Your questions about software-defined networking

The future is exciting.

Ready?

vodafone business

The enterprise network has come of age

The time when your business had to look after your network is over. Software-defined networking means your network can now start looking after you. And not a moment too soon.

Because, above all else, business success and survival now rely on having the agility and freedom to innovate. Whether that's grabbing the potential of 5G, capitalising on a connected world with IoT, or harnessing the power of AI, software -defined networks are the cornerstone of digital transformation.

This guide provides you an overview of the FAQ's surrounding software-defined networking; helping to underpin what software-defined networking can do for you, what opportunities it opens up and how it makes other transformational technologies a reality.

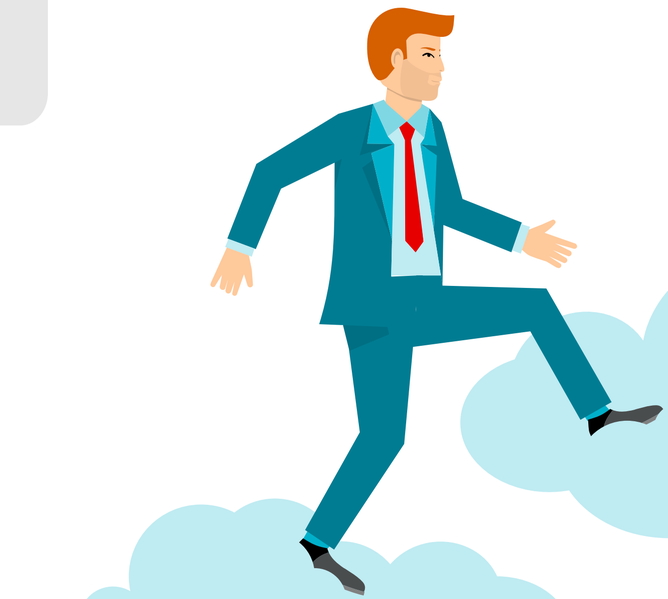
People have been talking about software-defined networks for years. Isn’t it just hype?

Software-defined networks are a game-changer, and we don't say that lightly.

In the past, it’s been expensive, time-consuming and complicated for businesses to make changes to their network. In effect, the network has become a disabler for enterprises, hampering innovation. And it’s expensive.

Software-defined networks allow your network to catch up with the pace of business, with the freedom of the cloud, with the demands of digital. It gives businesses a whole new level of agility, visibility and control.

But more than just catching up, software-defined networks also allows businesses to make leaps forward with other exciting technologies like AR, AI and IoT.



Software-defined networks allow businesses to make leaps forward with other exciting technologies

What's so great about software-defined networking?

A lot of businesses still buy their network from a network services provider. If they want to make changes – deploy a new application or support a new product, for example – they're reliant on third party network specialists. And changes take hours, even days.

Software-defined networking gives businesses a way to manage and develop their own networks; enabling them to respond rapidly to changing business needs.

