



## INTEL® E-BUSINESS CASE STUDY

# Insurance Agency Claims Intel's Gigabit Solution is the Best Policy for Boosting Productivity

*Gigabit Ethernet Connectivity to the Desktop Dramatically Increases Productivity of Mainstream Business Activities*

### CASE HIGHLIGHTS

*Profiled Organization:* The Fort Lauderdale, Florida office of Brown & Brown\*, Inc., an Independent Insurance Intermediary: ranked #57 on *Forbes Magazine's* 2001 List of America's 200 Best Small Companies

*Challenge:* Increase the productivity of its accounting department by reducing the time it takes to generate reports

*Solution:* Increase network speed by providing Gigabit Ethernet Connectivity to the Desktop

*Benefits:* The fast, highly reliable network increased productivity by 90 percent

### SUMMARY

As common desktop PCs and applications become more advanced, they provide mainstream businesses with the means to accomplish tasks that were once inconceivable, and make employees much more productive. Ironically, in most cases, as applications, such as spreadsheets, word processing, presentation and e-mail programs, become more advanced, they also become more bandwidth-intensive. They are typically run simultaneously with additional processes running in the background, which actually slows down the network and can actually decrease employee productivity. However, there are now simple, cost-effective solutions to increase network bandwidth and get employee productivity back to the level it should be.

The accounting department at Brown & Brown's Fort Lauderdale office found this out the hard way. While the employees had a new accounting program based on C++ programming and the utilization of Microsoft™ Excel™ that produces numerous detailed reports, the report generation process was excruciatingly slow. "It's analogous to a car that promises to go from zero to 60 in 5 seconds, but is driving on a highway during rush hour," said Tim Woodcock, President and CEO of Courtesy Computers™, Incorporated, an Intel® Premier Provider. "We had to create a network 'fast lane' so they could take full advantage of the software."

Deploying Gigabit Ethernet all the way to the desktop is the most efficient and cost-effective means to stay ahead of the speed curve. Until a few years ago, deploying a Gigabit Ethernet network meant that businesses were faced with re-wiring the entire network to fiber cabling – a very costly and daunting task. But thanks to advancements in Gigabit Ethernet technology, organizations of all sizes can afford to make Gigabit Ethernet performance a reality on their existing Category-5 cabling in their network.

## **CHALLENGE:** The Need for Speed to the Desktop

Established in 1939 and one of the nation's largest independent insurance intermediaries\*\*, Brown & Brown Insurance's motto claims the company "...must be as agile as the cheetah in order to thrive in the competitive insurance environment." What has kept Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale agile is its ability to keep up with technology – and know when to ask for new solutions.



Larry Heidecker of Courtesy Computers\* standing in Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale's computer room that houses the Intel® PRO Gigabit Adapter solution.

A few years ago, Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale's accounting department acquired a new C++ programming-based accounting system that allows them to generate numerous reports, such as large and detailed management reports, production reports, income statements, balance sheets, company payables, and account status reports. Six accounting employees run the reports for three profit centers. At the time Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale acquired the new accounting system, the company's network was comprised of: 150 workstations built with a combination of Intel® Pentium® II processors, Intel® Pentium® III processors, and Intel® Pentium® 4 processors; eight servers, including three servers running Microsoft™ Windows™ 2000, one running Microsoft™ Windows™ NT™, a server, a fax server, a primary application server, and a print server; four 100Base-T switches, three Fiber Optic transceivers and multiple 10/100 Hubs; with the majority of the equipment connected by Category-5 and 5e copper cabling.

Although the reports themselves provided Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale with excellent, customized information, it took an average of 20 minutes to generate a report. At the end of the month, the accounting department would generate as many as 30 reports, which could take as long as 10 hours to run. During the report generation process, the accounting employees were mostly idle while waiting for their systems to query the database, compile the information and print the reports. The slow report generation resulted in other problems too. Many times reports were needed immediately in short notice for meetings or business correspondence. So, not only did the accounting department lose productivity, but other Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale employees had to wait as well.

Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale's challenge was to figure out how to boost its computing performance, affordably and efficiently, so it could increase the company's overall productivity.

## **PROCESS:** Sniffing Out the Bottlenecks

Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale approached Courtesy Computers, a provider of IT products and services, to help them diagnose and find a solution to its network performance issues. As with most companies, Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale is cost conscious and, while they wanted the problem completely solved, they sought to do it judiciously and not overcompensate or spend money unnecessarily. Courtesy Computers was able to easily pinpoint the problems. "To examine network traffic for bottlenecks and problems, we used a packet sniffer, among other tools," said Larry Heidecker, Courtesy Computers' COO. "The sniffer helped us identify exactly where, when and how much extra bandwidth was needed."

Courtesy Computers found that the accounting department had the most critical need for network performance, not only at the end of the month, but all the time. The analysis also discovered that the problem wasn't in the desktop itself, but with the data moving from the server to the desktop. The criteria for the solution were that it must be high performing, cost-effective and reliable. "We turned to Intel Corporation for the solution, as the Intel® products we've used have proven to meet the three criteria. In addition, Intel has excellent support. Intel support staff is always there for us when we need it, which is usually when we have a technician at the customer's site and we need immediate assistance," said Woodcock. "Knowing that the solution is going to work and be supported saves both us and our customer time and money."

### **SOLUTION:** Only Five Hours to Gigabit Performance

The solution called for Gigabit Ethernet cards to be installed in three of the servers and all of the desktop workstations, and a Gigabit switch was installed on the network backbone. In order to use the existing Category-5 copper cabling, Courtesy Computers selected Intel® PRO/1000 XT Server Adapters and Intel® PRO/1000 T Desktop Adapters. This saved Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale thousands of dollars that otherwise would have been spent on re-wiring. Re-wiring also would have required several days of network downtime, contributing to the loss in productivity for the entire office. "Once we devised the solution, it took only 5 hours to install and configure the Gigabit switch, server adapters, and desktop adapters," said Woodcock. "And it went very smoothly."

The Intel® PRO/1000 Adapters also will allow Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale to future-proof its network. The adapters deliver Ethernet, Fast Ethernet and Gigabit Ethernet and use their auto-sensing feature to match the speed needed for each network device. Because Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale now has Gigabit adapters installed on its servers, desktops can be easily upgraded to Gigabit Ethernet as needed.

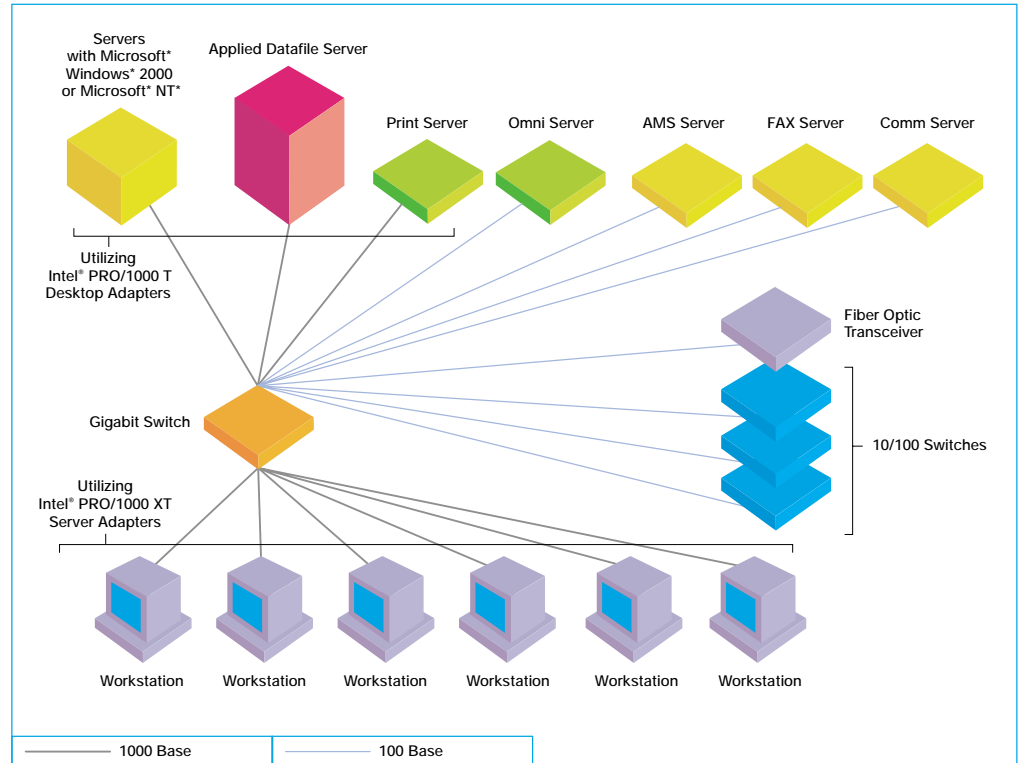
### **BENEFIT:** A 90 Percent Increase in Productivity

The Gigabit switch and Intel® PRO/1000 Server and Desktop Adapters solution made a dramatic difference in the Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale accounting department's productivity. Reports that once took 20 minutes to generate now take only two minutes to process, resulting in a 90 percent productivity gain. "The ROI was incredible," said Woodcock. "For a relatively minimal investment, we figured they're now saving thousands of dollars a year in lost productivity costs."

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Tim Woodcock  
CEO & President,  
*Courtesy Computers*

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## FUTURE: Add More Gigabit

Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale has more plans to deploy Gigabit Ethernet. In fact, Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale is so happy with the Gigabit solution in their accounting department, that all new desktops and servers in the entire office will now come standard with a 10/100/1000Mbps network connection from Intel. Each new desktop system that Courtesy Computers builds for Brown & Brown-Fort Lauderdale will have an Intel® PRO/1000 T Desktop Adapter integrated into the system. Because Intel® PRO/1000 XT Server Adapters are already installed on its servers, the new desktop systems will have instant Gigabit Ethernet connectivity.

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\*\*Ranked as the eighth largest such organization in the United States by *Business Insurance* magazine.