Choosing the Right Network Service Provider for Your Global Enterprise

FROST *&* SULLIVAN

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To compete in today's technology-driven global economy, businesses must transform their operations. They must become more agile, to quickly respond to market shifts. They must become more responsive, to attract and serve customers. They must become more collaborative, sharing data with employees, partners, and suppliers to harness the best, most innovative ideas.

Key to achieving their goals is the cloud. By hosting corporate applications in the cloud, businesses decrease their reliance on capital-intensive private data centers, allowing them to deliver IT resources consistently, securely, and cost-effectively to locations and constituents wherever they are. The cloud offers scalable compute and storage capacity, available on-demand, with pay-per-use pricing structures.

However, partnering with leading cloud service providers is not enough to ensure a successful cloud strategy. Businesses must ensure that all their stakeholders worldwide (customers, partners, suppliers, and employees) are connected with one another and with the cloud service providers. The choice of a global network service provider is essential to meeting requirements for secure, reliable, high-performance connectivity to all business locations.

In this paper, we discuss the needs of multinational enterprises in supporting their cloud strategies. We offer recommendations for selecting a global service provider. Finally, we consider how GTT can be a strong option when choosing network services to support a global, cloud-reliant business.

WHY CLOUD?

In recent years, IT organizations are shifting their roles from stewards of company technology assets to strategic enablers of corporate business goals. As such, IT leaders are decreasing their dependence on inflexible infrastructure investments within the corporate data center; and instead, turning more often to the budget-friendly, agile cloud. Global enterprises cite several key benefits as drivers for adopting cloud-based services. According to a Frost & Sullivan global survey, tactical, IT-focused benefits include cost reduction (cited by 41% of respondents) and ability to predictably manage IT resources (cited by 42%).[1] Strategic drivers also rated high: 45% of businesses say the cloud enables their business to respond more quickly to competitive moves; and 44% believe the cloud helps align IT responsiveness with business agility needs.

In moving applications and services to the cloud, most businesses find that they are more easily able to scale services to meet business needs, without paying for more services, infrastructure, or bandwidth than is necessary. With cloud computing, costs are aligned with usage.

Additionally, the cloud enables IT to more readily meet business needs for agility. Self-servicing and infrastructure automation reduce provisioning time to deploy or scale applications or services: what used to take days or weeks can be achieved in a matter of minutes or hours.

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[1] 2014 Frost & Sullivan Global Cloud Survey

Critical to successful cloud implementations is the network used to reach cloud-based services. Lack of reliable network connectivity to cloud data centers is a restraint to cloud adoption, cited by 58% of IT decision-makers surveyed by Frost & Sullivan. So, what do enterprises require of their network service providers, and what should they be seeking in a network service provider that can help them meet their enterprise business goals?

FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN CHOOSING GLOBAL NETWORK PROVIDERS: WHAT YOUR BUSINESS REALLY NEEDS

Modern business is an around-the-clock proposition. Better connectivity, enhanced global transport capabilities, and increasingly interdependent economic systems have led to greater competition, with enterprises competing for a finite market of potential customers.

For enterprises, globalization drives a need for reliable, consistent, worldwide network connectivity to reach offices in a variety of locations—including locations outside of major metro areas—as well as anywhere their cloud providers have points of presence (PoPs).

When searching for network services for your multinational business, there are several factors to consider.

Network Reach

The most important criterion is global reach, specifically, a provider that will consistently and reliably get to anywhere your customers, employees, and partners are now, or may be in the future. But "reach" means different things to different providers. Some own their own fiber in limited geographies, handing off the traffic outside major metro areas to local providers. Unless such hand-offs are governed by strict availability and performance guarantees, your traffic may be subject to latency and performance issues.

In contrast, a provider that negotiates strong partnerships with local providers is able to create a comprehensive network with consistent performance. In the partnership model, the provider that signs the customer contract controls the entire network through its partnerships, providing customers with a single point of contact for network-related needs.

Connection to the Top Cloud Service Providers in the World

In addition, enterprises benefit when their network providers are co-located in the top data centers of the world, with the leading cloud service providers. This enables them to easily connect to any cloud service provider by simply adding another connection to the network.

Ease of Business Dealings

Every global business is unique, with needs varying based on industry, geographies, business strategy, and workloads. To ensure optimal network services that fit with your business cloud strategy, you will need to work with a provider that is flexible enough to listen to your needs and configure the right solution.

