



Red River

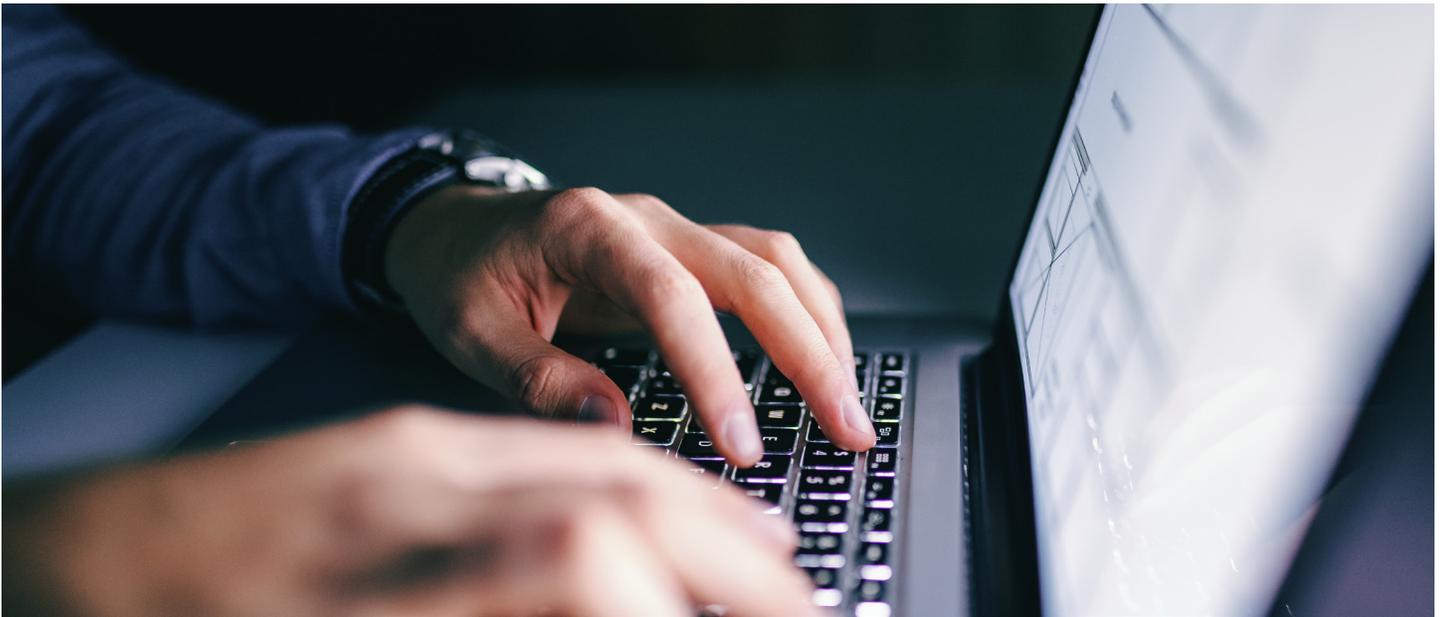
**THE IMPORTANCE OF
MOBILITY IN THE MODERN
DISTRIBUTED WORKFORCE**



Today, a mobile business is an efficient business. Many companies are moving toward a remote, mobile infrastructure — out of need, out of necessity, or out of efficiency. With the modern workforce being as distributed as it is, however, the needs of the infrastructure are changing. More people are out of the office — and more people need to be able to key into a dedicated connection to their office network.

In the early days of distributed work, security issues and stability issues were both significant. Employees created replicas of their data on their home systems. Data was sent into company networks through email attachments. It was cumbersome, erratic and inefficient. Most of all, it was unsecured.

Today, we have better answers. With tools like SD-WAN technology, companies are able to grow their network connectivity to suit their modern, distributed workforce. They can provide the services, solutions and data that their employees need to connect. And the distributed workforce is able to work as though they are in the office — even alongside those who are actually in the office.



THE MODERN, DISTRIBUTED WORKFORCE

COVID forced many offices to move to remote labor. But the forces at work are far more significant than just the pandemic. As the pandemic wanes, we find that many employees are refusing to go back to the office. Many high-profile companies such as Amazon have announced that their employees will remain mostly remote.

The driving forces are many and varied. To procure the best labor, employers need to provide remote opportunities and flextime; many of the best employees no longer want to come into the office every day for a 9-to-5, if at all. Companies are finding that they can tap into labor from all across the world rather than focusing on a single geographic location. And companies are discovering that employees can actually be more efficient working from home.

As an additional bonus, many companies that allow remote labor can downscale their brick-and-mortar presence, remove costs, and increase agility.

But this also requires a widespread shift in infrastructure. Companies can no longer rely on employees simply VPNing into their office servers. Companies need to be able to replicate their in-office experience out-of-the-office. This is where a Wide Area Network (WAN) comes in. WAN networking provides for a far better user experience as well as better security and stability for the business.

It used to be that a WAN could be defined through hardware through a system like MPLS. But today, most WANs are software-defined; they use SD-WAN technology to create a network that isn't hard-coded. Let's take a look at why mobility has become so important to the modern workforce and how SD-WAN technology can help.



