

**CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY**

# OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE LIKES ITS NETWORK...WELL DONE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**CUSTOMER**

- Outback Steakhouse

**INDUSTRY**

- Hospitality/Restaurant

**BUSINESS CHALLENGE**

- Gain high availability
- Scale the network to meet 5-year growth estimates

**NETWORK SOLUTION**

- Cisco Metro Ethernet solution, including Cisco Catalyst 3550 Metro switches
- Time Warner Telecom, a Cisco Powered Network member, provides managed services to Outback Steakhouse, including native LAN (NLAN) service. The company achieved this designation by maintaining high levels of network quality and by basing its service end-to-end on Cisco equipment, using proven platforms such as the Cisco 15327 Multiservice Provisioning Platform (MSPP), Cisco 7600 Series routers, and Cisco Catalyst 3550 Series switches. Cisco Powered Network member providers help help customers reduce training costs, activate advanced Cisco IOS Software features, improve application performance, and benefit from Cisco standards for support.

**BUSINESS VALUE**

- Deployed a reliable, powerful infrastructure
- Gained gigabit scalability
- Reduced local networking costs while connecting over 1,100 restaurants around the world

When Outback Steakhouse, Inc. (OSI) needed to replace its limited networking structure in order to improve reliability and access to vital data, it chose Cisco Metro Ethernet solutions and Time Warner Telecom managed native LAN services.



**BUSINESS CHALLENGE**

When it's time to eat, restaurant customers expect high quality, great service and an overall good experience. And that's what Outback Steakhouse, Inc. also expects of its network. Steak is not the only item on Outback's menu – in addition to 857 Outback Steakhouses, the Outback restaurant system also operates 159 Carrabba's Italian Grills, 46 Bonefish Grills, 25 Fleming's Prime Steakhouse and Wine Bars, 18 Roy's Restaurants, five Cheeseburger in Paradise restaurants, and two Lee Roy Selmon's, in 50 U.S. states and 21 countries. The challenge for headquarters was to assure that each "customer" restaurant it operates had access to the data and network services required for delivering outstanding food and service, while the executive team received timely data for making decisions that maintain the company's aggressive growth targets.

One challenge with the company's previous information systems was reliability. The company and all of its restaurants needed to be able to access timely data, anytime, all the time, yet it commonly experienced lapses in application availability and poor application performance. One factor involved the actual building housing Outback's IT operations, which had problems with power. In addition, limited bandwidth slowed

network performance for all of the company's restaurants, forcing them to wait for important data and causing reporting delays. Finally, because the headquarters are in Florida, operations were vulnerable to outages caused by lightning and hurricanes.

"We want our restaurants to focus on cooking great food and delivering excellent customer service," said Dusty Williams, Outback's chief information officer. "I don't want them to have to worry about anything related to information technology. We needed reliability and enough bandwidth to ensure that our growth plans would not impact any of our customers' ability to get the information they need. At headquarters, we wanted a solution that enabled us to focus on our own growth strategy, which is why we began evaluating out-tasking partners."

In the process of consolidating company operations into a headquarters location, Outback was simultaneously making a decision about out-tasking its datacenter to a secure site where power issues – and hurricanes – wouldn't be an issue. Outback chose Qwest and colocated its data-center operations in a Qwest Cyber Center. Qwest would provide full-time datacenter operations, as well as local access and transport area (LATA) and international transmission capabilities. However, Outback still had to connect its Tampa headquarters offices to the datacenter. After going through a request for proposal process and evaluating several options, Outback chose Time Warner Telecom. In addition to already having installed fiber in Outback's new office building, Time Warner Telecom could provide the managed services Outback needed to connect its far-flung restaurants, deliver high-availability services, and scale the network as Outback's needs changed over time. In addition, Time Warner Telecom had the advantage of being a Cisco® Powered Network member provider.

"We're growing dynamically," Williams says. "Five years from now, we don't want to have to worry about capacity issues. We chose an outstanding team who brought the best package into play for us. We know that in five years, these companies will still be here with us."

**"Having the Metro Ethernet solution between the datacenter and our corporate location gives us a much more reliable solution. Execution was flawless. Time Warner Telecom and Cisco did a great job – we've had no downtime and no business interruption. Our customers never even knew we moved the datacenter."**

— Dusty Williams, Chief Information Officer, Outback Steakhouse, Inc.