Beware of network service providers that require their customers to follow stringent procurement and onboarding processes. Services are not always flexible or able to be customized to meet a business's specific needs. Often, more nimble, agile, and customer-focused network service providers are able—and willing—to customize services, processes, or support to meet the customer's needs more fully.

[2] 2015 Frost & Sullivan Cloud User Survey

The Managed Services You Need to Run Your Global Operations

As the pace and complexity of business accelerate, companies increasingly turn to third-party experts for managed services. Managed services represent a partnership, in which the partner takes responsibility for operating the service on behalf of the business. An expert managed services provider provides a full range of functions, including designing, procuring, implementing, managing, maintaining, and monitoring the solution. Relieved of management responsibilities, the internal IT or network team can focus on higher business priorities, while the provider takes responsibility for optimal function of the service being managed.

While many telco providers offer some managed service capabilities, you will need to be sure that your provider offers the services you need today, as well as those you may need in the future. Be aware that such services are not always as global as the network itself. Some providers only offer or fully support managed services in specific geographic regions. This can leave gaps for global businesses that wish to leverage managed services across regions unsupported by the telco provider.

Multilayer Network Security

To ensure a consistent, secure cloud environment, it is important to work with a network provider that provides a fully managed, multilayered security offering. Security should protect not only the actual fiber over which data is transported, but also the routers and other network equipment, whether located in the cloud or on the customer premises. Security measures alone are not enough: providers should monitor network traffic around the clock to proactively identify and thwart threats to network traffic.

Additionally, compliance should be considered for regulated businesses. Some providers offer security as a managed option, where the provider offers its expertise to configure network security features, and then monitors the network on an ongoing basis to ensure the security of data flowing over the network. Such providers may also ensure compliance with specific industry regulations, and should be able to provide customers with reporting to prove to governing bodies that the business data that flows over and through the network is compliant.

Factors to Consider in Choosing Global Network Providers: What Your Business Does Not Need

Just as there are criteria that most businesses require when looking for a global network service provider, there are also things to be wary of when evaluating network service providers. Keep in mind that some providers will have attention split across a variety of competing services or business units. As such, the network may be subordinate to newer technologies when it comes to investments or resource allocation. Thus, when assessing providers, be cautious about those that tout products or features that you don't need, such as:

- A growing list of ancillary services, like mobility, hosting, and software-as-a-service (SaaS). This can indicate that the company is more interested in chasing the next new technology market than supporting the network.

- A focus on consumer or small businesses, whose needs are likely quite different from that of your multinational enterprise.

- A company that maintains hundreds of thousands or even millions of customers. You don't want to be lost in the crowd.

GTT OFFERS VALUE FOR YOUR CLOUD-ENABLED ENTERPRISE

GTT is a global cloud networking provider that can tailor its extensive portfolio of offerings to suit an enterprise's needs. To support a global business operation, the company offers a number of service benefits.

Global Reach

GTT offers worldwide reach with more than 250 points of presence (PoPs) in the top data centers of the world, and does business in more than 100 countries. In addition to its own network, GTT negotiates partnerships with local providers, both within and outside of major metro areas. This allows a business to get applications or data closer to its own sites—which, in turn, enhances performance and speed.

Because the GTT network is present in many of the leading colocation and interconnect facilities, it can provide direct connections to most of the world's leading cloud service providers. This is another factor that can eliminate network latency and improve application performance.

Ease of Doing Business

GTT has identified seven areas of focus in which it has honed its ability to support customers in a simple and flexible way that enhances customers' experiences.

- **Quoting** – GTT works with customers to understand their business needs, and quotes the right level of services to fit their business requirements. GTT sales teams are trained to understand the customer need; offer the appropriate services, which can include multiple technologies, access types, and management solutions; and then work with the customer to either optimize or add capacity, as business needs dictate.

- **Contract Negotiation** – GTT negotiates quickly and in a flexible manner to ensure that contracted services meet their business requirements. GTT also offers strong service level agreements (SLAs) within its contracts.

- **Service Delivery** – GTT has developed streamlined onboarding processes that ensure customers activate services on its network in a rapid and secure manner. GTT's global service delivery team is responsible for service implementation for client locations anywhere in the world. Each client is assigned a project manager who leads and oversees the service delivery process. The company reports that the provisioning process often takes less time to coordinate and complete than the process used by other industry providers.

