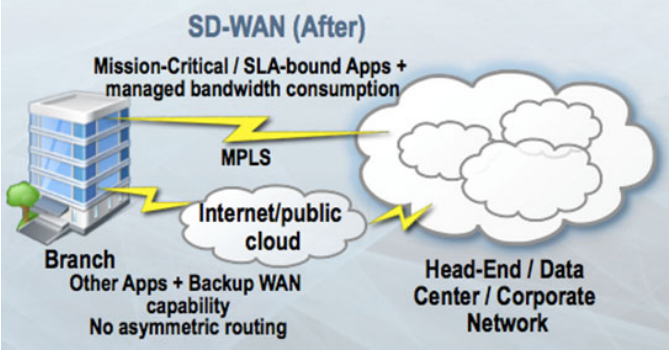
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According to IDC software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) represent a major opportunity, with the global market set to grow at a CAGR of 69.6% and reach $8.5 billion in 2021.



SD-WAN leverages hybrid WAN, and adds a centralised, application-based policy controller, analytics for application and network visibility, a secure software overlay (abstracts underlying networks) and an optional SD-WAN forwarder (routing capability). It allows for cost-effective application delivery, meeting the needs of modern branch/remote sites, optimising software-as-a-service (SaaS) and cloud-based services, and improving branch-IT efficiency through automation.

The "most significant" SD-WAN driver for the 5-year forecast period is digital transformation (DX), or the deployment of 3rd platform technologies such as cloud, big data, mobility and social business. DX increases network workloads and elevates the end-to-end importance of networks to business operations. The increased use of public cloud-based SaaS applications is another growth driver, since SD-WAN is increasingly leveraged to provide dynamic connectivity optimisation and path selection in a policy-driven, centrally distributed network architecture.

SD-WAN growth should also benefit from broader acceptance and adoption of software-defined networking throughout the enterprise. As virtualisation, cloud management and SDN continue to gain traction in enterprise networks, SD-WAN should only benefit from such a paradigm shift, and receive increased consideration.

"SD-WAN is not a solution in search of a problem," IDC says. "Traditional WANs were not architected for the cloud and are also poorly suited to the security requirements associated with distributed and cloud-based applications. And, while hybrid WAN emerged to meet some of these next-generation connectivity challenges, SD-WAN builds on hybrid WAN to offer a more complete solution."

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