

# Testing SD-WAN Service Is the Easy Part

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Initial deployments lead enterprises to realize the value of a fully managed SD-WAN solution

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## Summary

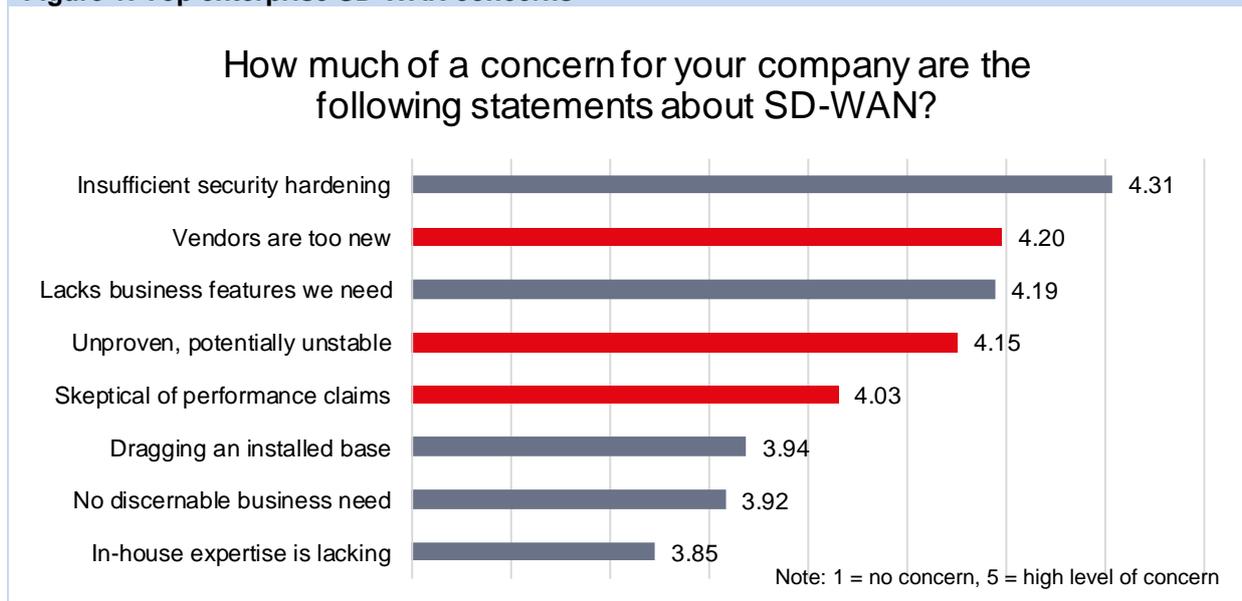
### In brief

Enterprises today have many options for the testing and early deployment of SD-WAN services, including free trial programs offered by vendors or through service providers. Testing SD-WAN with a few sites is the easy part of attaining some initial knowledge about SD-WAN service. Deploying and monitoring SD-WAN service in a large-scale production environment is where many enterprises realize the value a managed SD-WAN service brings.

### Ovum view

Many vendors and service providers are encouraging the market to try out SD-WAN technology. Their emphasis is on promoting the customer's first experience with SD-WAN, while less attention is paid to scaling, monitoring, and managing SD-WAN services for the long term. Ovum has seen many pilots and proofs of concept with SD-WAN technology in the past several years. Ovum's survey below highlights the major concerns enterprises have with SD-WAN. Few enterprises want to spend their precious IT resources on the large-scale deployment, onboarding, fine-tuning, and monitoring required for a successful SD-WAN service environment. To address these concerns, most enterprises eventually turn to an experienced network service provider for their larger deployments. A provider of a managed SD-WAN service can more effectively address the major concerns listed below and limit the burden on in-house IT resources.

**Figure 1: Top enterprise SD-WAN concerns**



Source: Ovum

### Key takeaways

- Testing SD-WAN with a few sites is relatively easy to deploy, and most enterprises can support any vendor or provider for a small-scale trial.

- Many enterprises are sufficiently resourced to manage small deployments but eventually see the value of a managed service (either fully or partially) for the full-scale deployment and day-to-day management and configuration of SD-WAN services.
- Many enterprises encounter complexity in inventory assessment, updating required software, and maintaining on-site equipment, particularly across the geographic spread of large deployments.
- Enterprises recognize that the transition of the network services underlying the SD-WAN are a critical and complex element of a successful full-scale deployment and see value in having a network service provider who can manage that transition end-to-end.
- Enterprises perceive considerable value in leveraging network service providers as trusted advisors to address their SD-WAN concerns, including security risks.
- Providers of managed SD-WAN services are maturing, have best practices available, and are stable enough for serious evaluation.

## Moving from testing to deployment

### Early trials start small and simple

During the early test phase, enterprises can take advantage of the available trial programs, managing an SD-WAN deployment with a few internal resources. Many enterprises eventually understand that small-scale trials can be quickly stood up but do not fully represent their production environment. With most trials lasting only a few months, there is no long-term network performance data available for a true comparative assessment of the impact of full-scale deployment and long-term monitoring of the customer's critical applications. Ovum's research shows that more than two-thirds of enterprises are interested in trials of SD-WAN service, but less than one-third of enterprises are ready to consider moving to full-production of SD-WAN.

