



# Wataniya Insurance Boosts Branch Office Application Performance and User Experience with Silver Peak

Leading Saudi Arabia-based insurance firm dramatically reduces WAN OPEX and CAPEX costs, enhances application performance and halves transaction times

When Saudi Arabia-based company, Wataniya Insurance, the automotive insurance specialist, commenced operations with a rebranded identity in the second quarter of 2010, it inherited the legacy of the Saudi National Insurance Company (SNIC), which had been registered in Bahrain and operating in KSA since 1975. With a 50% increase in employees working across three main branches at the company's headquarters in Jeddah, and branch offices in Riyadh and Al-Khobar, Wataniya saw its operations grow geographically across the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As such, in 2015, Wataniya embarked on an IT transformation programme, which would give the group full ownership and control of its IT infrastructure.

The company's IT transformation journey involved many initiatives within the IT department over the years, including application development and infrastructure enhancement, which significantly added more technology capabilities to its existing infrastructure to boost operational efficiency in line with the new trends and to facilitate business

50-60%  
INCREASE IN  
TRANSACTIONS

3  
MAIN  
BRANCHES

50%  
INCREASE IN  
EMPLOYEES



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— Majed Al Ghamdi, IT Manager, Wataniya Insurance

growth. “When I joined Wataniya Insurance in April 2015, I took ownership of the transformation programme for Wataniya Insurance based on the strategy the IT team had developed. This was the main vision for IT when I came on board, and we needed to improve the technical aspects before executing the whole strategy,” recalled Majed Al Ghamdi, IT Manager, Wataniya Insurance.

To achieve the business transformation, the company needed to enhance the core infrastructure at its head office in Jeddah and the two branches in Riyadh and Al-Khobar. Given the nature of its business, Wataniya employees process large volumes of insurance documents and transactions from the branch offices to the company’s headquarters

in Jeddah. In addition, the company’s network connectivity to the internet was routed entirely through its head office.

“In the insurance sector, we rely heavily on processing documents. There is a lot of document scanning and sharing involved to achieve a paperless environment for operational efficiency. Wataniya’s operations require efficient connections as transactions are processed online, so reliable network connectivity and performance is crucial. As the company added more users, bandwidth costs began to skyrocket, because of the 50% increase in employees. The increase in staff numbers also meant bandwidth usage had also amplified,” Al Ghamdi added.

As the business expanded and with growing amounts of data being transported across its existing network, the core network experienced latency, slow application performance and lost productivity due to longer times for completion of even the routine tasks. With a growing need for increased agility, wide area network (WAN) and broadband optimisation was top of the agenda for Wataniya and, as such, it required an overhaul of its IT network.

## Silver Peak Saves the Day

Conscious of the financial impact of its business expansion, and increased data throughput between its branch offices and headquarters, the IT team

explored the market to see what solutions it could find to address these challenges. Having unsuccessfully contacted several vendors, the breakthrough came when the IT team contacted the local Silver Peak technical team in Dubai, which responded in a timely manner. Wataniya went directly for a proof of concept (PoC) with Silver Peak in Dubai, which connected it with a partner in Saudi Arabia.

“The company’s main challenges were the network response, as well as the demand and the increase of regulatory requirements, which meant that there were more documents that we needed to scan, capture and share over the network. Also, the growth in our customer base and growth of business meant that the increase in data had a significant impact on our network connectivity and performance.” For most companies in this situation, they would traditionally add more bandwidth or circuits, or have an additional leased line installed. “That’s not so hard to do, but the cost implication of adopting such a strategy is not practical, especially now when IT is being challenged to do more with less,” Al Ghamdi explained.

Prior to implementing the Silver Peak Unity EdgeConnect SD-WAN solution at its headquarters in Jeddah and branches in Riyadh and Al-Khobar, Wataniya had standardised on Cisco for its network infrastructure, both for core switches and branch routers. “Wataniya quickly and successfully implemented

EdgeConnect, with the help of Gulf IT, a Saudi Arabia-based channel partner of Silver Peak," Al Ghamdi added.

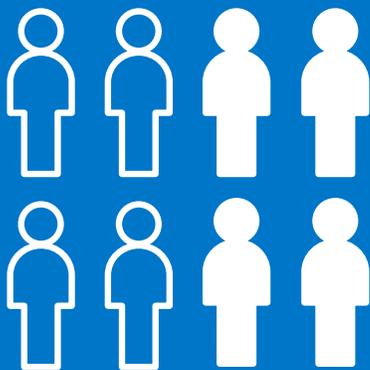
## The Silver Peak Advantage

Silver Peak EdgeConnect physical and virtual appliances now deliver predictable application performance over any combination of transport services, including low-cost broadband. Orchestrated application-driven security policies also enable direct internet breakout, from branch locations, for trusted Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) and web-based applications.

