Riverbed Aternity

360°

Digital Experience

The Quiet Friction
of Staying On-Prem

Why SaaS is the Future of 360° Digital Experience

riverbed®

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Introduction – Why Modern Work Demands a New View of Experience

For many IT and Digital Workplace leaders, on-premises platforms feel dependable. They're familiar, proven, and still doing the job they were originally designed to do.

But the world they were built for has changed.

Work no longer happens in one place, on one network, or during set hours. Employees move seamlessly between offices, homes, customer sites, and frontline locations. They rely on SaaS applications, cloud services, collaboration platforms, and mobile devices as part of a single, continuous workflow.

In this environment, availability is no longer the benchmark. Experience is.

And this is where many on-prem environments begin to quietly fall behind. Not because they are broken, but because they were never designed to support the speed, scale, and expectations of modern digital work.

This eBook explores the quiet friction of staying on-prem and why SaaS has become the foundation for delivering a true 360° Digital Experience.
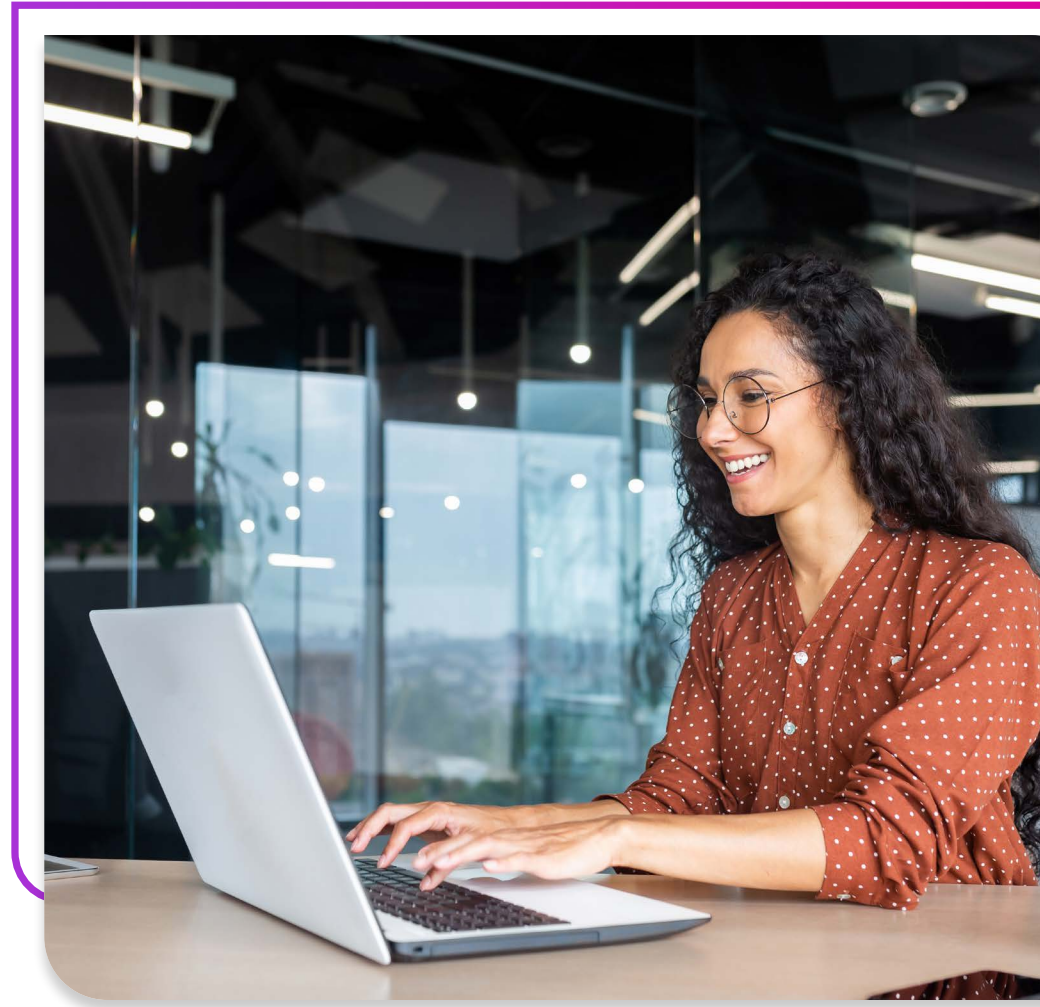
The Friction Dashboards Don't Show

When systems look healthy but work still feels hard, experience is the missing signal.

