Turning ideas into reality.

Is your network ready?

Inside:
Interviews with the experts and event agenda.

@BTBusiness
Technology is helping us to work faster and smarter, and as a result we’re more reliant on the network than ever before.

These days businesses need to share information, communicate, and access all the business applications they need – no matter where they are, or what device they’re using. It puts a big strain on IT teams to provide the highest level of service to keep businesses connected as cost-effectively as possible, without any loss of quality.

The key is in having access to the latest intelligence on your network performance, and this is where BT Managed WAN can help. Our Managed WAN service gives you accurate up-to-date information on the performance of your critical business applications, enabling you to plan your network requirements for today and in the future.

Our experts explain how voice and collaboration are going to help businesses come alive thanks to BT Managed WAN.
Event agenda.

Registration and refreshments.

Welcome.
An introduction to the event and your speakers, including what they’ll be covering.

Knowing the signs.
Helping you to anticipate the stress that your IT may place on your network.

How to respond.
Highlighting three key principles that you need to stick to if your network is to support all the things you’re going to throw at it.

Coffee and showcase.
A chance to meet experts, account teams, specialists and your peers.

Getting it right.
The components you need – covering technology and products, access technology, core technology and management.

Bringing it all together.
A recap on what’s been covered and our perspective on choosing your next network.

Lunch, networking and showcase.

Close.
What are the key triggers you see for businesses needing to refresh their WAN?

One of the key triggers is change; change of almost any kind, because it eventually filters down to the WAN. Often the change results from a business growing – either organically or through acquisition – and having to take on more sites. That creates a need to be able to share information and resources across these sites, which in turn triggers a need for a private network between all the locations.

Often companies have trouble if they’re operating across multiple sites and relying on the internet to run key applications. Poor performance can have a big impact on the business. For example, call centres trying to share customer information but suffering delays, or other business transactions that are being affected.

Security is another major driver – for example, if customers are doing things over the internet and there are growing concerns about the security of their personal information.
How has the role/importance of the network changed in recent years?

Its importance has increased as more things are centralised in data centres or the cloud or cloud servers, and as a number of applications that businesses depend on go onto the network. The network underpins the business now, especially if you’re a multi-site company wanting to share information. This requires more capabilities, consistent performance (i.e. no fluctuations at peak times of usage) and security. With a private network, you’re in control of all of this.

Is the growing trend towards flexible working a further driver?

It can be. Sometimes remote and home workers are looped into the company network via the internet, but it’s important that this happens securely. BT offers a solution called Mobile Express, which offers a secure connection into the WAN for remote workers.

What are the common implications of not having a suitable WAN in place?

If the company’s WAN is not adequate, or connects over the internet, applications won’t perform correctly between sites.

At a very simple level, voice conversations would break down or stutter if there wasn’t enough bandwidth, or if this type of traffic suffered interference from other content travelling over the network, due to an inability to prioritise voice calls. Video conferencing would soon freeze. Similarly, database queries could become very slow, and the IT manager would soon start to shout! Although bandwidth can be addressed by adding a bigger link, performance is only guaranteed for sensitive apps if there’s intelligence in the way the network is managed.

Our Managed WAN has different priority settings for different applications, so voice and video get through before internet browsing or emails, which are less sensitive to tiny delays of, say, a tenth or hundredth of a second – something that’s enough to distort voice or video.

What opportunities can the right WAN give a business?

The opportunities are the reverse of the potential problems. Having a good WAN lets a business respond to growth and acquisition opportunities, because you can move and add sites very easily. Once the core network is up and running, you just run a link to the nearest point of presence to get access to central resources. Having the right WAN set up is also a good precursor to being able to deploy cloud services, whether public or private. You can then take a private link into a private or public data centre to consume hosted services. Most application providers will have clients connecting to their software via a data centre or cloud.

Once all your resources are hooked onto the WAN, you can also tap into flexible and remote working, allowing sales people to access sales applications and managers to access Oracle financial systems remotely.

So, what’s next?

We have introduced a suite of cloud-enabled capabilities – virtualised servers and storage – onto the WAN in such a way that would allow a company to add these resources very quickly. For example, a terabyte of extra storage and 1,000 additional servers to support a special project or new application roll-out. The WAN would be the enabler for that.

The WAN is also an enabler to plan and provide voice capacity more flexibly and economically across multiple sites, through the introduction of SIP. This allows all in and outbound calls to be managed and routed via the WAN, removing the need for traditional phone lines.

All you would have instead is a single pipe capable of providing all voice channels, internet bandwidth and any virtual servers and storage. That’s much easier and more flexible to manage.
What are the key triggers you see for businesses needing to refresh their WAN?

It’s usually driven by two or three things. For example, when a customer reaches the end of their contract term, they might start looking for better value and review whether their existing service gives them enough bandwidth or enough bang for their buck. It could be that they want to run different types of applications over the network, but their current network won’t support this – for example, video and VoIP [Voice over IP] are being used more and more, but this kind of application demands Class of Service/Quality of Service controls, right from the core of the network to the data centre. SAP/ERP roll-outs are another trigger. Then there’s the need to be able to flex the network to cope with seasonal trends or different business requirements.

Many companies – SMEs in particular – are also looking to put more applications into the cloud too, which has inherent network dependence.
How has the role/importance of the network changed in recent years?
It goes back to the things I’ve mentioned. Before, the network was just used for one thing. Now it forms the main railroad track for businesses to run their services across. So if they lose the network they lose their applications, if they lose their applications they can no longer operate.

What are the common implications of not having a suitable WAN in place?
This means businesses are unable to roll out new applications, or to access cloud-based services securely – i.e. to take advantage of cheaper, centralised services. For us, if there’s no network, then there’s no work going on. That’s why we focus on three key principles to stick to as you refresh your network.

What are the opportunities that the right WAN can give a business?
Speed of change is an important one. The right WAN can allow a business to change direction very quickly without worrying about changing its underlying technology. And they can add network capacity very efficiently. Where a company is using an old-fashioned point-to-point network, it’s hard to merge, add and subtract sites. With a Managed WAN service they can do this in weeks rather than months.

So, what’s next?
As businesses become more and more dependent on the WAN, they need disaster recovery provision or certainly multi-point resilience. You can’t afford to use cheap broadband if you’re running your business over it.

What should companies look for in a WAN?
Service management – i.e. who will manage the WAN and how will they do it? Also, tools to see what’s happening on the WAN – i.e. is anyone attempting to hack into the network, or otherwise abuse it (for example streaming YouTube videos at work). Tools allow you to identify the problem before the network breaks, or to see how applications impact the WAN – allowing you to predict the need for an upgrade. Fault diagnosis and recovery capabilities are also vital. With BT Managed WAN, the Class and Quality of Service can be applied end-to-end.

A further consideration is how you’ll implement your WAN. A WAN is not something you can buy off the shelf – it needs skilled project management.

What about service flexibility?
Yes, you really need to work with a company that can offer solutions if and when a problem occurs – a provider that will work with you in the best interests of solving the problem.

What about 24/7 service cover and security?
Yes, these go without saying and that’s why we have a UK-based Network Operations Centre running 24 hours a day, all year round.

“\nThe right WAN can allow a business to change direction very quickly.\n”
What are the key triggers you see for businesses needing to refresh their WAN?

The main drivers for change are usually the deployment of new applications, be they in-house or cloud-based, to help resolve performance or service issues with existing networks and applications, or mergers and acquisitions.

The ‘applications’ can vary from traditional business applications like SAP, Oracle and Citrix, right through to things like the deployment of services such as wi-fi, IP CCTV, SIP, Hosted PBX services, cloud backup, file sharing and conferencing products like Instant Messenger etc.

The network has become as important to a business as the blood vessels in a body.

Interview with the experts.

Peter Sealey
Head of Ethernet Propositions, BT Business

Peter, who is Head of BT Business’ Ethernet Propositions, has 40 years’ experience in the telecomms industry. He has been at the forefront of many major technological developments, including the introduction of point-to-point ethernet networking, MPLS, Class of Service, the growth of the internet, ADSL and ethernet VPNs.
How has the role/importance of the network changed in recent years?
The strive to increase productivity and reduce costs means businesses are deploying more and more applications, quicker than ever before. The richness and immediacy of communication that sees so many people glued to their smart phones has been filtering through to business applications too.

BYOD and the plethora of applications available on the internet mean that employees are also driving the ‘network’ harder than ever before. The network has become as important to a business as the blood vessels in a body.

If not correctly configured, managed and maintained, you start to see problems manifest themselves in all sorts of ways, and some of them can have a major impact on the business.

What are the common implications of not having a suitable WAN in place?
A really common complaint is where end users moan that their applications aren’t working properly. “It’s always so slow in the morning.” “My screen keeps freezing.” It might be the inability to take an order. It might be a service agent not able to pull up the correct customer details. But we’ve seen a lot worse.

If the network isn’t flexible or can’t cope, then not only will it compromise the new applications, it will impact the business-critical applications – thereby impacting the day-to-day running of their business.

What are the opportunities that the right WAN can give a business?
With the right WAN in place, a business can come alive. Applications are responsive. Collaboration tools start working. Employees are more productive. Customers are happier.

Another major benefit of having the right network is that it puts you in control. The right WAN helps you identify, police and manage applications to ensure you obtain optimum performance in a cost-effective manner.

It also helps you keep up with, or one step ahead of, the competition by being flexible at times of need and by allowing you to adopt the latest time or cost-saving applications in a timely manner.

So, what’s next?
The future? It’s exciting. We’re seeing more and more businesses put IP Voice on the network, and unlock the flexibility of collaboration and cloud-based applications. But the increasing use of cloud-based applications to support business-critical applications will increase the dependency on the network.

Get it right and you should see significant benefits, whereas getting it wrong could have serious long-term repercussions for your business.
Your notes.