

How Prepared Is Your Network for the Digital Future?

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Cloud technology has probably already gained a prominent place in your IT strategy — and you're not alone. IDC's *Enterprise Communications Survey 2019* confirmed cloud services as the leading technology investment priority among UK organisations. At the same time the migration to cloud is redefining the demands on the network. IDC research predicts data traffic volumes in the UK will double in the next four years, while average bandwidth levels will accelerate, as will requirements in terms of security, latency and flexibility. A question that often does not get asked at this stage is whether your network is capable of supporting this shift to the cloud. This is quite surprising, as the success of adopting new cloud technology in general typically depends on the performance of the underlying network.

Keeping Up with the Pace of Change

The reality is that most of today's wide area networks (WANs) were not built for a cloud-first world — they were designed when the corporate datacentre was still at the heart of the application landscape. To effectively support their digital aspirations, organisations will need a different calibre of network — a network that:

- Is much more flexible and agile, so that it can immediately respond to changing requirements
- Improves manageability, with better visibility into network and application performance
- Can easily scale for the growing requirements of tomorrow

All of these need to be delivered in an inherently secure manner. Realising that the WAN needs to change is increasingly hitting home — 95% of UK organisations expect to make major changes to the way their sites connect to the WAN in the next two years. Still, network transformation is proving a major headache for many, as they struggle with design and management of such changes and worry about the implications in terms of skill sets and budgets.

Key Ingredients Enabling Transformation

1. Virtual networks — technologies such as software-defined networking will play a central role in reshaping the network by making it more programmable and flexible.
2. Intelligence and automation tools — networks are becoming smarter. Use of analytics and automation of tasks will accelerate over time, reducing complexity and driving the optimisation of network and application performance.
3. Increasingly hybrid architectures — leveraging the growing availability of next-generation fixed and mobile access technologies, and combining different network types, such as public internet, private IP and Ethernet. Think about the superior bandwidth that fibre can bring and how that, for example, can drive video-rich collaboration between your employees. Or think about how 5G can improve your connectivity, adding resilience and

bandwidth to fixed broadband, and providing flexibility when you quickly need to bring a new or temporary location online.

SD-WAN Brings All These Elements Together

SD-WAN is a solution that builds on all these ingredients, enabling it to bring substantially higher levels of flexibility, manageability, scalability, cost effectiveness and security to the network. These benefits position SD-WAN at the heart of the transformation that many organisations will need to prepare their network for the digital future.

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