

Rethinking your business network

 By [Riaan Graham](#)

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Most companies today are on a digital transformation journey. In fact, according to IDG, a global technology media, data and marketing services company, more than a third of organisations (37%) have already started integrating and executing a digital-first approach, and 7% say they're already an enterprise-wide digital business.



Source: pixabay.com

Still, almost half (45%) of IT and business leaders surveyed say their companies are in the very early stages of becoming a digital business – either gathering information or just beginning to formulate a digital-first strategy. However, no matter what stage businesses find themselves in, what is becoming increasingly evident is the role of the network.

From being a supporting function, the network has now become a core enabler to digital transformation and a critical backbone for day-to-day operations.

If we look at South Africa, the cost of renewing infrastructure is high and as a result, assets are not refreshed as regularly as they should be.

What's more, the skills shortage is creating a huge concern for companies as they scramble to not only acquire relevant IT skills but keep in-demand skills sets – forcing many to look at other options such as virtualisation and fast-track certain digital aspects.



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In fact, with mobility, cloud, IoT, AI and the rise of software-defined anything, many businesses are now realising that their network needs to rise to a new level of agility and scalability as well seamlessly integrate with and support, business applications and new operational technologies, if the business is to ever truly realise their digital transformation objectives.

Network availability is not just necessary

As a result, businesses today need to rethink how their network should work – with the premise that network availability is not just necessary, but critical. In fact, the network will need to become more dynamic, resilient and responsive to support the speed of business as well as allow for greater innovation as businesses push to become more customer-centric. And if we look at the move towards hyper-convergence, the network itself needs to be fluid and modular – with no barriers to expand, grow and adapt.

And this is the exact premise that Wireless-as-a-Service (WaaS) operates on – a commodity-based OPEX driven wireless model, where businesses only pay for what they use when they use it.

This makes it a viable option on top of a network for businesses that are looking for the flexibility and agility needed in today's 'fast era'.

According to a recent survey, almost a quarter of South African respondents (24%) said that they are already adopting WaaS, while 76% said that they are planning to adopt it in the foreseeable future – indicative of its value proposition. Respondents who either adopted or plan to adopt WaaS were also asked what the main factor was for adoption decision. Just over half (51%) cited simplicity, while 30% indicated cost – revealing key requirements for networks going forward.



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What's more, locally, businesses are starting to play with hyper-convergence, but the digital transformation industry is not mature enough yet here and most hyper-convergence is being done in bits and pieces. However, it is definitely on the radar and in 18 – 24 months, we are likely to see full integration and deployment, and this move to a more software-driven operation, based on simplicity and OPEX, will ultimately define what the network can do.

Digital transformation is more than just a buzzword - it's radically changing businesses and intrinsically linking traditionally siloed business functions. It's critical however that businesses look beyond the hype, but recognise that the 're-platforming' of legacy systems is a foundation for business change – with the network at its core.

ABOUT RIAAN GRAHAM

Riaan Graham is the sales director for Ruckus, sub-Saharan Africa.

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