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Agilent Takes Viptela SD-WAN to Life Sciences Space

By Wyatt Carlson

Life sciences testing and measurement manufacturer Agilent implemented Viptela's software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) technology across its 120 global sites to increase its bandwidth, increase availability for critical services, and steer WAN traffic across the most efficient transport links.

Agilent wanted to reevaluate its WAN so it could more easily handle bandwidth and cut down on the expensive global MPLS it relied on.

When Agilent came across the SD-WAN space, it initially looked at 15 different companies and narrowed it down to three vendors' technologies to test in its lab. In the lab, Agilent built out a small-scale version of its network and told the vendors to implement their SD-WAN technology, said Pascal Heger, global network architect at Agilent.

Specifically, Agilent was looking for things like quality of service manipulation, traffic steering, failover conditions, and dynamic routing conditions. Even though Viptela wasn't a big name at the time, it outperformed the other two vendors by a long shot, Heger claimed.

In addition to the features described above, Viptela was able to offer Agilent controller-based orchestration, monitoring capabilities, hardware support, and integration capabilities. For example, Agilent uses security functions from Zscaler for things like URL filtering, bandwidth restrictions, and traffic steering policies. And Viptela's technology was able to easily integrate with those Zscaler services.

Since Viptela's SD-WAN was deployed at Agilent in January 2016, it has seen a number of benefits. It's given them capabilities, including monitoring, integrated security, more bandwidth, and better performance — for the same price as MPLS.

However, the switch to SD-WAN was not undertaken as a cost-saving effort on Agilent's part, Heger said.

"In order to keep up with the constant demand for bandwidth — with more devices and more content going through our network — we had to be able to support that," Heger explained. "We now have so much bandwidth available at the same cost to be able to support the future needs of the company as we grow."

The company now relies exclusively on Internet connectivity for smaller sites and uses a combination of MPLS and Internet circuits for its larger ones. Having multiple Internet circuits at its sites makes the network more reliable because if one fails, it can easily rollover to another one, Heger said.

The Santa Clara, California-based company has 12,000 employees in 30 different countries and was founded in 2000 when it was spun-out of Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE).