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7 key things you need to know about On Demand and SDN.

Business IP traffic is growing at a CAGR of 23%, with Cisco predicting it will total over 63 Exabytes (EB) per month by 2022 as more applications move to the cloud and new online services compete for attention.

For CIOs and network managers, one of the biggest challenges is predicting the sectors of the business and the applications that will drive this growth, and ensuring the network has the flexibility to support them.

On Demand and Software Defined Networking can provide the flexibility that businesses need, by enabling the network can grow and flex as required. This ensures IT is seen as an enabler of innovation in the business and that budgets are met.

1 Why consider Software Defined Networking (SDN) and On Demand?

"Never change a running system" is one of the most misunderstood IT principles. It derives from the sporting phrase "Never change a winning team". But, as every good coach knows, even the best teams have to develop continuously or risk failure. Football teams are a great example, where in recent years Bayern Munich, Barcelona and Juventus have won an array of titles whilst constantly evolving. The same applies to your company's IT systems. Even if your infrastructure and network are state of the art you should look to update them at regular intervals.

2 How do companies benefit from On Demand services?

In the past, businesses had to plan investment in their networks long in advance. If they needed more bandwidth, they started planning weeks or even months before implementation. It took time before connections and lines were laid and activated. That all changes with SDN and On Demand services. Now businesses can request, provide and utilise bandwidth in a couple of minutes with a just few clicks and respond flexibly to peak loads. For example when a major bank compiles its annual financial statements, when digital films are supplied for a film festival or when traffic to online shops surge in the run-up to Christmas. In normal day-to-day operations, businesses also benefit from this new flexibility. Unlike conventional contracts, the minimum contractual term for On Demand connections is just one hour. That's ideal if you only need them for a short time.

3 Are companies already using On Demand services?

Yes, for example, the Berlin International Film Festival, otherwise known as Berlinale. In autumn, bandwidth requirements skyrocket as the first contributions arrive in Berlin and need to be reviewed. Then, during the festival in February, Berlinale increases the bandwidth to 1Gbps or even

10Gbps, depending on the connection, to transfer films to the cinemas. In the Berlinale data centre, an internet connection is available that can be used to upload films from studios and post-production directly to servers. The standard bandwidth is 1Gbps however in the weeks before the Berlinale, as the number of films sent increases drastically, the bandwidth is boosted to 10Gbps. Between the festivals, i.e. for the rest of the year, bandwidth requirements are generally lower.

4 What do businesses need before they can use On Demand services?

To use On Demand services, your company needs a connection to an intelligent network and a carrier-Ethernet multi-service platform (M-MSP). This fully modular, open and vendor-agnostic platform is designed to address the connectivity requirements of carriers and businesses that need to link their data centres and headquarters with thousands of sites across the world. You will also need access to an On Demand portal, in which you can define two endpoints, reserve the corresponding ports and release them.

In addition to the country, the city and the location, the portal also lets you choose the appropriate wiring. As soon as you have established two or more ports, you can connect them in a matter of minutes and select the VLAN configuration, bandwidth and price model you want.

5 What does network administration via an On Demand portal cost?

There's no definitive answer to this question. Generally SDN and On Demand services change the way you pay for network services. For a 100Gbps connection you only use a few days a year, you don't have to sign a contract that runs for years. In the future, you only have to pay for the network services you actually use. According to market researcher IDC, companies who use On Demand services over five years, benefit from operational costs that are 10-28% lower if they buy network components, or 7-23% lower if they lease network components.
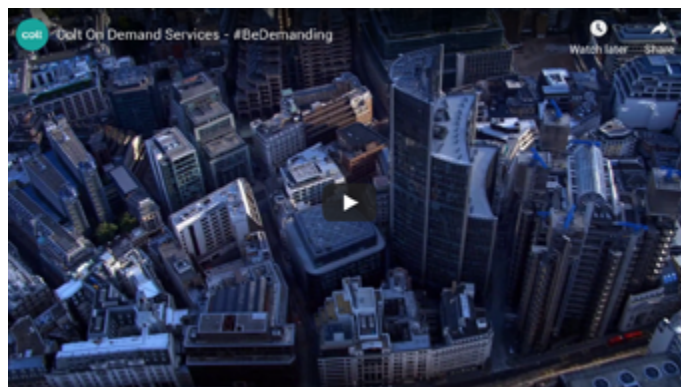
6 How can I recognise a good On Demand service provider?

Look for suppliers recommended by independent experts and institutions, for example the Metro Ethernet Forum (MEF) or in the Global Carrier Awards. Also make sure the provider has its own fibre-optic network, which means it has full control over its network and can respond rapidly if any problems arise.

Ideally, the supplier's own network should be available in all countries where you have branches and you should also demand a service level agreement (SLA) from your supplier. This document defines what service quality you can expect and the more figures in the document, the more transparent the supplier is about its network and performance.

7 Where can I find out more?

You can find further details here **www. colt.net/product/on-demand-services**.

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