inmarsat

BESTPATH

How SD-WAN provides strategic advantage through rapid and consistent scalability

Optimised network and application performance across multiple locations

Introduction

It is perhaps testament to the can-do attitude of IT teams that business strategists often make assumptions about the feasibility of certain particularly challenging requests. For example, strategic growth plans frequently address IT as an afterthought, assuming network scalability will be straightforward. There's an expectation that the network will be able to support business expansion, so IT infrastructure doesn't always get the serious consideration it needs during project planning stages.

This can obviously result in bigger challenges further down the line.

Software-defined wide area networking (SD-WAN) is a practical way to bridge the gap between digital activities and physical business locations. With SD-WAN, you can be ready for future scalability challenges, and your colleagues and customers can enjoy uninterrupted reliable network and application performance.

Here, we'll explore a few of the ways in which SD-WAN can help your business evolve and meet key objectives.

Contents

Scalability via SD-WAN

Software-defined wide area networking (SD-WAN) is a virtual overlay which gives enterprises the freedom to route traffic over various providers, including broadband, 4G, 5G, and MPLS (multiprotocol label switching) connectivity links[1]. By configuring SD-WAN to prioritise your business-critical traffic and any services that need to run in real time, you can optimise efficiency and improve performance[2]. Popular applications such as Office 365 can take up significant bandwidth; automated network routing via SD-WAN will not only help optimise network and application performance in existing locations but will also help maintain performance levels while scaling up the business.

Innovations in predictive network intelligence are available to use with SD-WAN, identifying potential issues with network performance before they become a problem. For example, Cisco's ThousandEyes tool gives you the ability to resolve performance and connectivity issues inside and outside of your network quickly, thoroughly, and proactively to keep your whole environment running at peak performance[3].

Enhancing SD-WAN with security functionality such as Secure Access Service Edge (SASE), an integrated cloud service model defined by Gartner[4], creates a network environment that's flexible, scalable, and secure.
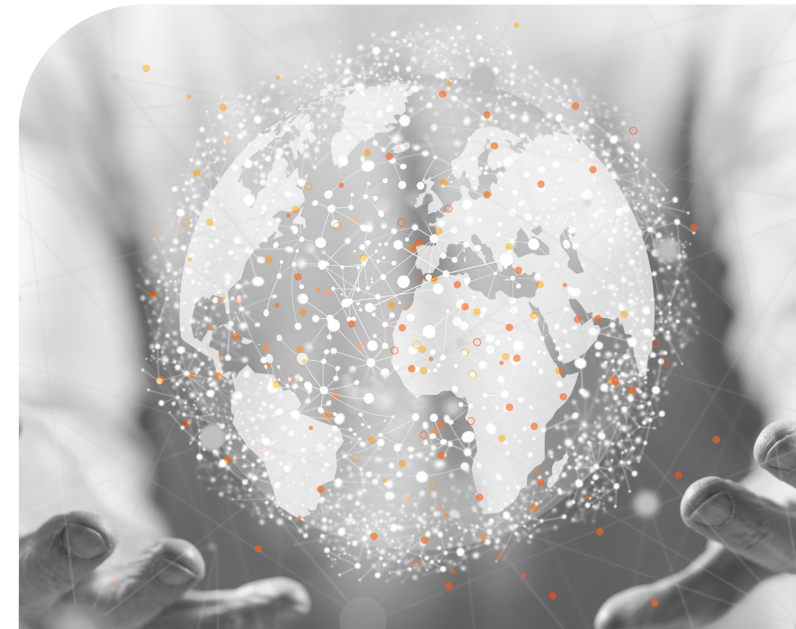
50% Gartner predict that **"50% of new SD-WAN purchases will be part of a single-vendor SASE offering"** by 2025[5.]
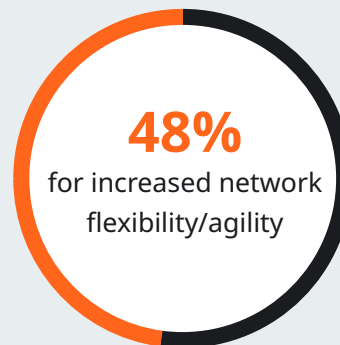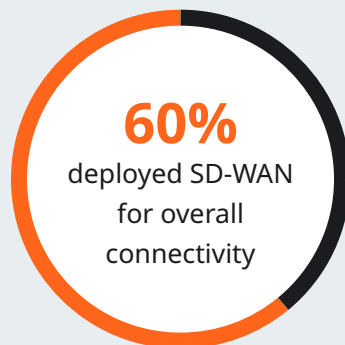
The rise in popularity of SD-WAN

