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Accelerate Your Network Modernization Goals With Zones

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Abstract: As a result of highly distributed application environments and hybrid work initiatives, organizations must modernize their networks to ensure consistently positive end-user experiences. However, in-house networking resources either do not have the appropriate expertise to undertake this effort or are too busy with daily operations to evaluate and learn about new network technologies. To overcome this challenge, organizations can leverage the expertise, experience, and insights of Zones' Network Modernization Services in designing, implementing, and managing modern wired and wireless enterprise networks across multiple industry verticals.

Distributed Applications and Hybrid Work Initiatives Create Complexity

When deploying and managing enterprise networks, organizations can no longer rely on end users and the applications they use to be contained within a fixed network perimeter. Specifically, both the end users and the applications are distributed across multiple locations, changing the way in which internal groups communicate with each other to achieve business objectives.

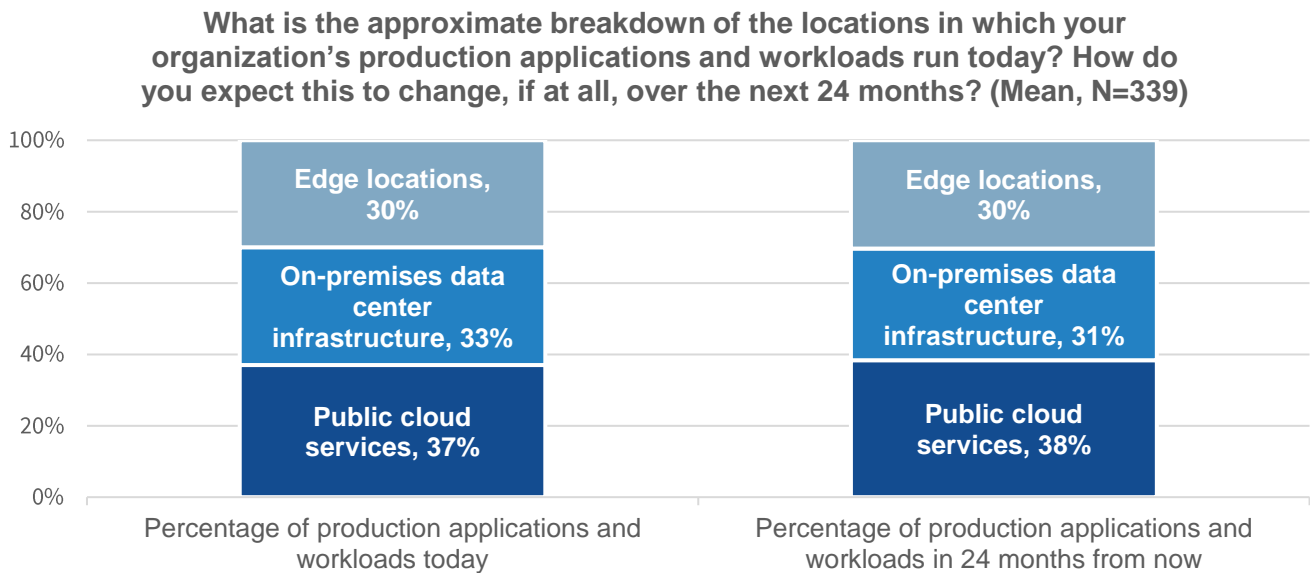
No one can argue that the rise in remote and hybrid work arrangements continues to challenge organizations in delivering consistent and highly available experiences that end users expect. However, organizations must deliver these experiences as more business applications are distributed across multiple locations. In fact, research from TechTarget's Enterprise Strategy Group uncovered that production applications and workloads are currently deployed across on-premises data centers (33%), public cloud services (37%), and edge locations (30%), with similar breakdowns expected in the near future (see Figure 1).¹

As more distributed, cloud-native applications are deployed, organizations must address how on-premises data centers connect to their public cloud of choice. The rise of 5G and IoT applications demands that organizations can reliably connect edge and branch locations back to campus data centers.

¹ Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Research Report, [End-to-end Networking Visibility and Management](#), April 2023. All Enterprise Strategy Group research references are from this research report.

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Figure 1. Breakdown of Locations in Which Production Applications and Workloads Run



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

The combination of a distributed application environment and a hybrid workforce requires organizations to modernize their networks. Undertaking such an effort requires the implementation of multiple networking technologies but can easily result in unwanted complex network environments. According to Enterprise Strategy Group research, a majority of organizations (73%) view their networks as equally or more complex than two years ago.

Yet, choosing and managing the right networking solutions across wired, wireless, and SD-WAN technologies becomes difficult. Vetting and managing multiple vendors and service providers consumes too much time and effort, as in-house networking professionals are typically focused on troubleshooting and maintaining network connectivity. With little time available, keeping abreast of the latest technological developments makes it difficult to figure out which solutions will service an organization’s networking needs now and in the near future.

While organizations may face these internal struggles, delaying any network modernization efforts only diminishes their ability to maintain the necessary performance and availability end users expect. In today’s dynamic business environment, organizations must be able to spin up and connect to resources so that applications can fulfill ever-changing business demands while maintaining the visibility required to proactively detect and resolve network-impacting issues.

Engage the Right Partner for Supporting Network Modernization

To accelerate the time to value of a network modernization effort, organizations should consider partnering with a firm that can assess, design, and implement a network infrastructure suitable for both current and future needs. Accomplishing these tasks demands that the firm have the necessary network, technological, and implementation experience, along with networking vendor alliances, so that the modernization effort accounts for the organization’s specific needs. One such partner is Zones.