- **Technical Support** – GTT provides customers with high-touch technical support, backed by global network operations centers (GNOCs). GTT's GNOCs are located in Europe and North America, and are staffed around the clock with technical staff trained to resolve customer service issues. Each GNOC acts as a center of excellence for a particular GTT service type, and all the centers work together to resolve any technical issue related to any GTT service. On a daily basis, the GTT GNOCs proactively:

  - ◊ Monitor operations of all backbone links and network devices

  - ◊ Ensure continuous operation of GTT's support servers and services

  - ◊ Troubleshoot all network-related problems

Beyond typical NOC capabilities, GTT also operates several security network operations centers (SOCs) staffed with security experts. GTT reports that its team of security experts monitors and manages more than 4.3 million client events per hour. Both network operations centers and security operations centers monitor and protect clients' networks 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

- **Flexible Billing and Service Delivery Options** – For its cloud networking products, GTT offers a variety of billing options. These include committed data rate billing, for predictable traffic levels; as well as tiered, burstable, and aggregate committed data rate (ACDR) options for businesses that have unpredictable traffic or that desire truly pay-as-you-go pricing.

- **Ongoing Customer Support** – GTT prides itself on delivering services with simplicity, speed, and agility. Each GTT customer is assigned an account manager or an account team to ensure client satisfaction. The account manager or account team assists clients with quotes for new services, provides pre-sales technical support, facilitates communications between service delivery, provides global network operations support and billing, manages supplier relations, and handles moves, adds, or changes to service.

- **Client portal** – GTT's EtherVision client portal provides features and functions to help clients manage their services with GTT, including:

    ◊   A dashboard for overall service health

    ◊   Real-time monitoring and alerts

    ◊   Management for

    - Location health

    - Support ticketing

    - New service quoting

    - Ordering

    - Service inventory

    - IP Address Requests

    - Billing Management

Network Services

As a global Tier 1 Internet Service Provider, GTT offers customers a strong core of IP network services that includes IP transit, dedicated Internet access, and broadband connectivity to its 250 PoPs around the world.

In addition to IP, the company offers EtherCloud® private networking services, including Ethernet, VPLS, and multi-protocol label switching (MPLS). GTT EtherCloud® offers customers scalable, secure connectivity with low latency and high application performance. The service is able to accommodate several configurations, including point-to-point, point-to-multipoint, and multipoint (any-to-any), with speeds from 10 megabits per second (Mbps) to 100 gigabits (Gbps) per port.

Managed Services Capabilities

In addition to its network services, GTT offers a comprehensive managed services portfolio. The GTT managed services portfolio encompasses infrastructure, network, and security to assist customers with knowledgeable, customized services that supplement a business' in-house IT staff. Managed offers from GTT include:

- **Managed Customer Premises Equipment (CPE)** – With this offer, GTT manages a customer's network, routers, network switches, and servers to ensure optimal function and proactive addressing of issues that arise. The offer also includes managed Wi-Fi service for business locations.

- **Multilayered Managed Security** – GTT will manage a customer's cloud and premises-based services, providing security measures and monitoring from the network to the core. The company can proactively identify and mitigate network threats to protect a customer's data, as well as ensuring PCI compliance for online merchant businesses. The company is also PCI/CISP compliant.

- **Managed Secure Access** – The GTT managed secure access offer provides businesses with secure network access through the public Internet, from any device that the business wishes to deploy— whether the endpoint is a laptop in a remote worker location, a mobile device used by road warriors, devices at a partner location, or from within a corporate office. The company currently manages approximately 650,000 users and 16 billion connections per month.

Through its managed offers, GTT is focused on ensuring that customers get the right support to meet their networking needs, while guaranteeing the security of the data transported over the network.

THE LAST WORD

In a digital economy, enterprises rely on global network services to run their cloud-enabled business. You need a network service provider that allows you to connect to all your business locations, data centers, and cloud partners anywhere in the world. A provider that will ensure the reliability, security, and performance you need. A provider that will treat you like the unique business you are. A provider like GTT.

Don't leave your multinational business to just any service provider. Choose a global service provider that can help you meet business goals both today and in the future.

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