

16 KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENTERPRISES BUYING SD-WAN

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making the decision.

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What to Consider When Purchasing SD-WAN

If your SD-WAN challenges derive from your SD-WAN vendor, you may need to consider a new provider. Here are some criteria to look for in an SD-WAN vendor:

- **100% SLAs:** Vendors who cannot guarantee a 100% uptime are likely not reliable.
- **Direct Carrier Relationships:** If your vendor uses too many 3rd party underlying network providers to orchestrate your SD-WAN, your solution will likely be too many layers deep to get quick resolution.
- **SNMP Monitoring:** Most SD-WAN solutions lack SNMP visibility, making it difficult to troubleshoot and predict challenges.
- **Billing:** Managing your SD-WAN is hard enough, but coordinating billing across multiple vendors, locations, and currencies can overwhelm your accounting department. Your SD-WAN provider should not only own their own billing system, but provide custom local billing in the local currency. In addition, SD-WAN usage should be calculated based on the average bandwidth rather than total bandwidth usage.
- **Professional Implementation:** Most IT departments will deploy an SD-WAN solution a few times in their lifetime. Attempting to deploy SD-WAN on your own will not only lead to possible failures down the road, but consume your internal resources. SD-WAN vendors like CommandLink deploy networks across the globe every day and can not only carry the burden, but ensure proper deployments in a timely manner. Note, if your SD-WAN vendor is managing the implementation on a spreadsheet, you probably need to look for a new vendor.

- **Global Hardware Fulfillment:** If you experience a hardware failure on the other side of the globe, you will need a vendor who can supply and resolve hardware failures quickly.
- **Deployment Options:** Determine whether you want an on-premises, cloud-based, or hybrid SD-WAN solution. Each option has its own advantages and considerations, such as control, security, and scalability.
- **Scalability and Flexibility:** Assess whether the SD-WAN solution can easily accommodate your organization's current and future network needs. Consider factors such as the ability to add new branches, support remote workers, integrate with cloud services, and handle increased bandwidth requirements.
- **Security Features:** Evaluate the security capabilities of the SD-WAN solution. Look for features such as encryption, firewalling, threat detection, and secure connectivity options. Consider whether the solution integrates with your existing security infrastructure or provides its own comprehensive security functionalities. Keep in mind any compliance and regulation requirements you have.
- **Performance Optimization:** Determine how the SD-WAN solution handles network traffic and optimizes application performance. Look for features such as intelligent traffic routing, quality of service (QoS) controls, and application-aware routing to ensure efficient and reliable delivery of critical applications.
- **Management and Orchestration:** Consider the ease of management and administration offered by the SD-WAN solution. Look for centralized management capabilities, intuitive user interfaces, and automation features that simplify network configuration, monitoring, and troubleshooting tasks. For example, within the Command|Link ITSM, you can analyze and control bandwidth traffic by application, port, IP, and or protocol. Enable real-time, dynamic, and pre-scheduled bandwidth modifications as often as you like.

- **Support Integration:** Because SD-WAN is part of a larger architecture, it's important to integrate a support team (NOC+SOC) that has full access to internet, network, security, and hardware inventory and telemetry.
- **Integration with Existing Infrastructure:** Assess how well the SD-WAN solution integrates with your current network infrastructure, including routers, switches, firewalls, and other networking components. Compatibility and interoperability with your existing hardware and software are crucial to ensure a smooth transition and minimize disruptions.
- **Vendor Reputation and Support:** Research the reputation and track record of the SD-WAN solution provider. Evaluate their experience in delivering SD-WAN solutions, customer reviews, and the level of technical support they offer. Consider factors such as service-level agreements (SLAs), support availability, and the vendor's commitment to ongoing product development and updates.
- **Cost Considerations:** Evaluate the total cost of ownership (TCO) of the SD-WAN solution. Consider factors such as hardware costs, licensing fees, implementation expenses, ongoing maintenance, and any additional network connectivity requirements. Compare pricing models and ensure that the solution provides a good balance between features, performance, and cost-effectiveness.
- **Proof of Concept (PoC):** Consider conducting a proof of concept to test the SD-WAN solution in a real-world environment. This allows you to assess its performance, compatibility, and ease of use before making a full-scale deployment commitment.



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