Most IT dashboards tell a reassuring story. Systems are up. Performance thresholds are met. Service levels look acceptable.

Yet employees tell a different story.

They experience slow logins that disrupt their focus, collaboration tools that falter at the wrong moment, and SaaS applications that behave inconsistently depending on location or network conditions. These issues don't always trigger tickets. Instead, they create small, repeated interruptions that employees learn to work around.

Over time, this quiet friction becomes costly. Productivity drops, frustration grows, and confidence in digital tools erodes.

On-prem platforms often struggle to surface these issues because they focus on infrastructure health rather than lived experience. They can confirm that systems are available, but not whether work actually flows.
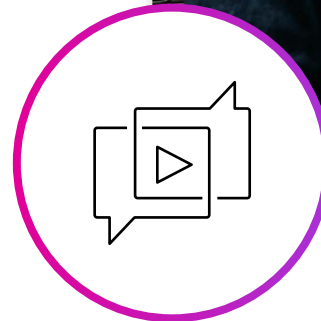
Why On-Prem Creates Invisible Drag

On-prem environments rarely fail loudly. Instead, they impose limits quietly, through friction, delay, and effort that accumulates over time.

The true impact of on-prem environments rarely appears in a single line item. It shows up in slower progress, higher effort, and missed opportunities.

Progress Becomes the Trade-Off

Stability without progress eventually becomes stagnation.
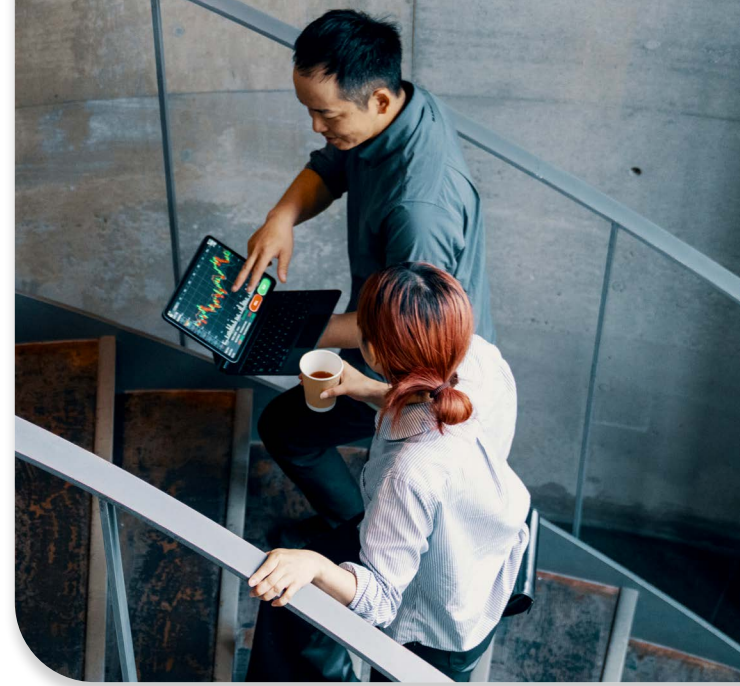
On-prem platforms operate on planned upgrade cycles, maintenance windows, and manual patching. New capabilities arrive incrementally, and innovation is constrained by infrastructure readiness .

In contrast, SaaS platforms evolve continuously. Enhancements, analytics, automation, and AI-driven capabilities are delivered as part of the service, without disruption.

The result is a growing gap. On-prem environments don't just move more slowly, they limit how quickly IT can respond to new business demands.

Operational Effort That Doesn't Improve Experience

Much of the effort required to maintain on-prem platforms is invisible to the business, yet deeply felt inside IT.

