Summary

Many I&O leaders are dissatisfied with traditional providers’ U.S. branch office remote access WAN solutions. To support digital business initiatives, they should seek out innovative offers from the alternative providers described in this research. Alternative access provider services can simplify WAN operations and improve performance for branch office designs by leveraging access agnostic services, such as SD-WAN for both private and public network services. Many alternative access providers offer suites of services that provide strong alternatives to traditional provider offers, pricing, billing and support.

SD-WAN Will Impact Branch Sites

SD-WAN’s primary use case is the ability to perform policy-based application path selection in real time over any access network type as a router replacement solution. It is built from the ground up for supporting cloud and Internet of Things (IoT) applications. This flexibility and access network optimization provides lower costs for higher bandwidth speeds and improved performance with simplified management complexity. Further, since SD-WAN is most commonly deployed over multiple access links, network resiliency and performance are improved for the remote site. Multiple access options exist for enterprises, including a combination of internet, private (MPLS), wireless/4G/LTE over legacy (TDM) or Ethernet access. Both SD-WAN and network function virtualization (NFV) services are rapidly evolving, and clients charged with improving branch office performance must make these key components of their remote access network going forward (see “Technology Overview for SD-WAN”).

Market Recommendations

As enterprises develop their emerging requirements for their branch offices, many will find themselves opting for their incumbent providers, which limits their range of options. Enterprise clients tell us that larger providers have neglected the needs of the branch office; this opens the door for evaluation of nontraditional provider offers that can improve both performance and price, and potentially increase network uptime.

In their next branch office network renewal/buying cycle, enterprises should explore alternative access providers to take full advantage of innovations in service offers and support. Enterprises should look at SD-WAN/NFV solutions as part of a comprehensive WAN architecture design, and make direct internet access a key requirement for primary or augmented access at the branch. Gartner also recommends conducting standard provider viability research and reference checks before engaging in any service provider agreement.

Gartner Alternative WAN Solution Ranking

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