SD-WAN, the new MPLS.

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Software-Defined Wide Area Networking (SD-WAN) is one of the most disruptive technologies to come to the fore and is impacting MPLS providers' revenues. Many MPLS incumbents find themselves without an SD-WAN offering because they simply don't have the ability to rapidly adopt new technologies and take them to market, and do not want to erode existing revenue streams. Businesses should be cautious about signing new or extending their existing MPLS contracts. The cost, inflexibility and slow time to delivery is making MPLS an archaic technology and one which inhibits cloud migration and future growth. Cloud migration has increased the urgency for transforming wide area networks. According to Gartner 30 - 50 percent of large enterprise traffic is shifting to the cloud, changing traffic flows and making traditional WAN suboptimal, meaning the cloud is becoming the network. Here are five compelling reasons to make the switch to SD-WAN sooner rather than later. **1. Agility, flexibility and cost saving** Businesses currently rely on an MPLS provider that can take days (even weeks) to process requested changes. Enterprises turning to SD-WAN, however, stand to benefit greatly from being able to quickly change policies and provide new services without having to get a provider involved. The technology gives enterprises full control and flexibility. In a retail environment, the rapid provisioning and closing of a site is paramount. With SD-WAN, IT departments can take available off-the-shelf bandwidth, whether it is fibre, ADSL, LTE or satellite and plug the connectivity into the SD-WAN device and the site is live within minutes, at a fraction of the cost. With SD-WAN, a typical site can be between four and ten times more cost-effective with the same service level agreement (SLA) as MPLS, depending on the current MPLS service provider used. **2. Quicker provisioning of services** More enterprise applications are moving to the cloud. A fact confirmed by IDC, which states that 80 percent of new applications will be deployed in the cloud by 2030. With SD-WAN, an IT department has the ability to insert a new service into its network in minutes instead of weeks. Thanks to a central orchestrator, configuring the rules - business logic rules as opposed to very technical rules, is simple. Once the rules are applied, the

SD-WAN infrastructure will replicate them to the edge devices and sites. However, when relying on MPLS, the IT department has to discuss the decision to use a new application or cloud service with its MPLS provider. There can be cost implications and it can take several months to ensure that the MPLS network can reliably carry the new service's traffic across the network. **3. Insight into the network** IT departments and network administrators can have complete insight into their network. They no longer have to log tickets with their service provider to find out the status of a link or site, or make firewall changes. They can have complete visibility through the SD-WAN orchestrator of which sites are up, which ones are down and which ones are performing poorly and then take action to mitigate those issues. **4. Rising bandwidth requirements** According to the IDC, branches experience a 20 percent increase in enterprise WAN bandwidth per year with network traffic doubling every three years. The immediate benefit of SD-WAN, bar the cost saving, is that an enterprise's network will have more bandwidth available at a lower price. The result is that business can find ways to utilise that bandwidth to improve the experience of its customers and staff, and it can introduce new applications into its network. Businesses want to offer their customers new services, including video and guest Wi-Fi. Higher bandwidth applications, such as High Definition video, will typically drain the MPLS network, but with SD-WAN, businesses offload that traffic onto cost-effective internet links. **5. Hybrid deployment** Enterprises currently locked into MPLS contracts can consider a hybrid deployment that combines MPLS with internet off-the-shelf links into the SD-WAN infrastructure. The advantage of SD-WAN is its ability to leverage existing links and over time, as the ease and usability of the system becomes apparent, and as the SLA matches that of MPLS, the MPLS links can be phased out. It is advisable to work with a managed service provider that has both MPLS and SD-WAN experience so that it can consult on a hybrid environment that meets the business's SLA criteria. IT departments have lost control of their corporate networks for far too long. The time is now for businesses to take control of their networks and gain scalability, insight, cost-saving, bandwidth and ultimately future growth. **Post written by Greg de Chasteauneuf CTO Saicom Voice Services (PTY) LTD**