



Key Challenges

- Improve intranet and extranet performance of mission critical corporate portal

Solution

- WebAccelerator Plumtree Edition with portlet caching

ROI

- 700% performance improvement
- 5 times bandwidth utilization reduction
- Accurate and non-intrusive usage report

British Land

WebAccelerator Turns British Land into a Hot Property

Executive Summary

British Land is the largest real estate company in the UK with a portfolio of 12.5 billion British pounds. To promote collaborative working and knowledge sharing, British Land implemented a web-based portal using software from Plumtree. The portal proved extremely beneficial, but was subject to frustrating performance concerns. To enhance the usability of the portal, British Land deployed F5 WebAccelerator™. The solution resulted in a 700% improvement in performance and reduced bandwidth utilization by 5X.

The Company

Formed in 1856, British Land is certainly one of the oldest publicly listed property groups in the United Kingdom. The portfolio primarily consists of prime office and retail assets with long leases and strong tenants. Known for pursuing a risk-averse, highly flexible business opportunity strategy, British Land needed to improve business processes and provide a single point of access to the company's existing systems. To facilitate these improvements, the company implemented the Plumtree portal which significantly reduced cycle times, allowing business processes that took two to four weeks via the paper-based method to be completed within a matter of days.

The Problem

While the portal proved extremely beneficial, there were concerns about its performance, which occasionally frustrated both internal and remote users. British Land's portal delivers results from several data sets stored in the company's corporate databases. For example, displaying and flagging all rents that are due for renegotiation would make up one data set. Retrieving information from these databases was a slow process. Indeed, at its worst, some page redraws were taking up to 20 seconds, and this was unacceptable. British Land therefore decided to undertake an extensive infrastructure project (including tuning the application itself) with the goal of reducing or eliminating performance issues, and F5 was a key part of the overall solution.

The Solution

British Land could have implemented several different performance enhancing technologies (such as ones that turned on caching within the application and/or the network) but this would have added complexity to the enterprise infrastructure. Instead, F5 WebAccelerator was installed, replacing the need for many of these disparate technologies and greatly reducing the burden on the IT team.

"The WebAccelerator was chosen to be part of our re-engineering efforts because it was able to meet and exceed all our performance requirements," said Jay Hunter, IT Project Manager for British Land. "Our company was also very impressed with the professional services team. Their "can do" attitude and willingness to examine the whole infrastructure—versus just the WebAccelerator contribution—was an unexpected bonus that made migrating to the solution particularly beneficial."

To justify the investment in the solution, British Land undertook a test of three potential solutions, the main criterion being an appreciable improvement in performance. WebAccelerator was ultimately chosen and was soon deployed to provide caching, compression, network optimization and timing solutions.

The Results

Now, using WebAccelerator's application smart caching, pages are served 4-5 times faster. In fact, page elements are served almost instantaneously if the page contents are not modified, the most common scenario. In addition, pages are now compressed from an average of 800K to 150K, depending on content. WebAccelerator reduces HTTP protocol chatter by reducing the number of browser-to-server requests and responses. This creates a huge increase in performance for British Land partners who access the server via low bandwidth connections. In addition, WebAccelerator provides accurate timings (making bottlenecks easier to detect and improving overall efficiency) by taking timings from "outside the system" rather than from within. Previously, timings taken from within the system were unreliable as it was unclear exactly which elements were causing the bottlenecks.

Another benefit is the ability to track application usage. The company can now access information on which pages are used most and when people log on. Knowing specific usage makes it much easier to plan ahead for infrastructure improvements, training, and other similar activities.

Today, on average, the portal draws pages in under three seconds versus the previous worst case 20-second time—a 700% improvement. This gives the company the portal performance and solid web foundation to take the system well into the future.

*"The WebAccelerator met or exceeded all our performance requirements."
– Jay Hunter, IT Project Manager for British Land*



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