SASE: THE FUTURE OF NETWORKING HAS ARRIVED

It is time to align the enterprise network with the expectations of the modern cloud-enabled business by providing a secure and seamless user experience regardless of location.

To outpace competitors and cope with market disruption, enterprises are looking to rapidly transition to multi cloud centric models. Critical to these digital transformation efforts is the ability to provide end-users with a secure and seamless experience, so they can quickly access the resources they need, from anywhere in the world. Equally important is the need to keep these resources secure in the face of advanced cybersecurity threats. But can the traditional network model meet these new requirements? I don't think so. A new approach is needed.

COVID induced chaos

Prior to the recent global pandemic, most enterprises relied on traditional networking to connect their disparate offices, datacenters, and remote users. This complex environment frequently contained numerous different underlying technology providers, specialized firewall rules, and access methodologies.

While this patchwork of technologies generally held up to the requirements of the day, maintaining these environments was difficult and required people with specialized skills that couldn't always be quickly duplicated. Tribal knowledge of device configurations and firewall rules created frustration for application owners and end users alike when something wasn't working as expected. Things got even more difficult when the 2020 pandemic arrived virtually overnight, and many enterprises were caught off guard. Shifting a significant part of the workforce to remote working left many enterprise networks unprepared to handle the surge in remote access systems such as Virtual Private Networks. Almost immediately, many business functions ground to a standstill while Information Technology departments rushed to shore up these antiquated and complex systems to support the sudden high volume of remote workers.

What does the future look like?

It's already here! As we look to 2022, the remote work policies that became urgent in 2020 continue to be commonplace. While some businesses have begun to allow a portion of their workforce to return to what is now a very different office space, most are having to cope with the fact that we can't just go back to the way things were—employee expectations have shifted and the hybrid work model is here to stay.

Fortunately, the underlying technology to cope with this 'new normal', with features like secure software defined wide area networks and multi cloud based security services, already exists. Combined into the more common term Secure Access Service Edge, or SASE, it forms the basis to transform one of the last remaining bastions of legacy enterprise systems.

SASE not only addresses the issue of remote worker access, but it also brings a raft of additional benefits, including:

Cost optimization
SASE solutions, like VMware's, allow for connectivity to be provided via Internet peering points such as the types used by existing hyperscale cloud providers. In some instances, it is possible to use the native high speed global networks of the hyperscalers to act as the network backbone of the enterprise. Leveraging this capability can provide a new level of resiliency to the enterprise network. No longer needing specialized and expensive circuits

to interconnect datacenters, offices, and users, not only reduces costs but also greatly simplifies the network architecture.

Security
SASE architecture benefits from a zero-trust network access model. This model allows for a secure and consistent experience for users regardless of how and where they use enterprise resources. Ensuring contextual policies are applied based on business requirements further reduces the 'attack surface' available to exploit. The SASE approach finally harmonizes network access and security into a single end-to-end platform.

Operational clarity
The ability to provide remote access, branch office, and campus connectivity from a single, secure, cloud delivered platform, provides a new level of visibility into applications and the ability to deliver services to where they are needed most. Moving past complex and inflexible legacy methods makes troubleshooting any application issues much simpler. Observing performance and network flow from the user to the application is now a straightforward task. SASE's common platform provides entirely new levels of end-to-end network intelligence.

User experience
It's no longer necessary for workers to chose VPN locations or troubleshoot complex configuration issues to simply do their work. For the user, it becomes a seamless way of working no matter where they're sitting, be it at their office desk, or in an overseas hotel. A reliable Internet connection is all they need. With the enterprise network now essentially hosted in the cloud, users can take advantage of the benefits of the hyperscaler networks by automatically being directed to a SASE

point of presence (PoP) that is closest to them, rather than having to traverse the Internet in an unpredictable and potentially insecure manner.

Branch office transformation

While we have only scratched the surface of how SASE transforms the enterprise, one area I expect to be of special interest is branch office transformation. Branch offices are traditionally connected to the enterprise via a mashup of technologies that were available at the time of deployment. These locations are ripe opportunities for cost optimization and simplification by replacing dedicated circuits and hardware with an Internet connection and SASE solution. A huge advantage of SASE is that it doesn't require a massive, coordinated effort to implement. In most cases, the cloud-based nature of SASE allows a phased approach to deployment in parallel to a legacy solution, reducing the risk of downtime.

We're here to help you on your journey

Executing on your digital transformation strategy requires a partner that has a clear record of delivering on complex transformation initiatives using industry leading technologies such as SD-WAN with SASE. Our SASE solution powered by VMWare's cutting edge technology, can help reduce your costs and untangle technical debt in your current enterprise network. By evaluating and simplifying your overall wide area network and remote access architecture with a SASE solution, we help to reduce the reliance on expensive and complex access mechanisms. With Capgemini you can confidently accelerate your transformation to the cloud and provide an enhanced and secure user experience to your business.
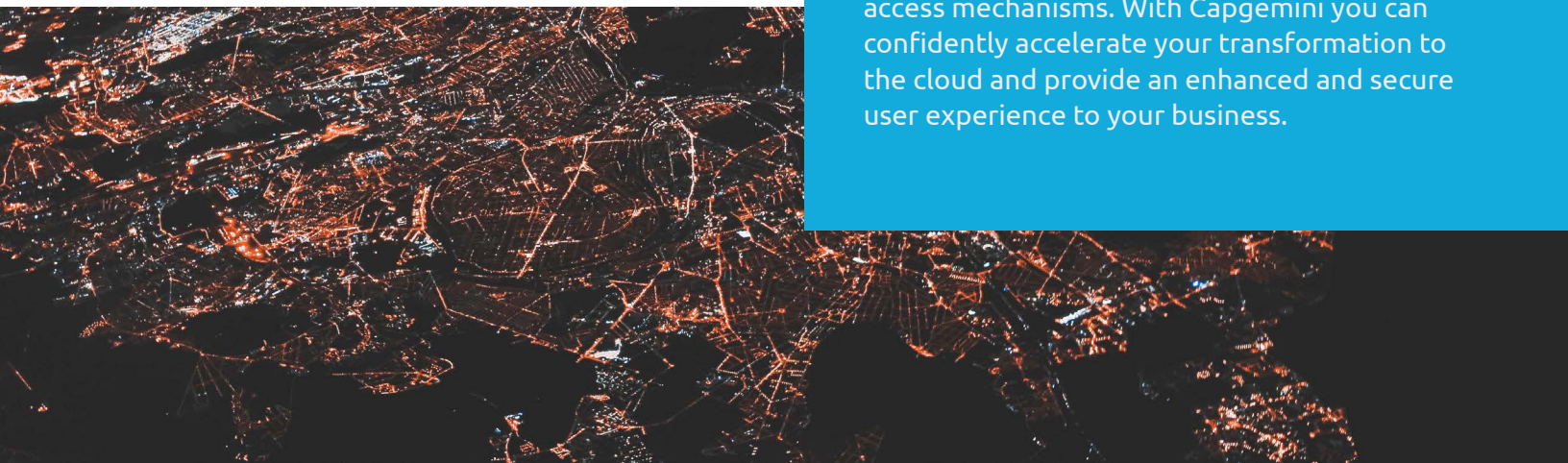
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