# WAN Optimization Helps Software Licenser Maintain Competitive Edge

## Branch offices and customers worldwide access SoftwareONE's centralized data in real time with Cisco WAAS appliances.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Customer Name:** SoftwareONE

**Industry:** IT Services

**Location:** Headquarters in Stans, Switzerland, with offices in more than 60 countries worldwide

**Number of Employees:** 1400

**Partner:** Netcloud Switzerland

**BUSINESS CHALLENGE**

- Provide superior applications and data access performance for branch office network with centralized data center
- Contain operating costs and IT management burdens by maintaining simple, modular infrastructure at branch office level

**NETWORK SOLUTION**

- Cisco Wide Area Application Services delivered via Cisco Wide Area Application Virtualization Engine (WAVE) appliances

**BUSINESS RESULTS**

- Fast, simple deployment and centralized management of branch office WAN optimization
- Application performance improvements up to 300 percent
- Investment protection afforded by collaborative Cisco approach to WAAS

## Business Challenge

In business, growth may be a good problem to have, but it is a problem nonetheless. It can stretch resources, human and otherwise, to the breaking point. Growth can also add layers of complexity to what were once simple processes. It can undermine product quality and customer service, essential elements of any business's competitive advantage.

For Switzerland-based SoftwareONE, "The Software Licensing Experts," growth was problem number-one. In eight years, the company has grown from 50 employees to 1400, adding as many as 15 new branch offices to its worldwide network each year. It now serves as an elite software reseller for top publishers including Microsoft, Adobe, Oracle, Symantec, McAfee, Citrix, IBM, and VMware. Representing 4000 software vendors and providing sales and service to many of the largest enterprises in the world, SoftwareONE helps customers manage more than 13,000 software licensing contracts.

"Staying competitive in the face of such rapid growth has been our biggest challenge," says Bojan Jancar, head of corporate IT for SoftwareONE. "With offices in more than 60 countries, we serve our customers on a local basis. At the same time, our value proposition rests on offering customers a real-time, global view of their software assets from anywhere in the world."

To meet all of its requirements, the company needs a combination of centralized data and applications services that operate efficiently not only through the cloud but also through various grades of local telecommunications infrastructure.

A couple of years ago, Jancar and his colleagues had the perfect opportunity to rethink and re-engineer SoftwareONE's IT infrastructure. The data center architecture lagged behind the company's rapid expansion in terms of both storage and computing power. The WAN acceleration solution in place had reached the end of its useful life, and was no longer being supported by the vendor. Application performance problems were becoming all too common when, for example, the company's enterprise resource planning (ERP) software and other applications were vying for data access on a limited 1-gigabit backbone.

It was time for an upgrade that would provide the data availability and centralized application performance SoftwareONE needs now and be ready to scale with the company as it grows into the future.

## Network Solution

Jancar and his IT colleagues looked beyond capital expenditures to the operating expenses they would incur in deploying and maintaining whatever solution they chose.

“Our 60-plus branch offices house salespeople and administrative staff, not technicians,” he says. “With an IT department of only 20 people, most of them here in Switzerland, with a few in our Singapore and Wisconsin facilities, we have to be able to support the branches remotely. So it was essential to keep the infrastructure in each branch lean and modular. The idea was to keep all the complexity, as well as our data and applications, in the data center.”

Jancar and his team laid the groundwork in the data center. They upgraded the existing 1-gigabit backbone to a 10-gigabit capacity. For backup and disaster recovery, they went from one to two data centers, both in the Zurich area but some 50 kilometers apart. And they deployed, at both, FlexPod for VMware, a simplified but versatile shared infrastructure that can be optimized for mixed application workloads. Developed and supported by Cisco and NetApp in collaboration with VMware, FlexPod combines powerful Cisco Nexus® switches and the Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) data center platform. Built for virtualization now, FlexPod will also scale easily to a private or public cloud in the future.