THE NEED FOR MOBILITY IS ON THE RISE

Increasingly, companies are finding themselves needing to go mobile. This is hitting across all industries: construction, medicine, financial services, insurance and more. We can see that as companies have employees that are working in a more remote fashion, often with confidential and privileged information, it means that they need the technology to support this labor.

Let's examine the need for mobility across several example industries.

Mobility in Construction

Consider a construction company that needs to maintain a consistent network even though they may be doing job sites across a city or region. Construction companies today deal with a lot more data than they ever have before. From 3D surveys and simulations to real-time safety data, construction companies need to be able to access their data reliably — even when remote.

It's worth it noting that many construction companies are increasingly using sensors and IoT devices on-site. These devices, too, need to be able to be supported by a network to remain useful.



Mobility in Medicine

Throughout COVID, hospitals and clinics have had to set up new, outdoor wards to accommodate demand. They needed to connect these temporary wards to their networks — something that could be managed securely through a managed SD-WAN service.

But this isn't going away after the pandemic. Many clinics are now operating as boutiques that are part of larger chains — or as satellite services outside of a larger clinic. This increases the need for a consolidated system and centralized technology.

Mobility in Financial Services

Financial services have also found investors and financial managers increasingly working from home. How can they be sure that their employees are transmitting their data in a secured way to the company's network? How can they make sure that their managers and investors have the services that they need to deliver the best to their clients?

There's been consistent growth in the financial services industry, jumping from a steady 3 percent to 5 percent. Much of this growth has been in the unconventional sector of online services. With many banks no longer even having physical locations, the need for a safe, secured network infrastructure is even greater.

Mobility in Insurance

Insurance is an excellent example of office work that now requires additional mobility. Insurance companies are increasingly hiring work-from-home candidates to perform services such as data entry and underwriting. But that also means they need to concern themselves even more with security and speed.

Insurance companies are able to greatly reduce their costs by going "mobile," reducing their in-house workforce, and increasing their remote workforce. We will undoubtedly see this continue to accelerate in the years moving forward.



