



The new branch office: Light on assets, heavy on innovation

By: Voice of Virtela [Post a Comment](#)



Today's enterprises are accelerating growth and expanding global customer reach through branch offices. Branch-office users vital to the organization need the same anytime, anywhere access to business applications and services as their associates at headquarters.



Small or large, branch offices are coming up short

The distributed workforce depends on business-critical applications like SAP and QAD running over the primary MPLS network, and more and more are accessing SaaS solutions like Microsoft Office 365 and Salesforce.com via the cloud. Remote and mobile workers count on their VPN connections, while the BYOD crowd is taking advantage of a growing selection of mobile applications. Whatever they're accessing and however they're doing it, branch-office users need quick, secure, continuous access to applications and services to ensure workplace productivity and a positive experience.

However, the branch-office worker often has to simply make do. Branch offices that pop up through mergers and acquisitions and older branch offices are especially plagued by degraded application response times over the WAN and poor quality of service (QoS). IT managers and IT budgets too often live at headquarters, leaving branch offices generally frustrated.

Getting more for less with an asset-light strategy

Cost reduction is on every CIO's mind these days. But branch and remote sites are particularly sensitive to cuts in IT spending as bottom lines decline. IT managers must figure out how to deliver high-performance, always-available applications and services to their branch offices without huge IT budgets and onsite management and technical support.

The time has come for CIOs to evolve the way they deliver services to the branch office. An asset-light strategy will not just cut costs. Done right, it will allow you to deliver the same level of service to branch-office users as the folks back at headquarters.

Here are 10 key things to look for in cloud-based, asset-light network, mobility and security solutions for your branch offices:

1. **Flexible global network.** Look for a service provider with a global network infrastructure—preferably one that integrates hundreds of the best-performing local, regional and global providers. You'll get greater flexibility and geographic reach than you would from traditional network providers. This is especially important if you're on track to grow your company and may need connectivity to far-reaching branch-office locations.
2. **Localized cloud services.** Adopt a strategy that localizes your asset-light, cloud-based services—both SaaS end-user applications and managed network, mobility and security services—by engaging with a service provider with cloud centers distributed around the globe. This will bring your services and applications closer to your end users, improving performance and the end-user experience.
3. **Best-path routing.** Adopt a managed network infrastructure with best-path routing and auto-failover to ensure superior network performance and uptime for your branch-office employees.
4. **Fast activation.** Find out how quickly the provider can activate the cloud-based services that will cost-effectively support your branch offices. But don't take their word for it. Check with their customers for a realistic deployment picture.
5. **Advanced application acceleration.** If you opt for cloud-based application acceleration to eliminate the need for on-premise devices, don't settle for anything less than a provider that can deliver your business applications up to 25X faster for dollars a day per branch office.
6. **Mobile device management control.** If mobile devices are running amok in your branch offices, consider cloud-based mobile device management for those environments. But don't give up control. You should be able to track, manage and control devices, applications and operating systems from an easy-to-use, customized portal.
7. **Integrated security.** Cloud-based managed security can help you sustain your security and compliance posture while you maintain visibility and control—without needing branch-office hardware. Consider doing business with an integrated network and managed security services provider. They will have the capabilities to aggregate and correlate events across all networks and security devices.
8. **End-to-end SLA.** Make sure the service provider offers an end-to-end SLA that covers all cloud-based network, mobility and security services. This will simplify vendor management on your end and ensure the high-quality, uninterrupted services you demand.
9. **Cutting-edge network analytics.** To ensure network uptime and branch-office business continuity and productivity, look for a service provider that can offer 24/7 network monitoring and predictive, proactive analytics on the state of your network.
10. **Superior customer service.** Don't settle for the headaches that come with the customer support of traditional telecom providers. Expect your call to be handled by network engineers, not phone operators—for rapid resolution of any branch-office issues.

