who felt storing ROBO data at the data center was desirable.

Centralized ROBO IT Operations.
SteelFusion allows IT to centralize all ROBO backup operations to the data center, where IT has more staff and can provide more oversight. This decreases both operational costs and the risk of data loss.
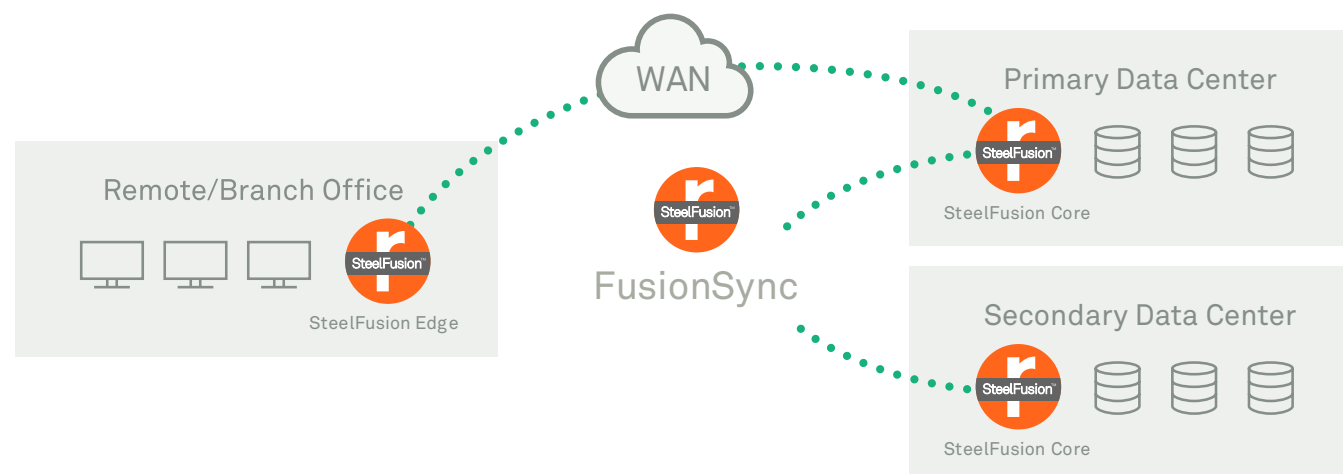
Enhanced User Experience.
SteelFusion provides local compute and optimizes data center access for centralized data, producing LAN-like experience regardless of the ROBO's distance from the central office. Even better, SteelFusion allows for continuous operations even if the WAN goes down by keeping a working set of data at the ROBO.

Data Loss Mitigation.
Respondents say disaster recovery is the biggest ROBO challenge they face. That's because ROBOs are, well, remote. And remote offices – far from central office IT's watchful eyes – can be susceptible to outages and breaches.

SteelFusion addresses these threats by moving crucial ROBO data back to the data center where IT can better protect it. SteelFusion also employs end-to-end encryption to protect data in motion. And, as mentioned, SteelFusion supports rapid provisioning to recover from outages.

WAN

Remote/Branch Office

SteelFusion Edge

FusionSync

Primary Data Center

SteelFusion Core

Secondary Data Center

SteelFusion Core

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Summary

As the business center-of-gravity moves away from the central office and out to the edge of the network, IT has their hands full supporting ROBOs. Riverbed's SteelFusion can help make ROBO IT less risky and less expensive for IT to support.

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