

# EMA Radar™ for Report for Network Operations Observability

## *Riverbed Vendor Profile*

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**Riverbed**  
Network Operations  
Observability 2024



**Riverbed** | Best Versatility  
Network Operations Observability 2024

## Customer Perspectives

“When we have an issue, it gives us a lot of insight. It is great at proving that the network isn’t the problem. and when the network is the issue, I can get useful insights that speed up troubleshooting without having to go through a process of elimination. It’s good at seeing complex issues where there are multiple components.”

“My favorite thing about Riverbed is the relationship. We’ve had a 15-year relationship with them and it’s never been bad. I don’t have anything bad to say about their products.”

“Historically, everything always looks like it’s the network’s fault. Now, we can prove if it is the network or not. Rather than go to multiple sources and trying to piece together what’s happening, we’re now aware of all traffic going over the network.”

## Overview

Riverbed is a Redwood City, CA-based performance management and acceleration company that was founded in 2002. It is best known for its WAN optimization business, which the company converted into multiple acceleration products sold today. Over the years it has made several acquisitions of IT management companies, whose products form the basis of its suite of network operations observability tools. The company primarily sells to mid-sized and large enterprises.

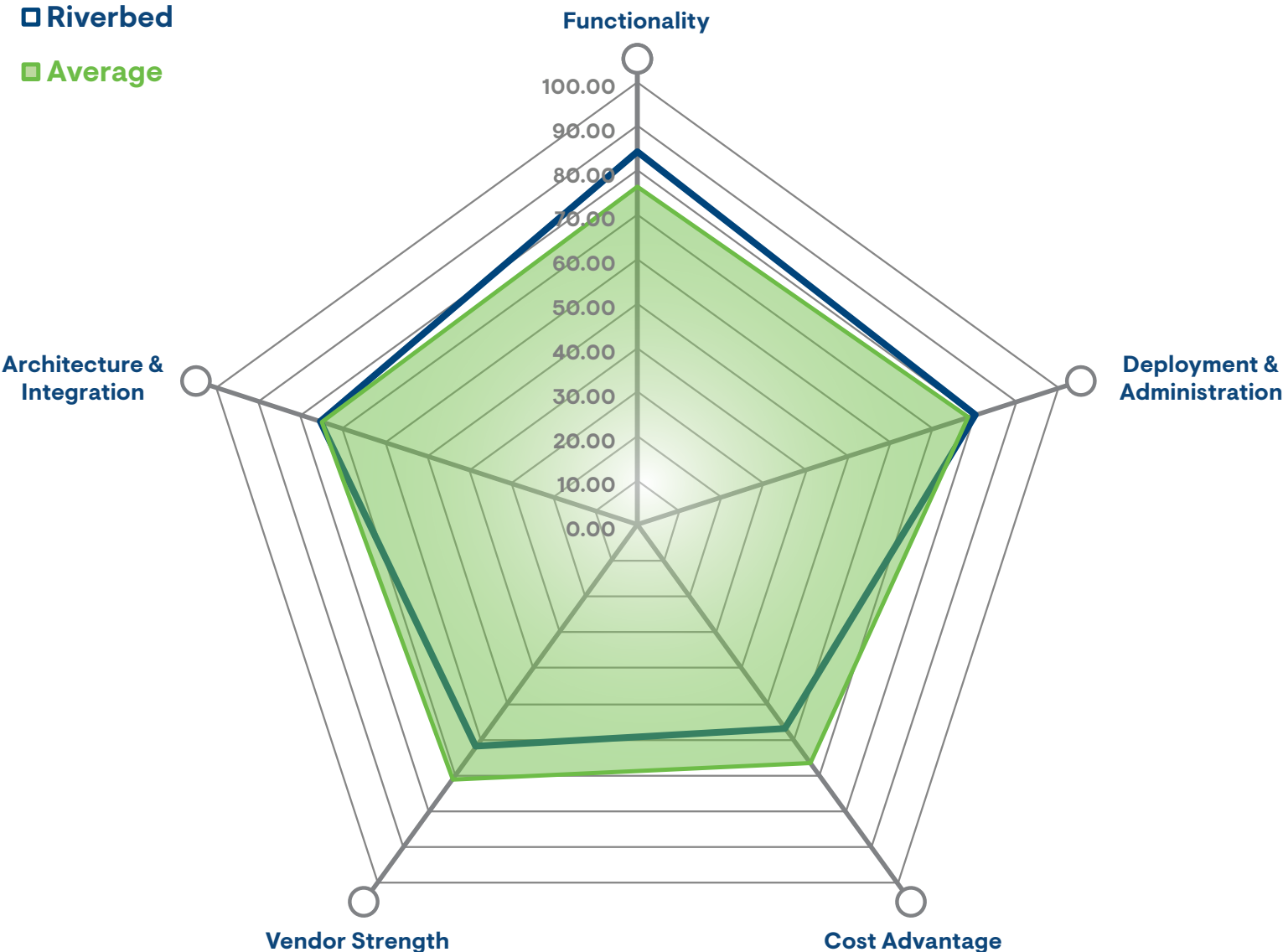
Riverbed offers a full suite of products that cover most enterprise network observability requirements. AppResponse is a mature packet-capture appliance with real-time analytics capabilities that can run as a distributed system across multiple appliances. Customers refer to it as their go-to tool for troubleshooting. NetProfiler is a network flow monitoring solution. NetIM conducts infrastructure monitoring. NPM+ is a recently released edge performance solution that monitors connectivity from the endpoint perspective, giving customers a unique option for digital experience management. Riverbed IQ is an AIOps tool that draws data from the rest of the Riverbed suite to correlate insights and drive intelligent runbook automation. Finally, Portal is a product module that correlates insights from all Riverbed products into an integrated dashboard.

