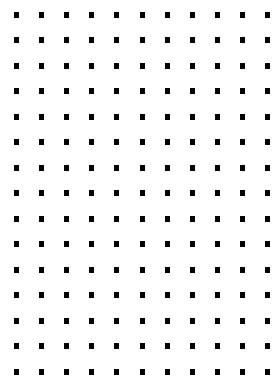


# Top 4 Capabilities To Look for in SD-Branch Management



Services and capabilities at the branch continue to expand with rapid adoption of Internet-of-Things (IoT) devices, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) applications, and voice/video tools. This is driving a reexamination of branch network architecture with a goal of reducing complexity and cost. To meet business objectives, technologies such as software-defined wide-area networking (SD-WAN) are seeing significant adoption as organizations realize this meets these goals, at least for WAN. As these benefits extend into more of the branch architecture, SD-Branch solutions can further consolidate and simplify all branch networking aspects.

To efficiently manage such a diverse group of technologies (WAN, local-area networking [LAN], security) a single-pane-of-glass view of all the equipment is only the beginning. When evaluating SD-Branch solutions, there are four key management capabilities to look for:

## Zero-touch Provisioning

Whether at initial deployment or when bringing new sites online later, the solution needs to support zero-touch provisioning (ZTP). It's important to minimize the amount of technical expertise needed at an installation site. Ideally, once plugged in, the equipment can connect to the internet and automatically find the management platform. The intended configuration can then be applied to branch equipment, bringing everything from WAN, to LAN, to security online quickly, easily, and securely.

## Configuration Management

The management platform should facilitate the management of expected configurations for all SD-Branch equipment. This should be more than just a single template. It must be able to take necessary deviations and exceptions into account in a way that is easy to understand and manage.

## Orchestration

On top of configuration management, orchestration is needed to coordinate between resources and ensure all network pieces, from the branch to headquarters, are working correctly. In the case of SD-Branch, look for a solution that coordinates WAN paths in addition to LAN routing elements.

## Automation With Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Machine Learning (ML)

AI with ML capabilities can significantly decrease the amount of time spent on troubleshooting and dealing with incidents as they arise. Look for an AI/ML solution that can track trends and prevent issues. When there is a problem, the solution should dramatically simplify the troubleshooting process with actionable intelligence for the user. Also look for the capability to assist with validating configurations by checking against the likely intent (using past or other configurations). Deviations that may arise from operator error can be flagged for correction.

To achieve effective SD-Branch operations, make sure to look for a solution that brings all the elements of ZTP, configuration management, orchestration, and automation with AI/ML together.