Running an on-prem environment demands constant attention. Hardware must be maintained , capacity planned, databases managed, and security patches applied.

These activities are essential, but they don't make work easier for employees.

SaaS shifts this responsibility away from internal teams, allowing IT to focus on what actually moves the needle:

improving experience, preventing issues, and optimizing how work gets done.

Gaps in Understanding the End-to-End Experience

Employees don't work in silos and experience can't be managed that way either.

Modern work is not application centric. It is workflow centric .

A single task may span an endpoint device, a SaaS application, a network path, a collaboration tool, and user behaviour. When visibility is fragmented across tools and teams, root cause becomes guesswork.

On-prem platforms often struggle to provide this end-to-end view, particularly for remote, mobile, and frontline workers, or in encrypted and cloud first environments .

Without context, IT remains reactive, addressing symptoms rather than causes.
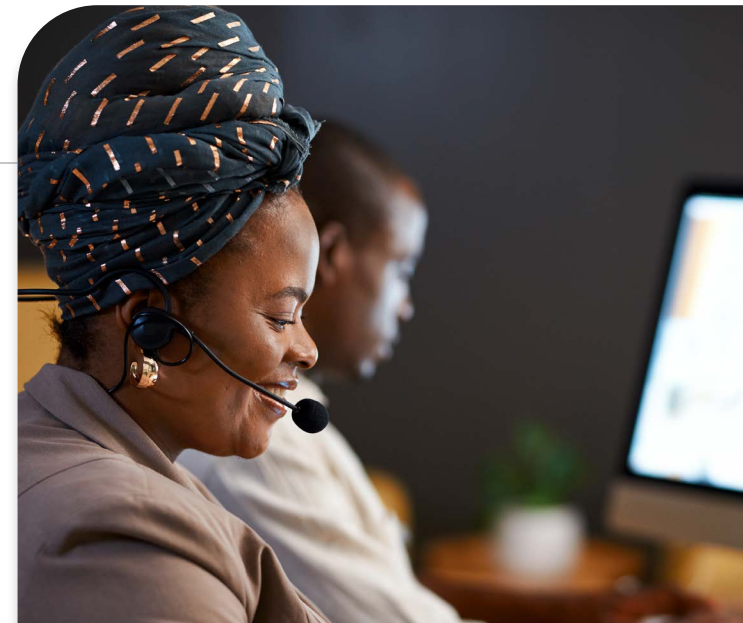
Security and Compliance That Becomes Harder to Manage

Security is frequently cited as a reason to remain on-prem. In practice, it can become a burden.

Manual patching, inconsistent controls, and delayed updates increase exposure. Keeping pace with evolving compliance requirements adds further complexity.

Modern SaaS platforms are built with continuous security updates, identity driven access, and Zero Trust principles at their core. For many organiz ations, SaaS is now the more resilient path to compliance, not the riskier one.

Security & Compliance Validation for Government Environments

The Riverbed Platform for Government has been granted IL5 Provisional Authority by the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), a major step in federal cybersecurity compliance. This designation validates the platform's readiness for testing to confirm its ability to support secure, mission-critical workloads for national security and defense operations. At the same time, Riverbed is actively pursuing the FedRAMP High certification process.

Why 360° Digital Experience Requires SaaS
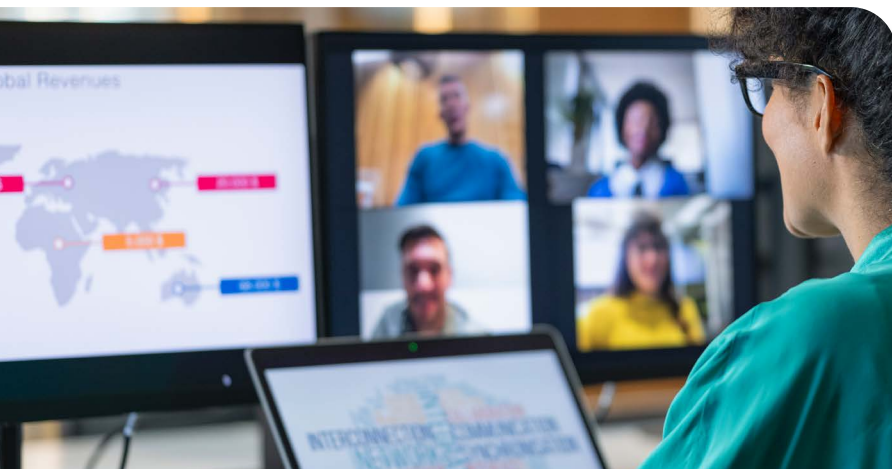
A true 360° Digital Experience brings together performance, behavior, and sentiment into a single, coherent view.

