

## The New Branch-Office WAN Delivers Applications at Lower Cost

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New wide-area services that use the Internet can cut the cost of branch-office links, and new techniques can improve application performance. This Spotlight outlines various approaches and helps you make the right choice.

## ANALYSIS

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Many organizations are now replacing private branch-office networks with virtual private networks (VPNs) over the Internet or over shared services, such as Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS). By carefully selecting wide-area connectivity services and network equipment, organizations can save money while improving the performance of business applications.

But there's no one approach to global WAN services that will suit all organizations, as regional markets are heading in different directions. Clients should balance the use of Internet and MPLS services with alternative access technologies, such as digital subscriber line, depending on the region. In "Strategy for Global WAN Services Must Reflect Regional Trends," we examine typical strategies of international businesses and outline their pros and cons.

For many organizations, Internet-based branch-office connectivity, secured using an IPsec virtual private network (VPN) can save them money on their wide-area networks. In "Six Things You Need to Know About Site-to-Site IPsec VPNs," we present six guidelines to help organizations achieve cost-savings, to design the network to support future needs and to select cost-effective VPN equipment. Follow our tactical guidelines to ensure that the transition from private routed networks maintains service levels and reduces costs.

Prompted by increased concerns over security and backup of branch data (often driven by new legislation), and by the desire to reduce branch office IT support costs, many organizations are moving to a "serverless" branch office, where all servers (like those used for e-mail, files, ERP and CRM) are located in a central data center. In "BOBs Help You Make the Most of Branch Office WANs," we show how a new kind of product, the branch office box (a hybrid of server and WAN optimization controller), can be used to cut costs and improve control.

Finally, many IT managers recognize that they must prepare their enterprise networks to support voice over IP (VoIP), but they are not aware of vendors that can assist in this task. Voice behaves differently from data applications and requires specialized tools. In "Readying Your Network for VoIP," we describe products specifically designed for IT professionals to evaluate and monitor converged enterprise networks.

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