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Mark has a long career in IT, spanning consultant, entrepreneur, industry analyst, product marketer, software developer and salesperson. He spent 12 years at IBM in roles including worldwide security sales enablement and SIEM product management. He's also worked at Ping Identity, Polarsoft, Siebel Systems, Sybase and other leading firms.

Preliminary results from SASE/ZTNA research yield key insights

TMT Consulting, a part of S&P Global Market Intelligence, was commissioned by Verizon to conduct a multi-month qualitative study focused on secure access service edge (SASE) and zero-trust network access (ZTNA). The objective of this research, which is still underway, is to understand business drivers, key decision-making criteria, deployment types, barriers and key learnings from organizations that are evaluating and conducting SASE/ZTNA projects across Europe and Asia-Pacific.

Since SASE and ZTNA are still relatively new – emerging in 2019 – many organizations are keenly interested in hearing about the business value and challenges that others are experiencing with these projects, providing a head start for those that have not yet begun their own. And while this study is still in the field, data acquired so far has proven useful, providing some key insights. Since the approach for this study is primarily qualitative, obtained from in-person interviews and a virtual collaborative discussion board, the results reflect deep learning through direct peer experience about what worked – and what did not.

Drivers of SASE/ZTNA deployments include business transformation, increases in IT security, cost savings, improved customer and user experience, increased compliance levels and improved business agility. Many organizations are seeing benefits in multiple areas. Virtual private network (VPN) replacement or augmentation is the driver cited most often, with organizations also reporting improved user experience and greater support for remote workers as key benefits. Some companies are also seeing reduced costs through easier deployment of user workstations and simplified connectivity requirements when opening remote offices because SASE can remove the need to provision dedicated wide-area networks and VPNs.

Organizations are realizing significant user- and customer-experience benefits from these projects due to the removal of VPN client software and elimination of the hassles in making VPN connections to access organizational resources. ZTNA approaches result in improved security due to network micro-segmentation, a key feature, ensuring that users gain access only to resources assigned to their role. There are also compliance benefits to this approach, as some regimes are moving toward requiring zero-trust architectures.

Participants are reporting several deployment barriers and other knowledge they've gained along the way. These include:

- Difficulties in understanding organizational IT architectures and mapping them to SASE frameworks
- The need to identify and mitigate risks
- Challenges in explaining the value proposition and business case for the project
- Identifying a "shortlist" of prospective vendors and deployment partners
- Determining the best way to manage the implementation – e.g., deployment using in-house resources versus using a systems integrator (SI), consulting firm or vendor

Preliminary findings suggest that study participants are pleased with the results of their SASE/ZTNA migrations. Many have reported several key benefits, with improved user experience and replacement of legacy VPNs have been cited repeatedly, along with a reduction in network communication costs. Improved business agility, particularly around support for remote workers, partners and customers, is another major benefit. In addition, improved security through ZTNA is translating into lower business risk and improved compliance. As this research progresses over the next month, we will continue to publish updates on our findings, gained through extensive collaboration with people actively involved in these projects. These updates will include best-practice guidance for SASE and ZTNA decision-making and deployments, plus knowledge on sourcing external assistance and tracking the benefits from implementation.

Learn more

To find out more about SASE, visit our website. This is regularly updated with new content on this fast-moving topic. The results of the research mentioned in the above article will be published here:

[verizon.com/business/en-gb/resources/lp/secure-access-service-edge/](https://www.verizon.com/business/en-gb/resources/lp/secure-access-service-edge/)