

Executive Summary

Demand for Network as a Service Accelerates, Driven by Shorter Planning Cycles and Network Management Concerns

Sponsored by: Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company

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IDC OPINION

IDC research demonstrates that enterprises are prioritizing resiliency and agility as foundational elements of their IT strategy. Organizations are looking for richer levels of visibility, cross-platform control, and advanced data management and protection that spans the entire edge-to-core continuum. Meanwhile, connectivity and enterprise networking specifically have become not only increasingly important but also more difficult to manage as the edge of the enterprise network continues to expand.

Flexible consumption models have emerged to overcome management obstacles and accelerate digital and network transformations. Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, sponsored research to understand how organizations are incorporating network as a service (NaaS) to help achieve better operational and business agility.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Recent years have seen a growing awareness and adoption of flexible consumption models across the IT spectrum, including for NaaS. These offers provide cloudlike flexibility of IT resources to not only ease operational management of networks but also help speed up new deployments. This enables organizations to transition from managing network infrastructure to keeping pace with the speed of business.

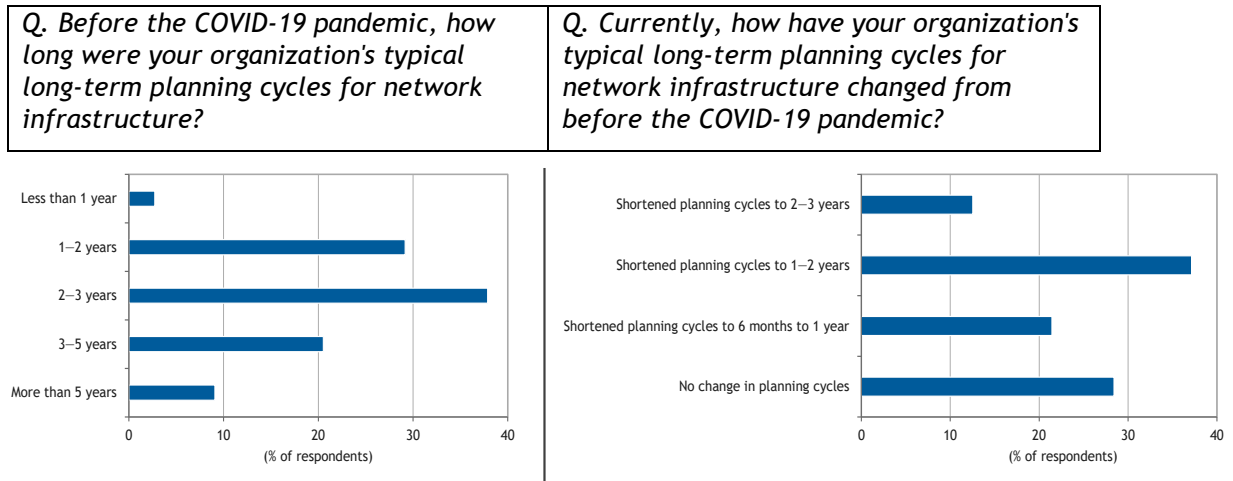
In a recent study conducted for HPE Aruba, IDC surveyed 1,100 respondents from 11 countries to explore the views and requirements for NaaS adoption. Regional-specific results provide insights into how organizations perceive NaaS and the current adoption of NaaS deployments. The study found that one-third of respondents said their organization is already using NaaS for either access network or cloud connectivity. The top survey responses revealed interesting drivers and many benefits for those that are using NaaS. One such customer is Ricardo Flores, executive director of Information Technology Services at Washington Adventist University, which has deployed Aruba's NaaS offering to help remain competitive while staying within a tight budget. During a recent conversation with Flores, he mentioned the following: "For an organization that is always dependent upon revenue that may or may not come next semester, it allows us to play with the big boys without having to spend the money that big boys usually have."

Interestingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for agility in IT and network procurement and management. Specifically, 71% of respondents said their long-term planning cycles have shortened

due to COVID-19, and 82% of that group said long-term planning cycles have shortened to two years or less (see Figure 1). Shorter planning cycles are evidence of the agility that is required for today's business dynamics and the impact that it has on networks, and both are driving the demand for NaaS.

FIGURE 1

Network Planning Cycles Pre-COVID-19 and Shortened Planning Cycles Due to COVID-19



Source: IDC's *Aruba NaaS Study*, December 2021

Deploying NaaS enables the financial flexibility required for the shorter planning cycle times and provides an agile infrastructure to meet changing business dynamics. Other key changes to network management since COVID-19 began include the need for insights to optimize network performance, increased reliance on cloud-based management platforms, and the need to automate networking tasks. NaaS helps achieve each of these changes with a cloud-based platform with analytics to drive automation and improved responsiveness to networking changes.

COVID-19 isn't the only driver of change in enterprise networking though: As more users and devices access the network and enterprises rely on more high-bandwidth applications, it creates an increased need for network modernization. Organizations are looking for ways to simplify the management and security of their network. The survey data shows this: NaaS adopters recognized that deploying NaaS can enhance security, improve sustainability efforts, and resolve concerns about regulatory compliance and financial penalties.

As organizations focus on meeting sustainability goals, they are selecting vendors and partners that have like-minded goals and objectives. IDC's *Aruba NaaS Study* found that 82% of respondents recognized the importance of IT asset disposition services and the ties to sustainability goals. Built into a NaaS offer are secure asset decommissioning services that reduce the risk of data breaches and penalties associated with poor disposal methods. An additional benefit of using a NaaS offer is that all the responsibilities of a secure asset decommissioning strategy are no longer the responsibility of the IT staff. This is another way that using NaaS can reduce the workload of the IT staff and improve operational efficiencies.

CONCLUSION

As organizations continue to look for ways to improve productivity, as-a-service models like NaaS represent a way for IT organizations to support new workloads and business requirements with confidence. NaaS enables business resiliency and agility efforts all within budget requirements. These are the reasons that IDC predicts that by 2025, 60% of enterprises will fund LOB and IT projects through opex budgets, matching how vendors provide their services with a focus on outcomes that are determined by SLAs and KPIs. The survey revealed that the size of organizations seeking a NaaS solution has broadened with specific criteria for particular regions and company size. When choosing a NaaS provider, consider an organization that can become a strategic partner to your organization to help increase your organization's agility and competitiveness.

MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSOR

HPE GreenLake for Aruba is a simple and flexible enterprise NaaS offering that enables organizations to consume Aruba ESP (Edge Services Platform) in a cloud-like manner, through a single monthly subscription payment and with options for flexible consumption that help align network spend with usage.

Available in over 50 countries worldwide, HPE GreenLake for Aruba leverages standardized service offerings designed around popular wired, wireless, and SD-Branch use cases, accelerating time-to-value.

Recently, IDC published an InfoBrief that underscores that security, reliability, and the depth of the HPE GreenLake for Aruba offering are driving interest and adoption to networking as a service.

To find out more go to www.arubanetworks.com/naas

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