IDC ANALYZE THE FUTURE

IDC WAN Readiness

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Sponsored by NTT Communications

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for completing IDC's Next Generation WAN Advisor, sponsored by NTT Communications. As organizations implement digital transformation strategies they are faced with accelerating network requirements and the need for a network that supports the business outcomes they are aiming to achieve. As such digital transformation should go hand in hand with network evolution.

IDC has developed the Next Generation WAN Advisor to help organizations assess the state of their WAN, and benchmark this performance against their peers. This interactive self-assessment tool is backed up by independent end-user research and IDC's in depth understanding of this market. The research draws upon input from 300 network experts and decision makers to understand how advanced different organizations are in terms of their WAN investment and approach.

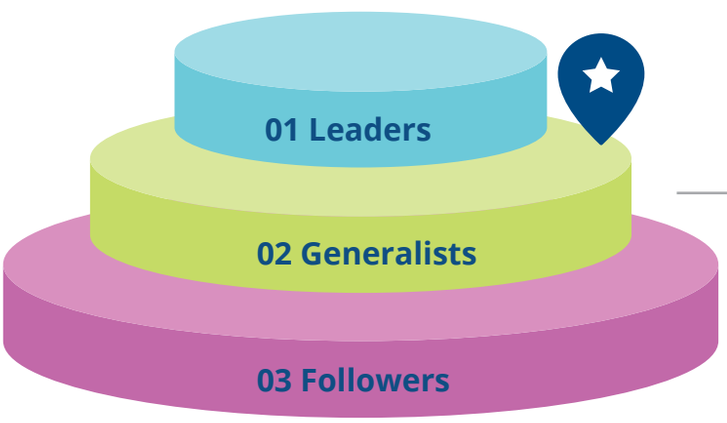
IDC has built a comparison framework in which individual responses from the survey are scored to group organizations into 3 levels of WAN maturity, based on their approach to:

- **WAN Infrastructure** - addressing usage and strategy with regards to connectivity and SD-WAN
- **WAN Intelligence** - covering usage of data and analytics to improve the performance of network and applications
- **WAN Operations** - focusing on operational tasks such as configuration and security policy management

Based on your responses, this report provides you with a benchmark of your organization's WAN. It gives essential and tailored guidance to help you prepare for the requirements of tomorrow and plot your course to a Next Generation WAN: a network that delivers the scalability, flexibility, manageability, cost effectiveness and security that your organization needs to drive digital transformation.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Organizations can only reap the full benefits of digital transformation if this goes hand in hand with an evolution of their WAN. IDC has created the Next Generation WAN Advisor to help organizations assess the readiness of their WAN for the digital future. It scores organizations on their approach to WAN infrastructure, intelligence and operations. Based on a survey of 300 network influencers and decision makers we class organizations into three levels of maturity: **Followers**, **Generalists** and **Leaders**. Few organizations at the top end of the curve, with the majority considered as WAN Generalists.

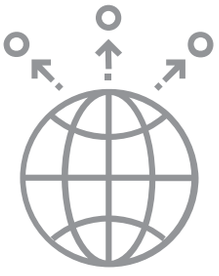


YOUR POSITION
GENERALIST

Based on your responses to IDC's Next Generation WAN Advisor, your organization has been positioned as a WAN Generalist (Level 2 of 3), which means your organization is generally inline with its peers.

These results indicate that there is plenty of room for improvement for most organizations when it comes to their WAN. To turn your WAN into a driver of digital transformation, you should aspire to outperform your peers and progress on the maturity ladder.

WAN INFRASTRUCTURE



Network requirements are accelerating as organizations are embracing digital transformation. At the same time the strategic importance of the WAN is increasing, as the business becomes more and more reliant upon it. There are a number of building blocks that can help improve the WAN infrastructure to address these requirements. These include hybrid architectures, local Internet break-outs, cloud connectivity and SD-WAN.

Based on your responses, your organization is in line with its peers when it comes to WAN infrastructure capabilities, which is consistent with its overall performance as a WAN Generalist.

You mostly buy WAN infrastructure on an ad-hoc basis, which means this is an area to focus on given your overall status of WAN Generalist. The increasing strategic importance of the WAN should be reflected in your approach to buying WAN solutions. You should develop a long term technology roadmap for your WAN infrastructure and purchase consistently. This will help you improve performance, interoperability and cost effectiveness.