## NETWORK SOLUTION

Outback's headquarters connects to the Qwest Cyber Center through Time Warner Telecom's native LAN (NLAN) managed service and a Metro Ethernet solution from Cisco Systems®, a flexible, service-driven network that delivers profitable and differentiated metro and broadband services. Time Warner Telecom brought redundant fiber into Outback's headquarters building and deployed a Cisco Catalyst® 6509 Switch and a Catalyst 3550 Switch, which connect to a Cisco 7609 Series router in Time Warner Telecom's central office via a SONET backbone and the 100MB NLAN service. Time Warner Telecom's metro SONET backbone assures high availability, offering 50 millisecond recovery times using redundant fiber paths and systems. This helps assure nearly 100-percent availability for Outback's business-critical operations data and enables the company to enjoy high availability in every restaurant location.

The Cisco 7609 Series router in Time Warner Telecom's central office delivers Outback operations data traffic to a Cisco ONS 15327 SONET MSPP, owned by Time Warner Telecom and colocated in the Qwest Cyber Center. Once the traffic enters the Cisco ONS 15327 ONS SONET MSPP in the Cyber Center, it must be converted to OC-3 (155 Mbps) to run over the high-availability Qwest infrastructure for long-distance transmission. It is then reconverted at the destination city back to Ethernet for delivery over Time Warner Telecom's metro network via the 100MB Ethernet NLAN service. The entire network is remotely monitored with the help of a Cisco IOS® Software application.

"This application was unique," explains Richard Santoro, vice president and general manager for Time Warner Telecom. "Thanks to the Cisco Metro Ethernet solution's architectural flexibility, we could support our environment and the Qwest environment to make the solution work for Outback."

Once the network was deployed, Outback transitioned its applications over a period of several weeks, running duplicate systems to provide a fallback in case of any problems.

## **BUSINESS VALUE**

Outback's new network is far more powerful and reliable, positioning the company for rapid growth while assuring high data availability. With plans to double the company's size in five years, Williams says he won't have to worry about the network being able to support the company's growth.

"Having the Metro Ethernet solution between the datacenter and our corporate location gives us a much more reliable solution," Williams says. "Execution was flawless. Time Warner Telecom and Cisco did a great job – we've had no downtime and no business interruption. Our customers never even knew we moved the datacenter."

Having the assurance of a Cisco Powered Network gives Williams a great deal of confidence. "We looked hard at the total solution package," he explained, "and we knew with Cisco and Time Warner Telecom that this was a partnership. We were looking to work with companies that would treat it as a partnership."

Williams feels that the network solution and managed service has been extremely cost-effective as well. In addition to saving money on local networking capabilities, Outback has gained the ability to do more with its network, such as add gigabit capacity as it is needed.

## **NEXT STEPS**

"We know the networks works," said Williams, "and when we're ready to make the next leap, we're comfortable we'll be able to do that. When we finished, it was fun for me to walk into meetings and ask people, 'Did you know that the entire company's network was converted this weekend and we're now running in a different facility?' They would answer 'no,' and that's exactly the answer I wanted to hear."

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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To find out more about Cisco optical solutions, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/hw/optical/index.html>

To find out more about Cisco Metro Ethernet solutions, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/metro>

To find out more about Cisco Managed Metro Ethernet Services, go to:  
[http://www.cisco.com/en/US/netsol/ns341/ns121/ns389/networking\\_solutions\\_solution.html](http://www.cisco.com/en/US/netsol/ns341/ns121/ns389/networking_solutions_solution.html)

To find out more about Time Warner Telecom, go to: <http://www.twtelecom.com>

To find out more about Outback Steakhouse, go to: <http://www.outbacksteakhouse.com>

This customer story is based on information provided by Time Warner Telecom and Outback Steakhouse and describes how those particular organizations benefit from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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## CISCO SYSTEMS



### Corporate Headquarters

Cisco Systems, Inc.  
170 West Tasman Drive  
San Jose, CA 95134-1706  
USA  
www.cisco.com  
Tel: 408 526-4000  
800 553-NETS (6387)  
Fax: 408 526-4100

### European Headquarters

Cisco Systems International  
BV  
Haarlerbergpark  
Haarlerbergweg 13-19  
1101 CH Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
www-europe.cisco.com  
Tel: 31 0 20 357 1000  
Fax: 31 0 20 357 1100

### Americas Headquarters

Cisco Systems, Inc.  
170 West Tasman Drive  
San Jose, CA 95134-1706  
USA  
www.cisco.com  
Tel: 408 526-7660  
Fax: 408 527-0883

### Asia Pacific Headquarters

Cisco Systems, Inc.  
168 Robinson Road  
#28-01 Capital Tower  
Singapore 068912  
www.cisco.com  
Tel: +65 6317 7777  
Fax: +65 6317 7799

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