Gartner predicted, even before the acceleration in digital transformations sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic, that 60% of enterprises would have implemented SD-WAN by the close of 20231.

In 2022, they estimated that the top 10 SD-WAN vendors, which include Cisco, Fortinet, and VMware, comprised >80% of the market[3].

The flexible and seamlessly scalable SD-WAN technology creates competitive differentiation from companies using older network solutions[6].

Network provider Orange reported[1] that in Hong Kong:

60%
deployed SD-WAN for overall connectivity

48%
for increased network flexibility/agility

48%
for reduced costs

Six key objectives that SD-WAN can help you achieve:

1. Spin up new locations

Because SD-WAN is a cloud-like overlay, rather than a fixed physical entity like a solely MPLS solution, it enables businesses to access their network applications quickly from new physical locations. These could include new branches, new or refurbished buildings on an existing site, and remote workplaces such as pop-up or home office environments. Even when combined with security measures such as Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA)[4], you can enjoy quick and simple network access, confident that security and privacy are not being compromised.

2. Successful mergers and acquisitions

A big challenge of mergers and acquisitions is how to integrate the different infrastructures from previously discrete organisations. When SD-WAN is part of your solution, it's far quicker to combine and optimise IT solutions safely and securely, applying security policy centrally. Access to different parts of the combined infrastructure can be restricted using various options, such as security device-chaining, ensuring data privacy is adhered to and valuable data kept secure until fully integrated, regardless of legacy infrastructure.

3. Onboarding innovative new IT solutions and applications

Because SD-WAN facilitates simple monitoring and better performance of networks and applications6, enhancing your IT solution portfolio is quick and cost-effective. Training for employees, whether on-prem or remote working, can be set up easily across a range of devices for swift onboarding. This gives your business the opportunity to be more flexible and makes it easier to optimise innovative solutions and adopt new applications with low risk.

4. Onboarding new products and services

When introducing products or services to employees and potential users, it's essential to have an onboarding strategy to ensure they understand the value of your offering. With SD-WAN, it's simple to set up onboarding resources that are effective and responsive—and do not compromise your network security. Monitoring their effectiveness enables you to see how particular products and resources are being received, and to make amendments as necessary to improve usage and sales.

5. Adapting to volatile business environments

When you want the flexibility to implement strategic directives fast, with rapid scalability and swift speed to market, having the right infrastructure in place is key. With an SD-WAN based solution, overheads such as expensive routing and hardware costs are reduced2, which means your business is not tied to specific locations by previous IT investment, and you can expand or contract as desired. SD-WAN can help you unlock your organisation's potential with a network solution that evolves in line with your strategic plans.
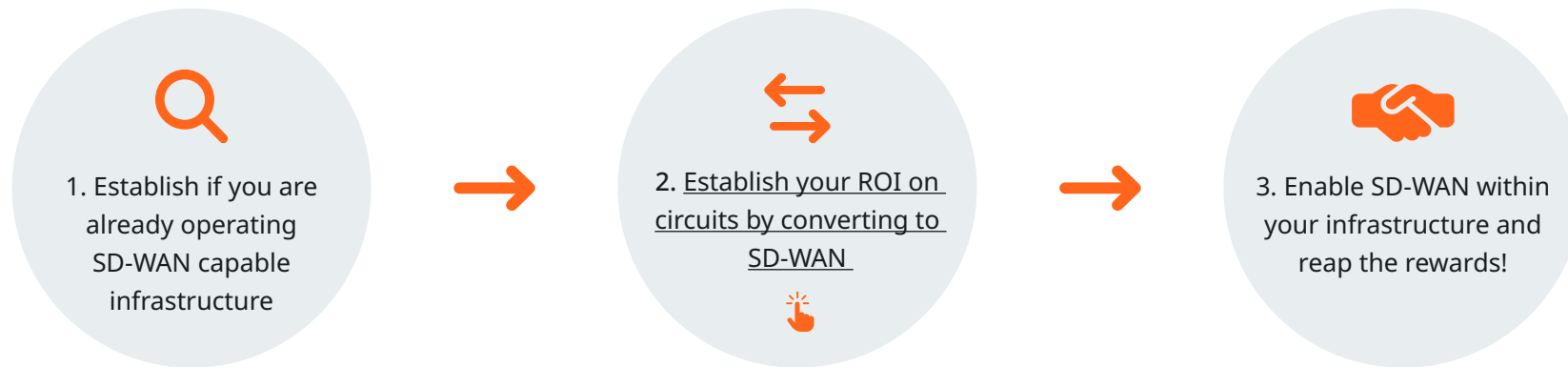
6. Reach new customers