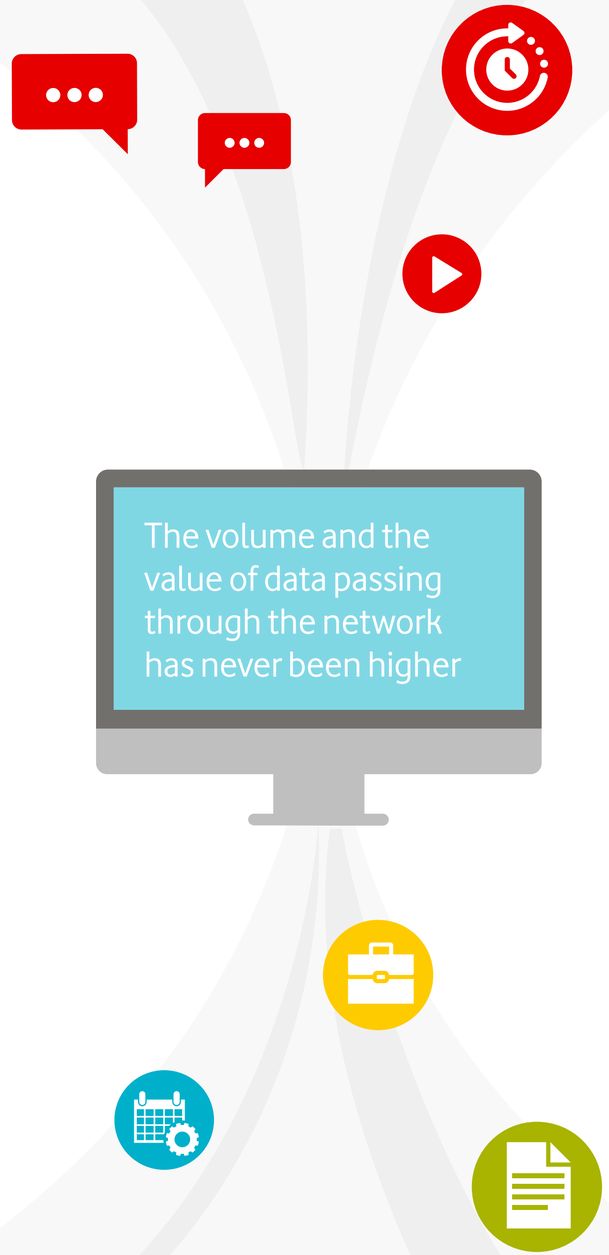
They also give businesses a real-time view of their entire network and greater insight into how their applications are performing. That means they can pre-empt security threats, avoid traffic bottlenecks, or ring-fence capacity for critical applications.

Software-defined networking – why now?

The volume and the value of data passing through the network has never been higher. Ever-increasing demand for always-on cloud services, video streaming and business digitalisation means that traditional networks are struggling with the sheer amount of data running through them.

Software-defined networks give businesses the ability to go to market with new services via new channels faster than ever. It also allows them to be masters of their own network traffic and performance. That control and agility is an important competitive advantage in every marketplace.

And let's not forget cybercrime. Hackers' tech, tools and tactics are getting more sophisticated by the day and we're only as secure as the networks that connect us. Software-defined networks allow you to see what's going on across your whole network, detect malicious traffic and enable you to react with speed.