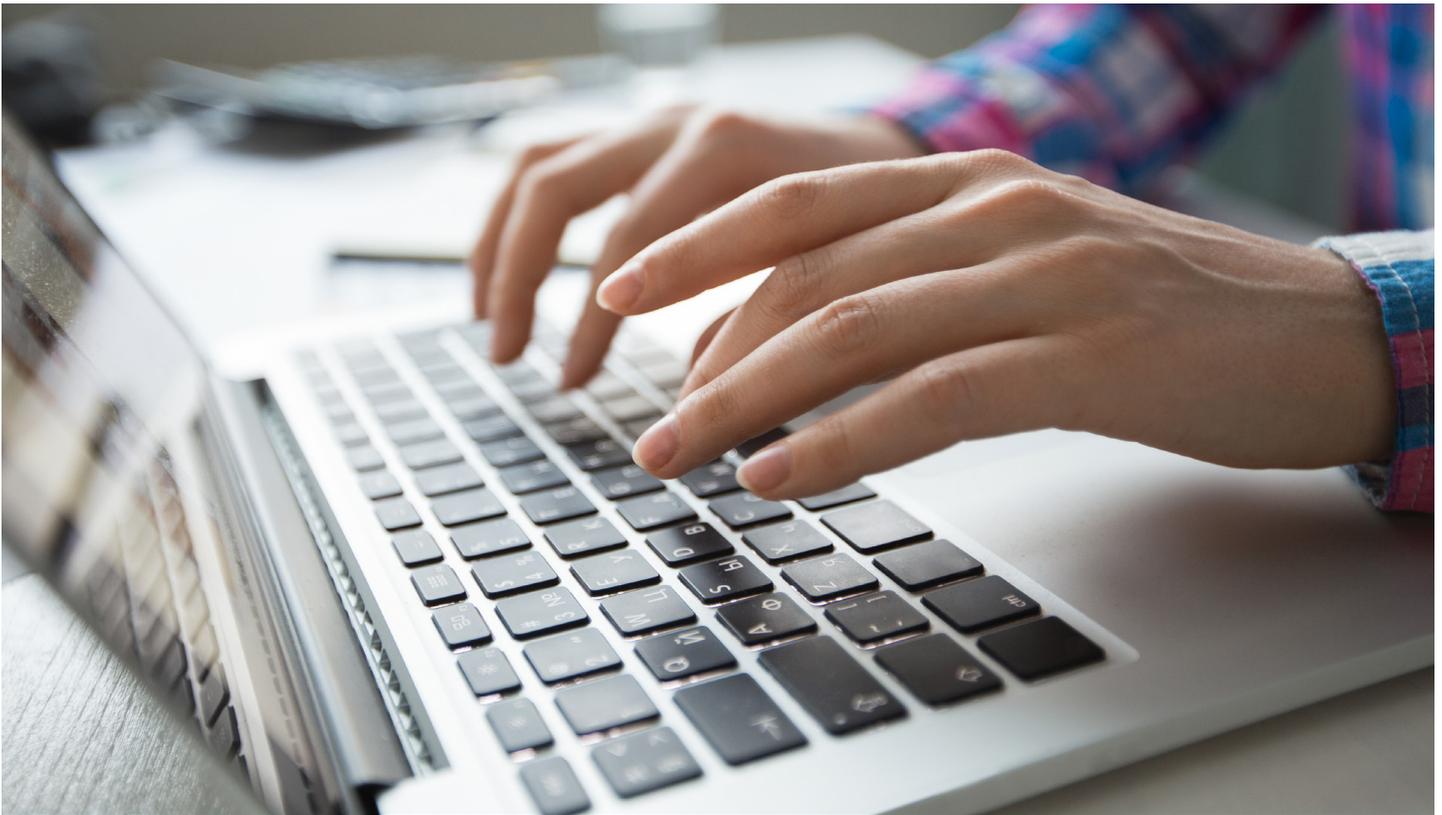
Industries in Change

What are the common factors in the above examples? Companies are starting to spread out more, to improve their own agility. Many companies are working on-site. Consider an accounting service that needs to send tax preparers or auditors to a physical address; they still need to maintain their security.

Furthermore, employees are starting to spread out more. As noted, most employees now want the ability to work remotely, even if they're only out of the office sometimes. Because employees need to be able to work outside of the office as well as inside of the office, they need consolidated, centralized systems.

The better a company is able to make their network, the less likely they are to experience security issues or significant disruption. The more likely they are to deliver a positive user experience to their employees — and the more likely their employees are to deliver a positive user experience to their clients.

To remain competitive, many companies will need to increase their adoption of distributed technologies. Otherwise, they'll fall behind. If this is the direction that the industry is changing, companies, at minimum, need to have a plan for adoption.



THE ADVANTAGES OF SD-WAN SERVICES

Compared to older technologies such as MPLS, SD-WAN services are more affordable, easier to manage, and more reliable. SD-WAN services can be better optimized, are consistently more agile, and can be managed as-a-service by an MSP. Other than very niche use cases, SD-WAN is almost always an improvement over MPLS.

SD-WAN is Easier to Manage

An SD-WAN system is inherently easier to manage. Rather than having to manage the configuration of multiple hard-wired devices, many aspects of configuring the system can be done on a software level. SD-WAN technology makes it possible for companies to make fast, easy changes to their network, whether the network is growing, changing, or just being optimized. And because it can be managed as-a-service, it's possible that the organization won't need to do any management at all.

SD-WAN is More Affordable

SD-WAN technology doesn't require as much hardware, which means the initial investment in the technology is lower, as well as the continued cost of ownership. With SD-WAN technology, companies are able to ensure that their systems can be maintained and updated at lower costs, which also means they have more money to put into other infrastructure developments, training, and management.



SD-WAN is Easier to Scale

When an MPLS or hardware network has to be scaled, new systems need to be purchased and deployed. The transition can be quite expensive, disruptive and onerous. But when an SD-WAN network has to be scaled, it's far easier. The network can simply be reconfigured, almost in real-time. Because of this, an SD-WAN is the easier-to-scale technology, which is critically important to companies that want to remain as agile as possible.

SD-WAN is "Futureproof"

Technology is changing quite quickly. SD-WAN is relatively futureproof (for the foreseeable future, anyway); when the system has to be updated, it can be updated on a software level. Comparatively, hardware is far more expensive to update. SD-WAN software can be updated more frequently than hardware could be updated, thereby gleaning the benefits of future technologies much faster, and ensuring that the system remains as secure, optimized, and reliable as it can.



SD-WAN is Reliable

Because SD-WAN technology is managed at a software level, there's also an extraordinary amount of reporting at hand. Organizations will be able to quickly see whether the SD-WAN network needs to be further balanced, whether there are load issues or bottlenecks or whether they may need to scale. Importantly, changes can be made to the SD-WAN network quickly before disruption occurs to the business, rather than having to manage a cumbersome physical network.

As mentioned, there are still reasons an organization might want to stay with MPLS technology. MPLS technology can, in some circumstances, be more secure. While it's often not as efficient, it is more precise. Companies in the banking services industry, for instance, may want to stay with an existing MPLS solution. But outside of this, SD-WAN is usually preferred.

SD-WAN is the superior solution for organizations that want to expand their network capacity to compensate for a distributed workforce. But that doesn't mean that companies may find it easy to transition to SD-WAN or to manage their own SD-WAN networks. Any large infrastructure change runs the risk of disruption.

An SD-WAN installation can take an upfront investment of time and money for an organization. It can pull IT teams away from their existing tasks. It can require that employees go through additional training. And if it's not handled correctly, it can potentially lead to a network that is not properly optimized. A network that isn't optimized and configured properly will be slow, inefficient and potentially unpredictable.

That's how an MSP can help. An MSP can help you design your SD-WAN transition, create a roadmap for your business and help you manage your SD-WAN installation moving forward. MSPs can provide training and support for your employees, optimize and configure your SD-WAN for the best possible resource management, secure your SD-WAN against outside threats and update your SD-WAN as needed.

Got questions? We have the answers. Contact us today to find out more about how SD-WAN can help



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