Trends spur modernization

in professional services

Strategies for helping firms enhance network
availability and performance

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Professional services organizations are feeling the pressure to modernize. Key trends such as the rise in cybercrime and growing operational complexity are inspiring professional services companies to evolve their business and improve their competitive edge. With these opportunities come new challenges and trade-offs, leaving firms with difficult decisions and often uncertain paths forward in their digital journey.

Research reveals that approximately 60% of professional services leaders say that technology updates are needed to make substantial improvements to crucial tasks from resource management to project billing and invoicing.[1] This reflects professional services firms' heightened need for innovation and secure, enhanced network availability and performance.

In response, many organizations are turning to outside help for guidance. Research has shown that greater use of managed services tends to correlate with higher levels of organizational goal achievement.[2] This brief explores how a network and managed services partner can assist professional services firms as they seek to advance their business by improving security, innovation and performance as well as the employee and user experience.

Security

Protect apps, data and the network

Professional services organizations are an especially attractive target for cybercriminals. In 2023, only healthcare and financial services experienced more cases of compromised security than professional services.[3] As companies embrace the cloud and add remote and hybrid work models, they increasingly move beyond the protection of private networks.

A greater reliance on the cloud means that the valuable data these companies work with and store — from Social Security numbers to sensitive financial information — becomes more vulnerable as well. Simply consider the business risk to a legal practice or consulting firm if its data is stolen. A breach of one firm can put all of its clients' information at risk as well. As companies address these hurdles, they must ensure that their security processes are simple to execute and manage to help keep the company safe while complying with industry regulatory requirements.
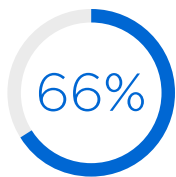
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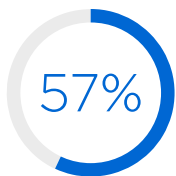of breaches involve data stored across multiple environments.[4]

$5.08M

The average cost per data breach for professional services organizations as of 2024, an increase of 13% over the previous year.[5]

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66%

of tech leaders say mitigating cybersecurity risks is one of their business's highest priorities.[6]

57%

of workers say cutbacks at their organization put them at moderate or extreme risk of cybersecurity attacks.[7]

Safeguard the business across locations

Customized managed security services enable professional services organizations to safeguard access to the cloud, networks and applications by users and devices. These services can assist in automating protection and governance and support regulatory compliance requirements.

The right partner can help:

- **Develop a single enterprise security policy** that spans the company's distributed environment and addresses threat detection, traffic inspection and user access.

- **Deliver defense in depth** with secure access service edge (SASE) solutions that blend a software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN), for unified access and network controls, and secure service edge (SSE), a cloud-based security platform centered on the identity of users, devices and operations.

- **Enable a consistent, universal security experience** for remote and office-based workers with visibility into devices and network traffic, activity and threats.

- **Protect against unauthorized access** to sensitive systems and data loss with a fully managed, cloud-based security solution.

- **Shield applications and systems from attacks** by identifying anomalies in traffic flows as well as responding to and mitigating threats.

- **Protect physical locations** using smart cameras and intelligently monitor critical spaces for potential environmental events with sensors.

- **Keep network and web properties available** by halting volumetric distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks.

- **Strengthen the security posture and support IT teams** via installation, continuous updates and technical support.

Key SASE components

A convergence of SD-WAN networking capabilities and security services, the SASE model typically includes the following components:

- **Zero trust network access (ZTNA)** protects remote network access.

- **Cloud-based firewalls** guard against malware and data breaches.

- **Unified threat management (UTM)** protects on-premises and remote users.

- **Cloud access security brokers (CASBs)** establish secure access to cloud-based applications and protect data.

- **Secure web gateways (SWGs)** enforce security policies, filter web traffic for unwanted content and block unauthorized user behavior.

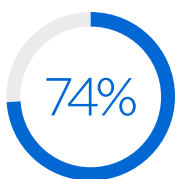- **Multi-factor authentication (MFA)** validates users and devices.