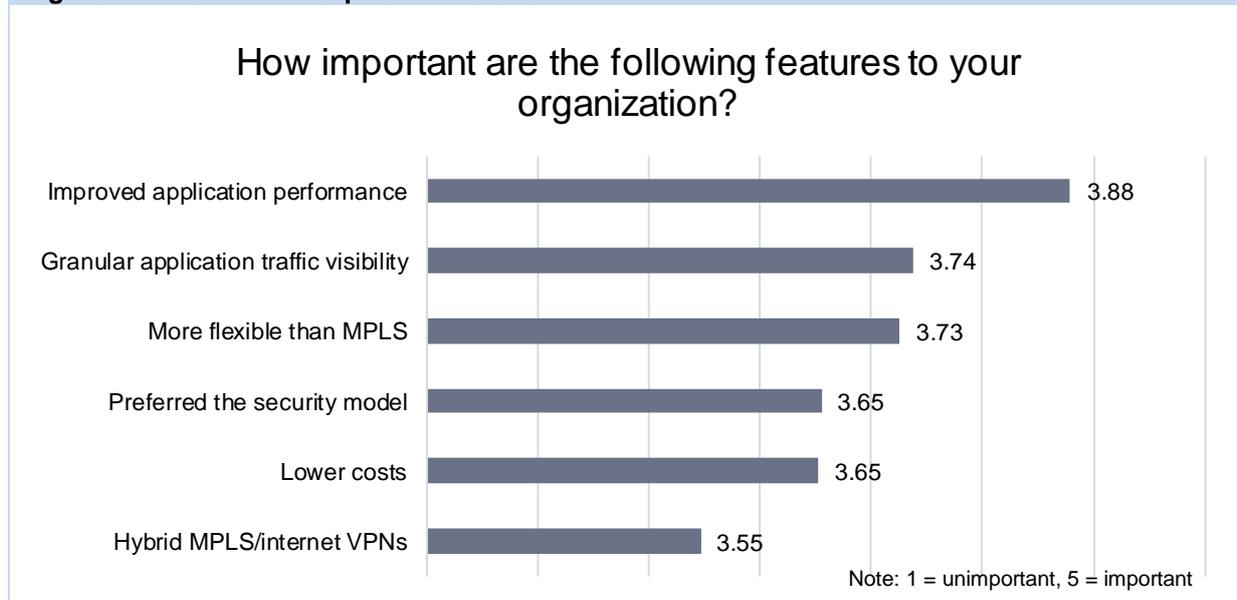
### Production environments are larger, dynamic, and more complex

Enterprises soon realize that on a large scale, deployment of SD-WAN service requires much more planning, design, monitoring, and management for a successful implementation. The support of this larger, more complex deployment will require increased staffing and effort in every facet beyond the installation. Figure 2 shows that application performance and granular visibility have emerged as the top value drivers of SD-WAN. This reflects a shift from the early days of SD-WAN, when Ovum saw cost as the primary value driver. Security has also grown in importance for SD-WAN. Network-savvy managed service providers integrate security into their managed SD-WAN offers.

Although there has been a major focus on simplifying CPE with SD-WAN technology options, enterprises still need to navigate the overall installation, monitoring, and repair of CPE in an SD-WAN production environment. The replacement of CPE must be managed properly, and this has traditionally been one of the strong motivations for most enterprises to use managed service providers. Even some of the larger do-it-yourself enterprises eventually realize that once they have gone into production mode, managing SD-WAN and a variety of network providers requires more

resources than they have or want to expend. At the same time, many service providers have become more adept at offering flexible service models that address customers' desire to share some of the tasks required for the large-scale production SD-WAN environment.

**Figure 2: Perceived enterprise value of SD-WAN**



Source: Ovum

## Managed SD-WAN service providers offer many benefits beyond deployment help

Large-scale deployment of SD-WAN networks will require much more rigor, discipline, and project management than a short-term trial. The following are areas where providers of a managed SD-WAN service can offer valuable assistance:

- **Designing the new network** – Planning the network architecture is critical to making sure that the new network has built-in redundancy, security, and capacity for short- and long-term viability.
- **Selecting the network** – SD-WAN normally requires making choices among different types of network access and the available access providers.
- **Experience** – Having the experience and knowledge of many SD-WAN deployments reduces time and errors.
- **Change management** – This is required for the optimal network, fine-tuning, and application performance that SD-WAN's robust functionality promises.

## Enterprises realize the value of managed services from a network provider

Having a network provider as your primary provider for managed SD-WAN services has many advantages beyond the items listed above. These include network services expertise that impacts overall network performance and end-user satisfaction.

- **Experience with cloud and SaaS connectivity** – Network providers routinely deal with securing connections between data centers, cloud services, and SaaS providers. This must be included in any large-scale SD-WAN deployment.
- **Efficient management of third-party network and technology vendors** – The experience of working across the entire SD-WAN value chain ensures existing and new SD-WAN vendors and network providers are compelled to perform. This includes testing new services and features.
- **Improved overall performance** – Having network visibility and network knowledge allows the network provider to offer the best, most accurate SLAs, ensuring network performance that leads to the best application performance.

Ovum has observed many enterprises have jumped into the SD-WAN game with small pilots early on. Few enterprises have the in-house resources and skills required for large-scale deployment and long-term support of SD-WAN technology. To make the transition to a full production environment, enterprises will frequently leverage a network provider for a partially or fully managed SD-WAN service.

## Appendix

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### Ovum Consulting

We hope that this analysis will help you make informed and imaginative business decisions. If you have further requirements, Ovum's consulting team may be able to help you. For more information about Ovum's consulting capabilities, please contact us directly at [consulting@ovum.com](mailto:consulting@ovum.com).

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