Fully compatible with existing WAN infrastructure, EdgeConnect provided Wataniya with a smooth migration to SD-WAN and, ultimately, to a thin branch architecture by simplifying and consolidating the firm's legacy WAN infrastructure. The high-performance of EdgeConnect also helped Wataniya Insurance to improve business

productivity and customer responsiveness, while significantly lowering WAN OPEX and CAPEX. What's more, it was praised for its ability to manage a critical concern – having a single point of failure. "We were worried that if the Silver Peak devices at the branches experienced a failure, the head office would be isolated from the branch offices. However, this was not the case. Indeed, there is automatic routing and a free pass if the hub is having difficulties carrying out the wireless optimisation, or if there is a failure, all traffic will run of course, but without optimisation and the connectivity is not lost," Al Ghamdi noted. "Subsecond failover was a key criteria for selecting Silver Peak over any other brand or vendor," he concluded.

In addition to rolling out the EdgeConnect SD-WAN solution, Wataniya also deployed Unity Boost, an optional performance pack, as well as Unity Orchestrator, which enables centralized management and provides IT with unprecedented levels of visibility into the data center along with the unique ability to centrally assign business intent



**50% GROWTH  
IN EMPLOYEES**



**REDUCTION IN  
TRANSACTION TIME**



**... The next move for us is to have standby software from Silver Peak because they have a solution as an appliance and it also comes with software. We are planning to execute the redundancy strategy, and we believe the Silver Peak SD-WAN solution opened the door for us to migrate some of our applications to the cloud.**

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policies to secure and control all WAN traffic. With Boost, additional performance is often needed for specific applications or locations. Indeed, the geographic distance between the head office and branch office locations often results in poor application performance. In this situation, it was less to do with

available bandwidth and more about the time it takes to send and receive data packets over distance, and the number of times data must be re-sent. Unity Boost leverages Silver Peak application acceleration capabilities to deliver high performing SD-WANs.

## Lessons Learned

Since the implementation of this project, the performance of Wataniya's network has been optimised for all the users, significantly improving application performance and network speed. For example, in the past, it would take five minutes to process a single transaction, but with EdgeConnect, the same transaction is processed in half the time. In addition, the company is utilising its WAN connections for IP telephony, and now has clear voice communication without experiencing latency, jitter or dropped calls.

In the future, Wataniya is looking to broaden its paperless office strategy and focus more on video conferencing and has plans to add more broadband connectivity. "We plan to deploy video conferencing across our branch offices so that the branch and operations managers from each location can interact via video with the head office. The company believes this will enhance communication significantly between the branch offices and headquarters," Al Ghamdi said.

What's more, Al Ghamdi added that the company is also looking at implementing a new ERP system, which will have more data and require more network capacity. "We currently have a local ERP system, not an international brand. We will soon have an infrastructure upgrade concerning servers and backup appliances, and the next move for us is to have standby software from Silver Peak because they have a solution as an appliance and it also comes with software. We are planning to execute the redundancy strategy," he said.

Ultimately, Al Ghamdi concluded that the objective of implementing the project has now been met because the company had two initiatives with the Silver Peak implementation; to optimise existing connectivity and reduce the WAN OPEX and CAPEX costs.

## Business Challenges

- > Network latency between head office in Jeddah and the branches in Riyadh and Al-Khobar
- > Poor application performance and longer times to process claims
- > Surge in network demand due to an increase in regulatory requirements, which meant more documents had to be captured
- > The growth in data had an impact on the network connectivity

## Network Background

- > Cisco infrastructure for our core switches, routers
- > One data centre at head office in Jeddah connecting branches in Riyadh and Al-Khobar
- > The head office connected two branches with a leased line
- > 50% increase in employees
- > Reduced application response time has boosted employee productivity
- > Flexibility to graduate to a virtualised and cloud environment
- > With the implementation broadband WAN connectivity, IT costs have been drastically reduced.

## Silver Peak Results

- > Zero-touch deployment enabled efficient branch-office connectivity
- > The WAN optimisation of the existing connectivity has increased network agility



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