# BT's Connect Intelligence IWAN SD-WAN Solution — New Communication Choices for the Cloud-Connected Enterprise

January 28, 2016

By: Nav Chander, Courtney Munroe, Melanie Posey

## IDC's Quick Take

BT Global Services (BTGS) has launched new capabilities for its BT Connect portfolio of global managed enterprise services with its Connect Intelligence IWAN, a software-defined WAN (SD-WAN) managed service offering in partnership with Cisco Systems' Intelligent WAN (IWAN) SD-WAN platform. BTGS, one of the largest MPLS VPN managed service providers, is the first global carrier to leverage and combine SDN and cloud-connect technology for a global rollout of SD-WAN services. IDC believes that this solution places BT in a great position to address enterprises' growing use of Internet-based services and applications across the WAN with flexible access network choices. BTGS will be able to better compete for VPN and WAN service opportunities in markets such as the United States. BT is implementing its SDN and NFV technology as part of this SD-WAN solution, enabling a rapid global rollout of flexible WAN services, not just a complementary service to the BT Connect Intelligence portfolio.

## Product Announcement Highlights

On January 26, BT Global Services announced its global launch of BT Connect Intelligence IWAN, a new managed service that enables organizations to automatically route and optimize WAN network traffic and gain visibility of applications' performance. BT Connect Intelligence IWAN integrates the Cisco Intelligent WAN solution into the BT Connect portfolio of network services.

The BT Connect Intelligence IWAN SD-WAN solution is a transport-independent VPN service that enables the delivery of applications across the network leveraging access network connectivity to specific application requirements across a WAN with available MPLS, Internet, Satellite, or 4G access networks.

In collaboration with Cisco, BT plans to implement several service enhancements for the Connect Intelligent IWAN portfolio that will be phased in throughout 2016 and 2017. The first phase will focus on providing IWAN 2.0 functionality integrated with BTGS' network management tools to existing enterprises that use Cisco CPE routers.

The first phase of the Connect Intelligence IWAN service will support the following features:

- Optimize the use of hybrid VPN networks for branch-office WAN connectivity over MPLS, Internet, or 3G/4G access networks
- Application-based network policies that route data, voice, and video applications across the appropriate WAN link based on real-time requirements
- Enterprise access to application visibility and analytics via BT's My Account Web portal
- Use of Cisco WAAS software to deliver WAN and application acceleration for Internet-based applications

BT and Cisco are already collaborating to offer this solution today to existing BT managed services customers that have installed Cisco CPE routers that can support a software upgrade for the IWAN functionality.

The first phase of the solution is available today globally, and BTGS already has several large enterprise customers that are deploying this in hybrid VPN environments. Future releases will integrate Connect Intelligent IWAN with BT's Internet Connect, IP Connect, and Cloud Connect services.

BTGS also announced that Walgreens Boots Alliance's businesses in the United Kingdom and in around 20 other countries are set to be one of the first BT Connect Intelligence IWAN customers, taking advantage of the service's reach and scalability to support their international operations. This solution allows BT to offer a rapid service turn up in markets where BT is not the access network provider and can provide this as an overlay solution leveraging Internet access and 4G access for retail store sites and integrate these into a hybrid VPN with SD-WAN.

## IDC's Point of View

While enterprises' application traffic traditionally traveled from desktop to datacenter, today it might originate on the desktop or a mobile device and move to the datacenter, a software-as-a-service (SaaS) provider, or an infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) provider like Amazon, Google, or Microsoft. Simply adding more bandwidth or using rate-shaping devices isn't sufficient to support rapidly changing applications crossing the WAN from an increasing variety of locations.

IDC believes that BTGS' Connect Intelligence IWAN solution addresses the shift in enterprises' increasing use of cloud hosted SaaS and IaaS and other Internet-based services, in addition to legacy premise-based applications, and the impact to branch-office WAN requirements. Enterprises are increasingly seeking dynamic service choices that support faster provisioning, agility, self-service, and flexibility to change bandwidth provisioning by application or time of day.

IDC believes that there is a marked shift away from enterprises managing their own IT and WAN infrastructure, including servers and datacenter-based functions, to more of a managed environment that includes both public and hosted private cloud services. This shift is affecting the WAN network communication requirement choices as enterprises try to plan for both external cloud-connected and traditional WAN environments within a flat IT budget. At the same time, enterprises are becoming more aware and familiar with SDN and SD-WAN technology choices, and IDC believes that in 2016, there will be a shift toward these new services

IDC views the BT solution is well positioned for these changes and believes its aggressive positioning of SD-WAN is a sensible strategy for branch-office WAN communications, even though there is a possibility that some of BT's installed MPLS VPN customers may shift connectivity to the Internet or purchase SD-WAN solutions from vendors directly.

BTGS is the second Tier 1 global managed service provider to announce an SD-WAN solution leveraging Cisco IWAN technology in the past five months. In IDC's view, BTGS is not only reselling the Cisco IWAN but developing a tighter integration of this SD-WAN solution into the wider BT Connect portfolio, including the BT Cloud Connect solution and BT's SDN management tools as part of a strategy to integrate the SD-WAN functionality into a more holistic BTGS managed WAN communication service. While BTGS, unlike AT&T and NTT Communications, is not taking a comprehensive bottom-up DevOps

approach to SDN/NFV development, it is nonetheless developing its own intellectual property (IP) at the management layer and tying this into the broader BTGS "Cloud of Clouds" development.

**Subscriptions Covered:**

Carrier IP Network Infrastructure and Virtualization, Global Telecom Indicators, Managed and Cloud-Hosted Virtualized Network Services, United States Enterprise Communications Services, Worldwide Telecommunications Markets