When you identify a cluster of potential new customers a long way from your existing physical sites, the question is how best to service them. To get new physical premises off the ground takes time. But with SD-WAN, its inherent scalability means your team can easily and quickly tap into your existing network once the new site is operational—and if the opportunity is very time-critical, you'll already have the infrastructure in place to operate from a temporary local office while you wait for the longer-term more permanent venue to be completed. So, you can reach new customers as and where they happen to be.

Forrester reports that "while **74%** of firms say they want to be "data driven", only **29%** say they are good at connecting analytics to action."[7]

Three Steps to consistent scalability with SD-WAN

1. Establish if you are already operating SD-WAN capable infrastructure

→

2. Establish your ROI on circuits by converting to SD-WAN

→

3. Enable SD-WAN within your infrastructure and reap the rewards!

Contact BestPath today to learn how our expert team can get you up to speed with your new secure scalable network solution.

We're BestPath. Combining curiosity with innovation we deliver agile, secure and trusted network infrastructures that enable organisations to deliver exceptional services and outstanding customer experiences.

Let's chat about how we can do just that, for you.   *info@bestpath.io*

References

[1] **Yick, Edmund (2022). SD-WAN in Hong Kong: supporting and scaling your business securely post-COVID-19. Orange Business Services, 16 February 2022.**
https://www.orange-business.com/en/blogs/sd-wan-hong-kong-supporting-and-scaling-your-business-securely-post-covid-19

[2] **Grillo, Patrick & Waxer, Cindy (2019). SD-WAN Benefits: 5 Business Advantages of SD-WAN. Fortinet, 05 August 2019.**
https://www.fortinet.com/blog/industry-trends/business-advantages-sdwan

[3] **King, Julia (2022). Top SD-WAN Stories of 2022. SDxCentral, 27 December 2022.**
https://www.sdxcentral.com/articles/analysis/top-sd-wan-stories-of-2022/2022/12/

[4] **Vance, Jeff (2022). What is SASE? A cloud service that marries SD-WAN with security. Network World, 12 December 2022.**
https://www.networkworld.com/article/3574014/what-is-sase-a-cloud-service-that-marries-sd-wan-with-security.html

[5] **Lerner, Andrew (2022). Single-Vendor SASE. Gartner Blog post, 30 September 2022.**
https://blogs.gartner.com/andrew-lerner/2022/09/30/single-vendor-sase/

[6] **Guo, Ken (2020). Best Practices for Scaling a Global SD-WAN Network. VMware, 04 June 2020.**
https://blogs.vmware.com/sase/2020/06/04/best-practices-for-scaling-a-global-sd-wan-network/

[7] **Hopkins, Brian (2016). Think You Want to be "Data-Driven"? Insight is the New Data. Forrester, 09 March 2016.**
https://www.forrester.com/blogs/16-03-09-think_you_want_to_be_data_driven_insight_is_the_new_data/

[8] **Chervek, Emma (2022). Gartner Says Single-Vendor SASE Set to Surge. SDx Central, 09 December 2022.**
https://www.sdxcentral.com/articles/news/gartner-says-single-vendor-sase-set-to-surge/2022/12/