This requires scale, real-time processing, and the ability to correlate massive volumes of data. On-prem environments were never designed for this level of integration.

SaaS provides the elasticity and intelligence required to transform telemetry into actionable insight, enabling IT to prioritize what matters most to employees and the business.
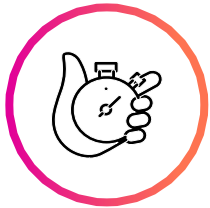
Why SaaS is the Foundation for Digital Experience
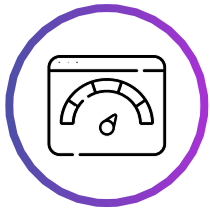
SaaS changes not just where software runs, but how IT operates and evolves.
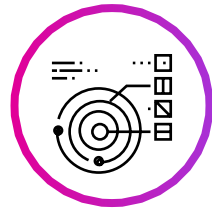
SaaS is not simply a different deployment option. It represents a fundamentally different way of operating.

By removing infrastructure constraints, SaaS enables IT teams to move faster, adopt innovation sooner, and manage experience as a continuous discipline rather than a series of incidents.

It allows digital experience to be measured, compared, improved, and aligned with business outcomes in ways that on-prem environments struggle to support.

Evolving Digital Experience Without Upheaval

Modernization doesn't have to mean upheaval.
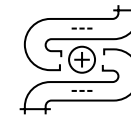
Key Enablers Include:

Migrating from on-prem to SaaS

does not require a sudden or risky leap.

A structured approach allows

organizations to establish experience baselines, migrate configurations and dashboards, and maintain continuity for IT teams, while gradually unlocking SaaS only capabilities.

The goal is not to discard what works,

but to remove the constraints that limit what's possible.

Enabling 360° Digital Experience with Aternity

At the center of this shift is the ability to see, understand, and improve experience continuously.

1

Aternity is purpose built to support 360° Digital Experience in a SaaS first world.

2

By unifying visibility across endpoints, applications, networks, and mobile devices, and applying intelligence and automation at scale, Aternity helps IT teams move from reactive support to proactive optimization.

3

The result is clearer insight, faster resolution, and measurable improvement in how work is experienced.

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360°ʳ

Digital Experience

From Standing Still to Moving Forward

On-prem environments are not failing. But they are increasingly outpaced by the world around them.

In an era defined by cloud, mobility, and rising expectations, the organizations that succeed are those that focus not just on keeping systems running, but on how work feels.

SaaS provides the foundation. 360° Digital Experience shows the way forward.

Plan Your Path from On-Prem to SaaS

Request a Technical Migration Workshop with Riverbed experts to understand your current environment, migration options, and a phased approach to SaaS, without disruption.

Book a Technical Migration Workshop ›

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Riverbed — Empower the Experience

Riverbed is the only company with the collective richness of telemetry from network to app to end user that illuminates and then accelerates every interaction so that users get the flawless digital experience they expect across the entire digital ecosystem. Riverbed provides two industry-leading solutions: the Riverbed Unified Observability portfolio, which integrates data, insights, and actions across IT to enable customers to deliver seamless digital experiences; and Riverbed Acceleration, which offers fast, agile, and secure acceleration of any application over any network to users, whether they are mobile, remote, or on-premises. Together with our thousands of partners, and market-leading customers across the world, we empower every click, every digital experience. Learn more at riverbed.com.