

# CASE STUDY

## IN BRIEF

### The Customer:

HB Group Insurance Management Limited is a subsidiary of The Co-operators, Canada's largest home-grown multi-line insurance company.

### The Challenge:

HB Group had experienced spectacular growth over a short period of time, taxing its network infrastructure. The company was searching for a reliable and scaleable Remote Access solution for its growing business.

### The Solution:

HB chose the Perle 594e Network Controller in preference to IBM's 5494 Controller. The Perle 594e offers a significant advantage in terms of TCP/IP connectivity, enabling SNA data from Twinax terminals and emulation PCs to be routed across the company's new TCP/IP WAN in native TCP/IP format.

### The Benefits:

The Perle 594e solution allowed HB Group to simplify network management, begin to adopt TCP/IP technology and prepare to expand to an ATM backbone at its own pace. HB Group was able to pass on the benefits derived from network improvements to its customers and was particularly impressed by Perle's level of support throughout the decision-making process.

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## TCP/IP Connectivity Simplifies Network Management

### Major Insurance Company Picks Perle's 594e Network Controller

### THE CUSTOMER:

HB Group Insurance Management Limited is a subsidiary of The Co-operators, Canada's largest home-grown multi-line insurance company. Formed in 1945, The Co-operators Group has grown to include 31 member companies, representing 4.5 million Canadians. HB Group is headquartered in Ontario, with ten other offices across Canada.

### THE CHALLENGE:

#### *Runaway Growth*

HB Group's stellar growth-rate had begun to tax network infrastructure. Its agents were highly dependent on network performance and with over 20,000 phone inquiries per week, the company could not afford to have a computer network that was anything less than 100% reliable.

#### *Invisible Change*

Given its rapid expansion, HB Group had outgrown its existing Perle 494 Remote Controllers. The company, which had been using the X.25 protocol, moved to Frame Relay in order to take advantage of high-speed access capabilities and was looking for a scaleable Remote Access solution for its growing business. Art Burchill, Manager of Systems Architecture for HB Group explained: "We required a device that would scale and perform quickly, enabling HB Group to deliver fast and efficient customer service. It was important to HB Group that our customers not notice a shift in the service levels offered to them as we grew internally. Making each customer feel like they are our number one priority is our goal, and this is achieved through immediate and fast turnaround time."

#### *Flexibility*

The solution would have to be compatible with existing network topography – including Ethernet and Twinax connections, using both SNA/SDLC and Frame Relay protocols. Burchill also needed to take into account ongoing efforts to improve overall network infrastructure. The company had already begun the process of migrating to TCP/IP and long-term preparations were in progress for a move to an ATM backbone, to handle anticipated increases in traffic.

### THE SOLUTION:

#### *The Perle 594e Network Controller*

In all the years that I had done business with Perle, they had never done anything to diminish their reputation," said Burchill. He had found Perle's products to be of very high quality and had come to depend heavily on the company's expertise for support. But, aware of IBM's dominance in the midrange market, he felt it would be prudent to compare remote access offerings.

#### *Unique SNA Over/IP Functionality*

"Perle's Controllers delivered just as robust and reliable a connection to the AS/400 as IBM's 5494, but in addition they offered the significant added advantage of TCP/IP connectivity. This meant that SNA data from Twinax terminals and emulation PCs could be routed across our new TCP/IP WAN in native TCP/IP format. That was a major advantage in terms of simplifying the task of network management," remarked Burchill.

#### *Outstanding Performance*

"IBM's controllers just couldn't compete with Perle's equipment at the same level of performance or functionality, nor did they have Perle's easy-to-use utilities for configuring and maintaining the controller. Sacrificing performance is not an option in a customer service industry such as ours, so Perle was a natural fit." Burchill also continued to be impressed with Perle's customer support: "I have had many bad experiences with other vendor products, so the support that Perle provides is very valuable to us."

#### *Simplicity, Flexibility & Scalability*

Ultimately, the Perle solution allowed HB Group to simplify network management, begin to adopt TCP/IP technology and prepare to expand to ATM technology at their own pace. "High-speed data transmissions and the capacity to scale as needs arise are the two main reasons why HB Group chose, and continues to choose, Perle controllers over the competitor," says Burchill.

#### *Future Developments*

Burchill is pleased to report improved levels of customer service due to the 594e's capacity for high-speed connections and plans to purchase more 594e controllers in the near future.