SD-WAN has emerged as one of the key building blocks of the network of the future, with the promise of improved network and application performance and visibility, particularly in a cloud environment. At the same time it aims to drive flexibility, while providing cost effective bandwidth and reducing complexity. You are not yet deploying SD-WAN, which means you are lagging behind given your overall rating of WAN Generalist. You should start exploring today what SD-WAN is about and assess what benefits it may or may not bring to your business.

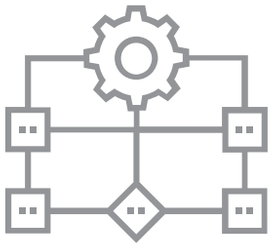
WAN INTELLIGENCE

Network intelligence can play a key role to optimize the network and to ensure application performance expectations are met. Intelligent services like WAN optimization, application performance management, real time monitoring and replay functionality can drive visibility into network and application and significantly improve performance.

Based on your responses, your organization is in line withits peers when it comes to the use of Network Intelligence, which is consistent with its overall ranking as a WAN Generalist.

You have a reactive stance to network optimization. You are only triggered into action by device notifications. To catch up with other WAN generalist, you should pursue a more proactive and structural approach to ensure network performance and cost effectiveness keep up with growing demands. Explore network intelligence and analytics solutions that can help you understand and optimize network and application performance.

At the same time you manually configure QoS to prioritize traffic. This is more advanced than many other WAN Generalists and certainly improves performance for key applications. SLAs for application performance and even user experience should be your next objective, and automatically adaptable networks can help you meet them.



WAN OPERATIONS

As organizations progress in the digital era the business demands they place on their networks are typically accelerating. They want their networks to empower innovation, increase agility, improve efficiency and drive competitive differentiation, but these networks have often become too complex from an operational perspective to deliver this easily. Task like connecting new sites, provisioning new functions, updating policies or connecting partners or cloud providers can prove quite challenging and stand in the way of delivering the desired business outcome.

Based on your responses, your organization is behind its peers when it comes to WAN operations, which means this area is less developed than its overall ranking as a WAN Generalist suggests.

WAN management is mostly automated, but there are still some manual tasks left. This puts you at the forefront of the WAN Generalists in this space. To stay ahead, you should explore how these can tasks be automated and start thinking beyond that. Integrating automation with policies and intelligence will put you on the road toward self-optimizing network orchestration.

Security plays a critical role in WAN strategy and operations. It is seen as the #1 WAN challenge and the vast majority of companies indicate they are improving network security in response to accelerating requirements. This makes managing security an increasingly important part of WAN operations. You manage your WAN security policy on a device by device basis, which can be quite a strain on your resources. It also positions you well behind most other WAN generalists in this aspect. You should address this in a more centralized and automated manner, which allow you to drive efficiency and consistency, speed up update cycles and reduce risk.

CONCLUSION

Digital transformation, with cloud at its heart, is changing the networking paradigm and driving requirements to unprecedented heights. The WAN needs to change to cope with these requirements and enable organizations to reap the full benefits of digital transformation. Organizations will need networks that provide more flexibility, manageability, scalability, cost effectiveness and security.

Essential Guidance

1. You should focus on further developing a strategic roadmap for the evolution of your WAN. Assess the current status of your network, and where you want it to be in the future. Prepare a gradual migration path that leverages the existing infrastructure where possible. Hybrid architectures, cloud connectivity, local Internet break-outs and network virtualization should feature prominently on this roadmap.

2. From an operational perspective the WAN is increasingly hampered by complexity, inefficiency and tedious processes which can make everyday tasks such as adding sites, updating policies or connecting to cloud services a real struggle. This prevents the network from delivering the desired business outcomes, like gaining agility, increasing productivity, and improving differentiation. Explore how centralization and automation can help you streamline your WAN operations.

3. SD-WAN has emerged as a solution that can integrate much of the above. The promise of SD-WAN is to deliver improved network and application performance, availability and visibility, particularly in a cloud environment, driving flexibility, while providing cost effective bandwidth and reducing complexity. Build on your early deployments of SD-WAN, and start plotting a roadmap toward a more widespread use of network virtualization that can help you reap the benefits in terms of flexibility and efficiency