Riverbed is in the early stages of transforming its products into cloud native, SaaS-delivered solutions. The company positions itself as a full-stack observability solution provider across infrastructure, networks, and cloud applications. It positions its acceleration products as solutions complementary to the observability suite. For instance, its acceleration business can boost the digital experience and cloud application performance that its observability solutions monitor. The company also offers Aternity, an endpoint monitoring tool (not included in this Radar) that uses the same agent as NPM+. Riverbed describes the newer IQ product as the heart of its overall platform, with a promised ability to seamlessly integrate data from the rest of its solutions and apply AI to identify the root cause of problems and forecast future problems. IQ can also integrate third-party solutions into data analysis and automation runbooks.



Riverbed highlighted the following differentiators in its interactions with EMA:

- An open suite of fully integrated products
- The ability to collect and analyze a broader set of data than its competition with accuracy and reliability
- Applying AI and automation for proactive prevention, identification, and remediation of problems
- Removing network blind spots, including those created by cloud native, work-from-anywhere, and zero trust environments
- A new Unified Agent for endpoints that supports multiple observability solutions, minimizing administrative overhead when you adopt more Riverbed products



# Scoring

## Deployment & Cost-Efficiency

Deployment & Administration	
Implementation	Strong
Deployment Flexibility	Outstanding
Proof of Concept Support	Solid
Professional Services Requirements	Strong
Customer Support	Strong
Customer Training	Outstanding
Administrative Overhead	Strong
Product Update Impact	Strong
Administrative Security	Strong

Cost Advantage	
On a scale of 1 to 100 with 100 being most affordable, Riverbed received a score of	57

### Deployment & Administration

There are six products in the Riverbed network operations observability suite, so naturally, there is some variation from one to the next in terms of ease of deployment and administration. Overall, implementation is not complex and administrative overhead is low. Customers were generally satisfied with the quality of customer support they receive from Riverbed, although one customer told EMA that he relies on Riverbed channel partners for most of his support. Riverbed’s commitment to securing its software supply chain, and obtaining third-party certifications for the security and resiliency of its products is strong.

### Cost Advantage

Overall, Riverbed is a moderately priced solution, but there are nuances between the various products. Packet capture and analysis products like AppResponse tend to be premium products, for instance. The other factor in Cost Advantage is the sheer number of products in the suite, which can lead to a significant cost.



