

CHECKLIST

10 Essential SD-WAN Capabilities

While SD-WANs offer major performance and convenience advantages over traditional WANs, these benefits come at the expense of centralized security from backhauling traffic through the organization's main data center.

Vulnerabilities associated with an expanding branch network attack surface, increasing infrastructure complexity, and a rapidly evolving threat landscape call for secure networking, namely, deep integration between networking and security capabilities at a platform level.

Effective SD-WAN also requires sophisticated management and orchestration capabilities for automatically selecting the best network paths based on contextual factors such as the specific application in use, business priorities, and security risks.

Questions to Help You Determine the Best SD-WAN Solution

Over two dozen vendors currently offer some form of SD-WAN, but only 11 are recognized in the 2024 Gartner® Magic Quadrant™. But in many cases, comprehensive full-stack security is not integrated into the solution. This leaves the network vulnerable to attack or requires the purchase of additional security devices. When doing initial exploration of SD-WAN, network engineering and operations leaders should use the following list of questions to determine which solution is best:

☒ GenAI

Does the solution offer integrated GenAI capabilities to accelerate configuration and troubleshooting?

☒ Threat protection

Regulatory bodies in some countries require compromise assessments. These authorities understand today's enterprise security challenges and want to ensure organizations are working from a proverbial clean slate, understanding potential risks before any damage can ensue. Does the solution offer the appropriate level of threat protection?

☒ Compliance

Does the solution support all of the applicable regulatory requirements for industry standards and data privacy obligations, including tracking, auditing, and reporting functions?

☒ Orchestration

Does the solution offer automated capabilities for application awareness and path intelligence to select the best network connections based on changing variables?

☒ Management

Can the solution provide networkwide management and automation, be easily deployed, and remotely managed (via the cloud)?

☒ Monitoring

Can the solution offer comprehensive monitoring of device, link, path, and application performance to optimize user experience and simplify operations?

☒ Total cost of ownership

Is there an operational cost to implementing the SD-WAN solution? If so, what is it?

 Third-party validation

Has the solution been thoroughly tested and recommended by independent industry experts?

 SASE

Is the SD-WAN solution capable of supporting single-vendor SASE?

 SD-Branch

Can the SD-WAN solution provide migration to SD-Branch with tight integration on hardware, software, and management levels?

Carefully Compare the Capabilities of Competing Products

An effective SD-WAN solution offers distributed organizations the chance to solve networking and security problems of traditional WAN. But in order to achieve this, network engineering and operations leaders must carefully compare the comprehensive capabilities of competing products against the full set of their solution needs.