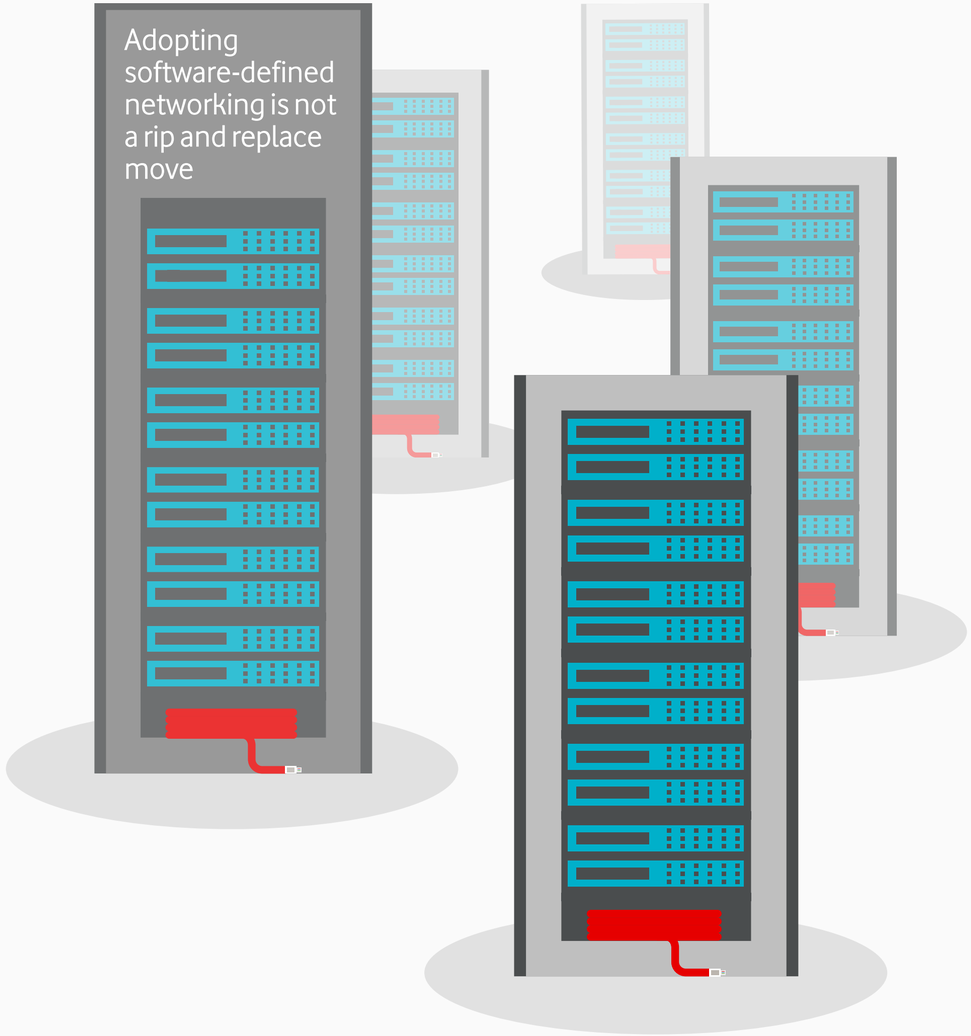


Isn’t software-defined networking just for the big boys?

During the early-adopter phase over the last two years, it was mainly hi-tech companies with large engineering teams and leading-edge service providers like Vodafone Business who made a head start on the benefits of software-defined networking.

Today we’re seeing all kinds of enterprises move towards software-defined networking. The thing all these businesses have in common is a cloud-first strategy – as well as a desire to be more agile and reduce cost and complexity.

For mid-sized organisations with small IT teams, transitioning to software-defined networking can feel daunting. And if their existing network is running fine, they may be particularly reluctant to make the move. Vodafone Business’ job is to help organisations of all sizes make the move seamlessly at a pace they’re happy with.



But isn’t it risky to switch networks?

No, in fact it’s never been easier. Adopting software-defined networking is not a rip-and-replace move; you can still use some of your existing technology.

The key thing to remember is that the transition is not as complex as you might imagine. Many enterprises are using SD-WAN as an overlay network, placing it on top of their existing network. There’s almost no risk or operational disruption; they’re seeing immediate benefits and are done and dusted in a matter of months.

We’re not saying it’s a walk in the park. Network change affects your organisational structure, culture and your operating model. But with the right deployment plan and network partner in place, businesses overcome all those barriers.

How are businesses approaching migration?

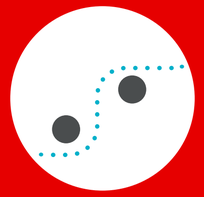
Ultimately, it depends on your organisation's digital strategy, and how quickly you're trying to move to agile and cloud-native technologies.

If you're doing it iteratively in small silos, software-defined network migration tends to follow the same path. If on the other hand, like some of our major customers, you're rebuilding the entire customer experience model for digital, software-defined networking will have a much broader adoption.

Vodafone Business spends a lot of time with customers to understand their existing network topology. Often, you find infrastructure has been built over many years, with elements added ad hoc. Sometimes, even customers themselves don't understand their topology.

We see it as our responsibility to work with them to understand where they are right now, and where they want to be – then map out exactly how to make that happen, in a way and at a pace that suits them without dropping quality of service or availability.

Key takeaways

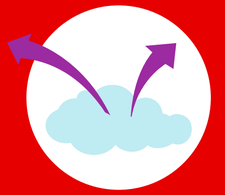


A software-enabled world is really happening – it's not just hype. Businesses are starting to incorporate software-defined networks into their network strategy.

Software-defined networking fixes the problems that have been hampering businesses for decades, instead making businesses flexible and agile.

The barriers to switching network provider are no longer an issue – migrating to software-defined networking is easy and low risk.

We're moving from a connectivity-based era to an era of operational simplicity, delivering services in an open, agile and seamless way.



Enterprise network leaders can use software-defined networks as the foundation for cloud-native services, digital tools, AI, AR and IoT-enabled customer experiences.

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