## Product Strength

### Architecture & Integration

Passive Data Collection	Outstanding
Synthetic Data	Strong
Hybrid Operations Monitoring and Data	Solid
Platform Scalability	Strong
Resiliency	Solid
APIs	Strong
Product Integrations	Strong

### Functionality

Network Discovery	Strong
Application Intelligence	Outstanding
Metrics and Measurement	Outstanding
Capacity Management	Strong
Alerting/Alarming	Strong
Troubleshooting	Strong
Visualization/Reporting	Strong
Active Controls	Solid
Ease of Use	Solid

### Architecture & Integration

Riverbed’s overall product architecture is very strong. Its data collection capabilities and platform scalability are powerful, but it has some gaps around hybrid infrastructure monitoring. For instance, its observability of public cloud environments needs improvement. Riverbed received strong scores for the quality of its APIs; however, one customer noted that API documentation needs a little improvement. IQ has a strong library of product integrations.

### Functionality

Given the large number of products Riverbed sells, it offers coverage of all the functionality that EMA reviewed. NetIM offers strong network discovery capabilities. Across AppResponse and NetProfiler, Riverbed offers outstanding application intelligence and capacity planning. Its alert management capabilities are strong, but customers noted it takes some work to minimize noise, a common complaint industry-wide. IQ will likely improve this issue over time. IQ also provides solid active network controls via its runbook functionality. Overall, customers gave Riverbed solid reviews for ease of use, but opinions varied from tool to tool. Portal is a mitigating factor here, since people with lesser technical expertise often use its cross-tool dashboards to track the network.



## Vendor Strength

Vision	Solid
Strategy	Strong
Financial Strength	Solid
Research & Development	Solid
Partnerships and Channel	Solid

In EMA's view, Riverbed's vision for network observability is solidly aligned with EMA's vision of the industry, and it has a strong strategy for advancing its solutions.

Riverbed's financial position has been up and down in recent years. Formerly a public company, Riverbed has had three different private equity owners over the last decade. Most recently, Apollo Global Management sold majority ownership of the company to Vector Capital in 2023. Prior to that sale, Apollo used federal bankruptcy protection to clear Riverbed's debts and recapitalize it in 2021. This financial engineering appears to have improved the company's overall position.



### Strengths

- Riverbed offers one of the most well-rounded solutions for network operations observability, with a suite of specialized products that covers monitoring of infrastructure, flows, packets, and digital experience. More recently, it added an AIOps solution that promises to tie all these products together more effectively than Riverbed Portal, a dashboard tool that aggregates reporting from all the products.
- AppResponse is a proven workhorse solution with a high customer satisfaction rating. It remains a bedrock component of Riverbed's suite. Customers deploy multiple appliances in critical locations for both real-time monitoring and forensic analysis.
- NPM+ is an interesting and unique product in the market. It leverages Riverbed's new Unified Agent, deployed on server and user endpoints, to decrypt and analyze packet data. This analysis provides performance insights in blind spots, such as at the remote user edge and from SASE proxies to the cloud. Other vendors use synthetic monitoring tools to attack these problems. NPM+ is a good sign that Riverbed is innovating in network operations observability.

### Opportunities

- Riverbed needs to prove it can innovate and grow. A decade ago, it tried to evolve its legacy WAN optimization technology into an SD-WAN business. The company admitted defeat several years later when it entered a resale agreement with SD-WAN vendor Versa Networks. Today, it is attempting a similar transition with observability by modernizing many of its existing products and developing new products to enhance and integrate the portfolio, including Riverbed IQ and NPM+. So far, this new wave of innovation looks promising, but Riverbed needs to leverage these new capabilities to drive growth and sustain innovation.
- The customers EMA spoke to had little to no experience with Riverbed's newer products, IQ and NPM+, so they remain unproven. One customer who worked with IQ commented that early efforts with implementation were somewhat difficult and that Riverbed needed to provide more documentation.
- Given the prevalence of hybrid and multi-cloud networks today, Riverbed needs to enhance its network observability in public cloud environments, which is limited compared to other vendors.





### About Enterprise Management Associates, Inc.

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