Read the glossary

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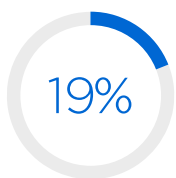
The forecasted compound annual growth rate of IT spending on cloud applications through 2027.[8]

74%

of organizations consider digital transformation a top priority.[9]

Innovation

Improve cloud application performance

Technological innovation is creating new opportunities for professional services organizations to help free overburdened IT teams to focus on other initiatives, such as optimizing the use of the Internet of Things (IoT). Companies are also eager to explore possible use cases for generative AI, machine learning (ML) and automation. In addition, leaders are looking to data analytics to unlock insights about their business, market and customers while improving their predictive capabilities.

Cloud connectivity represents an important driver, addressing the need for flexibility to scale to meet changing demands and market conditions. The cloud supports an expanding remote workforce, reliably connecting employees to the data and resources they need to collaborate. Meanwhile, bandwidth-hungry solutions, including video-calling tools, cloud content management systems and file sharing platforms, push companies to improve their cloud application connectivity and performance. When the effectiveness of these critical tools suffers, so does productivity. To remain competitive, companies also feel an urgency to use cloud-enabled technologies to create additional revenue streams built around new digital products or services — even as budgets and IT resources shrink.

Accelerate innovation and prepare for future business needs

Enterprise cloud services can help professional services organizations digitally transform, adapt to changing demands and prepare for the future. An experienced partner can help position companies to harness modern technologies, including the cloud, and maximize the benefits of today's work-from-anywhere world.

The provider should be able to help:

- **Redesign networks to optimize distributed sites** for higher-performing, efficient internet and cloud access.

- **Improve internet connectivity** and ensure capacity wherever it is needed.

- **Create a highly efficient network** that supports a wide range of traffic and reliably connects multiple buildings or public cloud locations.

- **Optimize data traffic** via an SD-WAN while retaining the existing network and forgoing the need for engaging an on-site technician.

- **Evolve internet capabilities** with assured performance for an exceptional experience all the way into the client suite.

- **Transport data directly to the cloud** to shorten transit time and latency, reduce overhead, eliminate bottlenecks and enhance application performance.

- **Provide access to voice and collaboration resources anywhere, anytime** with unified communications (UC).

- **Offer optimized service-level agreements (SLAs)** that promote predictability and peace of mind.

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Managed services
providers bring solutions,
expertise and support
to help professional
services organizations
accelerate their network
modernization and enhance
the user experience.

User experience

Reliably access apps and networks

In the hypercompetitive professional services world, a poor user experience can be costly to a company's reputation and bottom line. To support the secure, responsive, personalized experience users expect, organizations need effective ways to enhance network and cloud connectivity management. Meeting that bar may require automating how traffic is routed and discontinuing the practice of backhauling to a corporate WAN. Traditional WANs were designed for applications hosted in a central data center, not the cloud, which can slow app performance and create jitter, lag and downtime that compromise the user experience.

Professional services companies commonly transfer large data files and increasingly rely on bandwidth-heavy applications, from UC and data storage to customizable dashboards and self-service portals. The greater the bandwidth demand, the greater the likelihood they will compromise other applications devoted to tasks like sales, document management and data collection. Firms depend on applications that run without interruption. Secure, reliable, always-on connectivity is vital to ensuring that workers and clients can securely access applications and networks regardless of location.

Create a better user experience with improved connectivity

Managed services providers bring solutions, expertise and support to help professional services organizations accelerate their network modernization and enhance the user experience. With the right solutions, employees and clients can reliably and securely connect to the applications and networks they count on to communicate, collaborate and move their business forward.
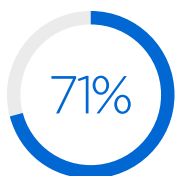
Engaging with a trusted partner can help:

- **Improve the network experience and regulatory compliance**, even for complex networking and routing needs.

- **Combine SD-WAN connectivity, equipment and network management** to support hybrid networks and workforces.

- **Simplify IT operations through networking** with enterprise security features and integrated WiFi and switching in a multi-cloud-ready platform.

