



HUGHES. Europe

THE ULTIMATE RETAILER'S GUIDE TO SD-WAN

PART FOUR:

**MAKING THE CALL -
MANAGED SERVICES OR
IN-HOUSE DELIVERY FOR
YOUR SD-WAN SOLUTION?**

FUTURE-PROOFING FOR RETAIL

With the management of retail networks becoming a strategic concern that can make or break an organisation's competitiveness, finding the right approach to delivering your SD-WAN solution is essential.

Resilient, fast and adaptable connectivity is now a business fundamental, necessitated by the rapid adoption of cloud applications and services such as Wi-Fi, advanced digital signage, mobile payment and kiosk technologies.

Yet at the same time, a retailer's network must be future-proofed for the growth of new applications based on bandwidth-hungry technology that enhances the customer experience in-store. An ever-increasing range of demanding applications is available, blending in-store and online experiences to provide fast, flawless and exciting services to customers.

Retailers facing these challenges increasingly understand that SD-WAN will help them to deliver on their commercial objectives. The question remains however – what is the best way of implementing and managing this technology that is already revolutionising distributed networks in the US?

In the fourth instalment of Hughes' Ultimate Retailer's Guide to SD-WAN, we address the most salient factors that companies should take into account. Should you be using your own in-house resources to implement and manage SD-WAN in a DIY approach, or should you opt for a managed services provider (MSP) to support the delivery and ongoing management of your SD-WAN solution?

In this e-book we will explore the areas you need to consider when making your decision.

Areas covered inside:

The key elements to consider

What to look for in a managed network service provider

Do I have the in-house expertise? What does it take to get SD-WAN right?

Do I have protection for the long-term?

Managed service providers

Working out the right approach



WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER?

Do I have the resources?

Any retailer with a network of stores, offices and distribution hubs needs connectivity that is always available, optimises bandwidth and never goes down. In a perfect world, all networks would work this way.

In reality however, many retailers struggle with connectivity that is slow and unreliable. It is the last thing you need when undergoing the complex process of digital transformation while simultaneously keeping store operations on-track.

SD-WAN can help to deliver the improvements that today's increasingly sophisticated, smartphone-addicted customers expect. Once customers realise they cannot enjoy effective Wi-Fi or efficient self-service kiosks, they will simply go elsewhere.

That means a network must be fully flexible, making best use of multiple providers and diverse forms of connectivity that include fibre, cable, 3G, 4G and satellite.

The complexity surrounding the network is a key criterion when deciding how to deliver your SD-WAN solution.

The pressures imposed on in-house staff to manage multiple suppliers, multiple connectivity types and to keep the network running can be immense. SD-WAN does simplify some of this but only when you have the expertise to understand and manage the technology.

Getting in-house teams up to speed with new technology can often distract them from delivering on transformational projects. And since, as we all know, resources are finite, this could impact the speed at which you start to access the benefits of SD-WAN.

On the other hand, by choosing a managed service option for your SD-WAN solution, every aspect of service delivery including provisioning, installation, monitoring, security, maintenance and program-management along with help-desk support and backup network operating centres, could be handled by your managed service provider. This means in-house teams can focus on other projects while specialists run the network. However, be aware that not all managed service providers have all of these capabilities



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DO I HAVE THE IN-HOUSE EXPERTISE?

What does it take to get SD-WAN right?

SD-WAN may simplify the operation of a complex network running on diverse forms of connectivity, but it takes experience and expertise to get it right. Like many aspects of life, it appears to be easy if you know how.

Considerable technical skill is required, for example, to extract maximum benefit from SD-WAN to ensure hundreds or thousands of devices and applications use the available bandwidth effectively. This is a crucial capability. Poor configuration or lack of experience with large-scale implementation can be disastrous, causing frequent slow-downs or brownouts in critical applications such as point-of-sale technologies or in-store Wi-Fi.

Not only will this create frustration among customers and employees, it means all the cost-savings that you anticipate from your SD-WAN solution and cloud-based infrastructures may never fully materialise.

Using a managed service will help you access the knowledge, expertise and skills to get the deployment and configuration right so that you can start accessing the benefits more quickly. This means IT teams are under less pressure, can deliver against business expectations and transition from constrained resources to effective enablers.

"FOR IT DEPARTMENTS THE MANAGED SERVICES APPROACH BRINGS A WELCOME REDUCTION IN THE MAN-HOURS WASTED ON NETWORK MONITORING AND REMOVES THE CONSTANT PAIN OF MAINTENANCE."



DO I HAVE PROTECTION FOR THE LONG-TERM?