> “We like the way Cisco collaborates with application partners in developing and growing the WAAS platform. They talk to each other. So if, for example, Citrix or Microsoft changes something in their applications, we can be sure the changes will be supported by Cisco.”
> **— Bojan Jancar, Head of Corporate IT, SoftwareONE**

That left the WAN optimization part of the solution to be determined, and for that Jancar and his colleagues considered offerings from Cisco and Riverbed. “We called users of both vendors’ solutions in Europe and the U.S.,” says Jancar. “We learned that there were slight differences in performance, with one or the other delivering better results on various metrics.

“But again, our most important requirement was to keep complexity in the branch offices to a minimum, and for that, Cisco’s Wide Area Application Services (WAAS) solution was ideal.”

They chose Cisco® Wide Area Application Virtualization Engine (WAVE) appliances, high-performance, scalable solutions designed to deliver Cisco WAAS in both network edge and core deployments. The company also contracted for Cisco SMARTnet® Service, with its flexible hardware coverage and anytime access to the Cisco worldwide Technical Assistance Center (TAC).

“The WAVE appliances maintained the simplicity we want in our remote sites: a combination of connectivity, including a virtual private network, from a local ISP, a Cisco switch, and a Cisco WAAS device,” says Jancar.

As he explains, the deployment itself was just as simple. During one of their customary “comfort visits” to each branch, where an IT staff member makes sure everyone’s laptops and applications are performing, they installed the WAVE appliance at each site.

“To be honest, I haven’t seen such a seamless and painless deployment,” says Jancar. “With our previous WAN optimization solution, it took us six months to deal with all the policy-based routing, redirects, configuration, and quality of service issues.

“But the Cisco WAVE appliance is virtually ‘plug-and-play.’ Connect it to the network, it gets its configuration from the central manager, and it runs. It’s actually fun to work with.”

## Business Results

Once the deployment was complete, the application performance improvements delivered by the Cisco WAVE appliances were readily apparent.

“We saw a 300-percent improvement in compression acceleration with our Citrix XenApp products,” says Jancar, “which is very important because we use Citrix to facilitate user access to our centralized ERP data.” File-sharing performance also improved, and print services increased by 30 percent.

“Users reported that all their business performance applications were much more responsive,” says Jancar. “While we haven’t measured it, we’re confident that translates into increased productivity.”

SoftwareONE was able to measure the savings in both capital expenses and operating expenses that the company had been looking for. The Cisco WAAS solution was 20 percent less costly to deploy than the WAN optimization solution it had been using, and the company is enjoying approximately 50 percent lower operating expenses. “Mainly because of the almost fully automated deployment, configuration, maintenance, and monitoring through the Cisco WAAS Central Manager,” says Jancar.

Perhaps most important of all, SoftwareONE’s deployment of Cisco WAAS helps the company maintain its key competitive advantage: global, real-time reporting for every customer, to every customer, on the status of their software licenses.

### PRODUCT LIST

**Branch offices**

- Cisco Wide Area Application Virtualization Engine (WAVE) 594 and 694 Appliances

**Data center**

**FlexPod**

- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
  - Cisco UCS B200 M1 Series Blade Servers
  - Cisco UCS B230 M3 Series Blade Servers
- NetApp storage
- VMware Hypervisor

**Routing and switching**

- Cisco Nexus 5458 Series Switches

**WAN optimization**

- Cisco Wide Area Application Virturalization Engine (WAVE) 7541 Appliance

**Cisco SMARTnet® Service**

“Through our customer portal, a CIO can log in any time and get aggregated information on his or her licenses, up to the minute and **in** a minute,” says Jancar. “That’s possible only because we have centralized data and Cisco WAAS.”

“Buying 60 WAVE appliances at one time was a big investment for us,” he says. But Jancar and SoftwareONE colleagues appreciate the investment protection built into the Cisco approach to its WAAS solutions. “We like the way Cisco collaborates with application partners in developing and growing the WAAS platform,” says Jancar. “They talk to each other. So if, for example, Citrix or Microsoft changes something in their applications, we can be sure the changes will be supported by Cisco.”

## For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Wide Area Applications Services, go to: http://www.cisco.com/go/waas.


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