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SMB NETWORK CHECKLIST

Are you ready to build a better network for your business?

Current company plans may call for new products, staff, locations, or customers. But what about a better business network? It's not an overstatement to say that an improved network is the foundation of any solid plan to efficiently reach company objectives.

A survey[1] from Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, of U.S. small and midsized businesses (SMBs) found that business leaders agree. Nine in ten business and IT decision-makers say technology — and specifically an improved company network — is extremely or very important to achieving their company and IT objectives.

Your company's network impacts everything from the experience a customer has when they first visit your website to how quickly they can pay at checkout, and everything in between. The quality of your network also affects data security and compliance, employee productivity, and cost control.

With a network upgrade, you can accommodate more employees and customers on your network without lags, add devices without issues, and deploy new sites without a lot of technical expertise or time.

Use the following questions to determine if your organization can benefit from an improved business network. When you're done, use what you've learned to make a change.

DOES YOUR COMPANY PLAN TO GROW?

Sixty-five percent of companies in the survey are focused on revenue growth. Close to half want to launch new products or services. Without an improved network, prospects and customers may encounter a lagging website when they try to shop or buy from you, and employees trying to use critical applications may not be able to quickly complete important tasks. If your growth plans call for new product or service development, a network that can't keep up will slow development and launch progress. With a network upgrade, you can accommodate more employees and customers on your network without lags, add devices without issues, and deploy new sites without a lot of technical expertise or time.

IS YOUR DATA SECURE?

To keep customer and company data safe, your network needs to have protections in place to minimize the chance of a breach. For example, access controls for who can use what data, 24x7 monitoring to identify threats and quickly stop them, application traffic monitoring to identify any suspicious behavior, and protection against common threats like phishing attacks. Better security is the number one benefit business and IT leaders expect from an improved network. One-third of companies also report that they anticipate better compliance with an improved network, since the right cloud-based network can ensure automated compliance with industry and government regulations.

Are employees as productive as possible? Close to half of business and IT leaders in the survey say that an improved network will boost employee productivity and network speed. Whether your team is working remotely and needs access to the network from any device, or your on-site staff needs reliable and speedy use of applications to serve customers, your network is at the heart of what it will take to keep them working productively. An improved network can also enhance access everywhere in your organization, whether that is inside and outside, in the far corners of your company facilities, or in new locations that need to be quickly added to your network.

COULD YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE BE IMPROVED?

A good experience for current customers — whether it's online ordering and problem resolution or speedy customer Wi-Fi in your location — is essential to keep them loyal. New prospects will assess your business from the first contact. Based on their experience, they'll determine whether to buy from you or move on to the competition. Close to 40% of business and IT leaders say that an improved network will provide a better customer experience. Roughly the same number of leaders revealed in the survey that better coverage across their entire business location is an anticipated benefit of an improved network.

DO YOU WANT TO REDUCE COSTS?

With funds on hand to seize opportunities and overcome challenges, a business can move toward its business goals. One-third of business and tech leaders in the Aruba survey cite cost-cutting as a benefit of a new network. With the current competitive hiring environment, especially for IT talent, a network that can support your company with a lean IT team is an important cost containment tactic. Among the biggest pain points for company leaders right now, according to the Aruba survey, is ongoing IT support for the network and finding and keeping qualified IT and network staff. When you use a cloud-based network, you can use only the technology you need, when you need it, and avoid overspending.

An improved network can also automate routine tasks and fixes for many issues, assess network activity for anything out of the norm, and let you easily monitor users and activity.

IS YOUR CURRENT NETWORK RELIABLE?

Automated network monitoring and fine-tuning can identify issues and fix them before they become a performance problem. A new network can also provide you with tools to limit employee access to certain applications, which can keep problems at bay and protect network uptime and overall reliability. More than nine in 10 survey respondents say that ensuring reliability and high speed for customer Wi-Fi is extremely or very important. Likewise, half of business and technology leaders plan for improved network speed for the whole company as a benefit of an improved network.

IS YOUR NETWORK MANAGEMENT EFFICIENT?

When your IT team is consumed with maintenance, troubleshooting, and service challenges, it's hard for them to support business priorities. In this challenging hiring climate, it may also be difficult to hire IT staff with the skills you need. Part of the promise of an improved network is a reduced burden on your IT team. Networks that let you easily add sites without a lot of installation and programming save time for your team and don't require sophisticated IT skills. An improved network can also automate routine tasks and fixes for many issues, assess network activity for anything out of the norm, and let you easily monitor users and activity systemwide.

Competitive businesses are using network upgrades to increase their likelihood of success across these important dimensions. If you checked off any boxes above, a better network can help your company reach its goals. Let Aruba help you put what you've learned in this checklist to use to find a business network solution tailored to support your company needs with our Product Wizard.

[1]Online survey of 150 business decision-makers and 150 IT decision-makers at U.S. companies with 100 to 999 full-time employees. The survey was fielded September 23 – October 4, 2021.

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