As with any technology, SD-WAN will continue to develop. Similarly, your business needs and priorities are likely to change over time. It means the investment in the time and resource needed to stay continually ahead of the game is significant.

Deciding to take the in-house route to deploy, manage and support an SD-WAN solution will require long-term planning to ensure your network adapts to changes in requirements as you respond to new business demands.

Conversely, working with a managed services provider of both SD-WAN and the underlying connectivity means you can have a degree of certainty that you can flex with changing contexts without the constant need to keep in-house skills updated.

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MANAGED SERVICE PROVIDERS

What to look for

Remember – not all MSPs are equal. SD-WAN is still a relatively new technology in Europe and the key factor in any decision about providers has to be their ability to deliver on both the technology and the support.

Some MSPs focus solely on the software, meaning other aspects of network management remain in house, while others offer a full end-to-end service covering the network infrastructure as well as the software layer. With deep experience in the US, pan-European operational reach and proven SLAs that guarantee optimal performance right across the continent, Hughes will transform any retailer's network.

When selecting the type of managed service that is right for your business, it's essential to consider what your current network environment looks like together with your key drivers for moving forward with an SD-WAN solution.

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WORKING OUT THE RIGHT APPROACH

1 Why am I implementing an SD-WAN solution?

If the focus of your SD-WAN project is cost-reduction to maximise existing bandwidth to access applications in the cloud, then considering a software-based management solution may be a good option.

On the other hand, if your core driver is to support a digital transformation project aimed at accessing benefits such as customer experience enhancement that move the conversation from cost to return on investment, then outsourcing the management and implementation to a specialist organisation that can deliver value across the entire network could be a better option. This frees up the digital transformation team's resources to focus on other strategically important elements of the project.

2 How complex is my network?

Complexity plays a big part in the selection of the type of MSP that best fits your needs.

If your estate is served by a single transport-type provisioned by a single service provider and relatively small, then a software-only approach from a managed service provider might be the best. This is where zero touch provisioning may play a part as it helps in the deployment and management of simple networks.

Where a network encompasses multiple transport-types provisioned by a number of service providers across multi-region or multi-country estates, a software-based approach is unlikely to deliver the same level of benefit as a fully managed service.

Some of the benefits that an SD-WAN solution can deliver focus around optimisation of existing infrastructure. A managed service provider with experience in managing both the connectivity and the service provider relationships that sit behind it is more likely to deliver value across the entire network infrastructure when deploying an SD-WAN solution.

This is where zero touch enabled installation helps to drive efficiency but to achieve continuous optimisation to deliver long term benefits, which is where the real value lies, needs specialist expertise.

For example, an MSP with a strong background in network management combined with SD-WAN solutions can help you achieve seamless third-party integration ensuring that last-mile connectivity is optimal both in terms of quality and price. Without the integration capability, or the experience of managing multiple contracts, the best outcome is difficult to achieve.

3 What are my long-term objectives?

In the retail sector, particularly where the industry is in a state of transition with online retailing putting significant pressure on offline viability and profitability, it is essential that your chosen MSP understands the unique requirements of your business today and can help you move towards your vision of tomorrow. As such they are not so much a managed service provider as a managed service partner.

By using their wealth of hands-on experience to ensure that the best value is extracted from existing and future commercial relationships, a managed service partner can help you deliver the benefits you are seeking from an SD-WAN solution and support you in being ready for the future – whatever that might look like.

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HUGHES Europe

ABOUT US

Hughes Europe helps retail organisations and other distributed enterprises to maximise productivity and enhance the customer experience by providing optimised managed networks for multi-site environments. We work with our customers to design, implement and manage wide area networking solutions.

Our flexible connectivity solutions combined with our multi-vendor approach means we can take modern technology capabilities and identify the right solution to meet our customers' commercial needs. Our long-standing relationships with our customers, which span many years, are testament to our collaborative and quality focused approach.

We deliver our services throughout Europe with offices in the UK, Germany and Italy and offer a single point of contact with a single, aggregated service level agreement for all sites irrespective of size or location.

We specialise in delivering secure WAN connectivity, network resilience, optimisation and SD-WAN to help our customers deliver the application availability they need to deliver the highest levels of employee productivity and Customer Experience.

We are part of Echostar Corporation and a division of Hughes Network Systems. The Group has a \$1.89bn turnover with operations in 100 countries around the globe. In Europe alone, where we have been helping our customers to achieve optimal value from their network infrastructure for more than 30 years, we manage 55000 sites, across 28 countries supporting more than 5 billion transactions every year.