- **Reduce latency and enhance the user experience** by discontinuing the practice of backhauling remote traffic through the corporate WAN to apply security policies at a central gateway.

- **Address legacy WAN needs** by enhancing local area networks (LANs) and WAN networking in an integrated solution combining security, visibility and control and SD-WAN connectivity and performance.

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Efficiency

Simplify network administration

Operational demands on professional services organizations continue to grow in complexity as leaders seek to streamline operations, boost efficiency and improve productivity. New technologies and work models are straining the capabilities of current infrastructures and architectures. Firms require a highly efficient network that supports a wide range of traffic, connects multiple buildings or public cloud locations, delivers reliable security and enhances the user experience. Low-latency, secure and cost-effective connectivity is a nonnegotiable requirement.

Busy IT leaders feel the pressure to respond. They know they need to automate traffic routing, simplify and centralize network management and ensure efficient internet and cloud access. The state of the company's WAN may also necessitate an update. Adding to the challenge for IT teams is the fact that they must execute these efforts without negatively impacting current performance or uptime.

Enhance your network by working with a single partner

Overworked professional services IT staff, especially those with limited IT resources, can find peace of mind by drawing on the expertise and support of an experienced industry partner. Aligning with one partner eases IT management demands by reducing vendor sprawl and simplifying the pursuit of improved agility, optimal use and allocation of bandwidth, greater cost efficiencies and more hands-off management.

The right technology partner can help:

- **Streamline complex routing** and simplify efforts to balance and improve traffic performance across sites.

- **Simplify network administration** with SD-WAN while negating the need for an on-site technician.

- **Modernize the WAN infrastructure** and centralize network management.

- **Move additional locations onto the WAN**, establish access to important applications and create a unified experience.

- **Simplify provisioning, visibility and integration** to meet today's complex, ever-changing IT demands.

- **Free up overburdened IT administrators** to turn their attention to other critical projects and initiatives.

- **Provision and scale connectivity**, schedule the install of network equipment and support reconfigurations and policy updates for network access to key applications.

- **Enable quick access and secure management** of client information.

71%

of organizations say their network assets are aging or obsolete.[10]

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Spectrum Enterprise® is your dedicated partner

Technology can empower professional services organizations to operate more efficiently, engage clients more effectively, secure valuable data and even develop entirely new revenue streams. New and emerging solutions can supercharge a firm's digital transformation, putting the company in a better position to grow and thrive. But this promise comes with a caveat: Innovations like IoT, AI, ML and predictive analytics are only as good as the reliability, security and speed of the IT infrastructure that supports them.

Spectrum Enterprise offers a full range of reliable, secure, high-performance, end-to-end enterprise technology solutions that address the network availability and performance needs of professional services providers. Our solutions drive greater flexibility to help organizations modernize their networks and improve efficiency. We simplify the support of remote employees, address work-from-anywhere needs with secure application experiences and protect networks and sensitive client data. Partner with Spectrum Enterprise and we can install and manage the solutions for you, offering an SLA that guarantees 100% uptime all the way to the handoff point* and 100%, 24/7/365 U.S.-based support.

Learn more

*100% uptime SLA guarantee applies only to Dedicated Fiber Internet, Secure Dedicated Fiber Internet, Ethernet Services, Cloud Connect and Enterprise Trunking.

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4. "Cost of Data Breach Report 2024," Ponemon Institute and IBM Security, July 2024.
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6. "Bridging the Gaps to Cyber Resilience: The C-Suite Playbook," PwC, 2024.
7. "ISC2 Reveals Growth in Global Cybersecurity Workforce, But Record-Breaking Gap of 4 Million Cybersecurity Professionals Looms," ISC2, October 31, 2023.
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9. "Flexera 2023 Tech Spend Pulse," Flexera, 2023.
10. "2024 Infrastructure Lifecycle Management Report," NTT Data, 2024.

About Spectrum Enterprise
Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions: Internet access, Ethernet access and networks, Voice and TV solutions. The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit enterprise.spectrum.com.

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