



CHECKLIST

Key Traits That Define Good Wireless Management Systems

When comparing various vendor solutions for wireless LAN, an important aspect to consider is the management utility the vendor provides with the solution. This management tool often can determine whether the solution is a smooth-running asset or a complicated headache.

Here are key capabilities to look for when evaluating vendor solutions.

Integrates across multiple network components

Dealing with multiple management systems is always a hassle. A wireless solution that integrates more of the network than just the wireless will save IT time. At a minimum, Ethernet, SD-WAN, and security should be integrated.

The overall goal is to ensure new technologies can be added to the existing management solution as the network expands and other equipment comes up for refresh. Otherwise, more management platforms will need to be added, causing extra work and draining resources. Keep in mind that true integration is more than a single pane of glass. Configuration should be unified as much as possible, with settings that can be leveraged across technologies to avoid configuration errors and mismatches.

Scales to solve network needs today and tomorrow

One size rarely fits all. A management suite that can expand and scale as the business grows is important. Otherwise the time spent learning and understanding the solution today will be obsolete or worthless if it can't keep up with network changes. The management solution should allow for additional features and capabilities in the future, but without adding undue burden (or cost) to a smaller deployment today.

Comes in a variety of form factors

Many network management solutions are moving to cloud delivery, but as powerful as the cloud is, it's not always the best choice. Make sure the vendors you evaluate can offer cloud-based and on-premises offerings for their management suites. The right answer for management today might not be the same tomorrow. Form-factor choices will ensure the wireless infrastructure won't need to be ripped and replaced later if the decision is made to switch to or from a cloud-based solution.

Includes flexible feature options

Features that are key to some customers are unimportant to others, and some capabilities only become important when the network is of a certain size or scale. Make sure that the solution you choose is flexible, allowing you to integrate and utilize those features that are key, while not paying for (in dollars or complexity) those things that don't matter. Extensible platforms that converge functionality within a single suite will make long-term management much less time-intensive.

Provides automated management

As your network grows, so does complexity. The wireless network should include a management platform built to handle menial tasks. This will enable IT staff to focus on important strategic initiatives. In addition, deployment should be simplified (zero-touch deployment), with automatic configuration of newly deployed devices, rather than requiring oversight by a skilled technician. Whether these elements are branded artificial intelligence (AI), automation, or something else, it's the functionality that matters, not the label.

Summary

When considering wireless solutions, keep in mind the capabilities on this checklist to find the right management system. This will set the network up for success—not only for wireless LAN, but across all network technologies.