Zones has created its Network Modernization Services to help enterprises build out a highly performant and available network infrastructure using the latest and most appropriate technologies. Zones provides expertise in three technology areas that can address how organizations manage distributed workforces and applications:

- **Wireless.** Assessing, designing, and implementing Wi-Fi network solutions.
- **Enterprise.** Planning, configuration, and implementation of network solutions for campus, branch, and data center networking environments.
- **SD-WAN.** Optimizing the value of WAN connections from branch to cloud while improving their speed, reliability, and efficiency.

By offering this breadth and depth of experience across these three areas, Zones can help build out network infrastructures focusing on and extending across various technologies.

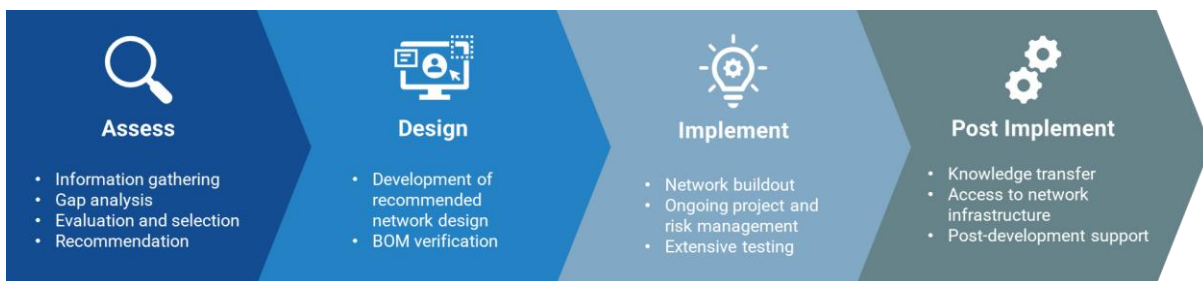
To recommend the technologies and solutions that will best serve organizations' individual efforts, Zones has partnered with multiple networking vendors, including but not limited to Cisco, Juniper, and Palo Alto Networks. This broad partner ecosystem enables Zones to keep up with the latest developments and earn certifications to deepen its network expertise.

Zones' Proven Methodology and Results

Zones leverages a proven methodology for delivering network modernization engagements via its Assess, Design, Implement, and Manage (AIDM) framework (see Figure 2):

- **Assess.** Gather information on current network and business needs and perform gap analysis, then evaluate and recommend vendors and network technologies.
- **Design.** Develop the proposed network design and network bill of materials (BOM) within budgetary constraints, and supply internal documentation for future reference.
- **Implement.** Partner with client organizations in project management, implementation, and testing before the network is deployed.
- **Manage.** Ensure that internal networking teams are equipped to resolve network issues, whether that is recommending the proper network management and monitoring tools, lending additional troubleshooting support with HyperCare, or assuming management responsibilities from clients through its 24/7 Network Operations Center Services.

Figure 2. Zones AIDM Framework



Source: Zones and Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

To support organizations in their continuous networking education, Zones offers an Innovation Center that provides clients with a sandbox for playing around with specific technologies or equipment. Organizations can then determine how their networks should evolve as business demands change.

Zones' Proven Track Record of Modernizing Networks

Recent efforts highlight the expertise Zones can bring to network modernization efforts that positively impact business outcomes:

- A regional healthcare company consisting of three hospitals and 25 clinics needed reliable Wi-Fi connectivity across its distributed environment. The quality of healthcare provided across all locations was at risk of degrading due to the lack of integration and collaboration among internal network groups at the hospitals and clinics. Zones delivered an enterprise-level network design to address reliability and connectivity concerns. The company experienced improved network performance and reduced network downtime, leading to increased employee productivity and patient satisfaction.
- Due to WAN outages, a regional tire and automobile services company could not adequately serve customers at over 100 retail locations. Customer orders were lost or botched, and inventory was not correctly managed. At risk was also the lack of PCI compliance. Zones opted to implement a software-defined WAN (SD-WAN) network to decrease the impact of network outages, as the network can use a combination of available transport technologies to restore connectivity in case the connection fails. The ability to restore connectivity with an SD-WAN network enabled the company to improve inventory management and, more importantly, increase customer satisfaction.
- Providing superior customer experiences at a luxury cosmetics retailer with over 200 U.S.-based locations became difficult to achieve given the poor in-store Wi-Fi coverage and performance (e.g., point-of-sale systems were not reliable). Since the retailer had limited IT staff, Zones offered its managed Wi-Fi service. Not only did connectivity and performance of the Wi-Fi network improve, but Zones also offered location analytics to support the retailer in developing better merchandising strategies. Ultimately, the retailer significantly improved the in-store customer experience.

Conclusion

The distributed nature of enterprise applications, coupled with hybrid work initiatives, has resulted in complex network infrastructures that are not optimized for performance and availability. Organizations often struggle to manage these legacy networks effectively, and the end-user experience becomes degraded and inconsistent. While organizations want to initiate network modernization projects to address these issues, dealing with new technology deployments can be daunting, especially when in-house networking professionals lack the knowledge and experience to implement the latest technologies for modernizing networks.

Instead of delaying new deployments due to lack of knowledge and experience, organizations should partner with a firm that possesses the expertise, experience, and technology partnerships to assess, design, and implement a network that is easier to operate and manage. With Zones Network Modernization Services, organizations can accelerate the time to value of network modernization efforts to meet the business challenges brought about by today's distributed work environments.

By applying its AIDM framework, Zones network modernization efforts have helped multiple customers deploy highly performant and available networks that deliver consistent end-user experiences and positively affect business outcomes.

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