



Enterprise Case Study

Williams-Sonoma's Network Journey to SD-WAN and SASE in Retail

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Raleigh Mann, a Senior Vice President of Technology at Williams-Sonoma, Inc. a multi-brand omni-retail company with over 520 stores in North America, is embarking on a digital transformation journey by adopting **SD-WAN and SASE** solutions for the brick-and-mortar locations.

This white paper explores the motivations, requirements, challenges, and future considerations driving Williams-Sonoma's adoption strategy.

The Need for Transformation

Williams-Sonoma's legacy network infrastructure, reliant on T1 lines and MPLS connections, faces increasing limitations in supporting the company's evolving business needs:

WILLIAMS-SONOMA, INC.

Growing bandwidth demands: Upgraded POS systems, guest Wi-Fi, and the need to showcase online products require significantly more bandwidth than T1 connections can provide.

Inefficient traffic routing: Backhauling all traffic to centralized data centers creates latency issues and suboptimal user experiences, particularly for accessing company websites and cloud applications.

High operational costs: Maintaining security appliances and MPLS circuits across hundreds of stores significantly impacts operating margins.

Embracing SD-WAN and SASE

To address these challenges, Williams-Sonoma is shifting towards SD-WAN and SASE:

SD-WAN: Allows for utilizing multiple internet circuits, optimizing traffic flow based on application requirements, and ensuring business-critical applications receive priority.

SASE: Enables secure access to cloud resources and internet applications through a cloud-delivered security stack, reducing reliance on on-premises security appliances.

Key Requirements and Gaps

Williams-Sonoma has identified several key requirements for its SD-WAN and SASE deployment:

Unified control plane: A single control plane for both network and security policies is crucial to streamline management and avoid conflicting policies.

Application awareness: Security policies should be aware of application-specific traffic prioritization implemented at the SD-WAN layer to ensure optimal performance.

Integration with existing security infrastructure: A seamless integration with the existing on-premises security stack is desired to avoid creating isolated security silos.

Comprehensive functionality: Support for essential features like RDP proxy and visibility into on-premises applications is critical for enterprise needs.

However, existing SD-WAN and SASE offerings fall short of meeting all these requirements, exhibiting gaps in:

Integrated control plane: Current solutions often lack a truly unified control plane, requiring separate management consoles for network and security aspects. Even SASE products that exist in the same catalog as firewall products are still managed through separate controllers.

Policy consistency: Inconsistencies between security policies defined for VPN access and application access create unnecessary complexity and potential security vulnerabilities.

On-premises visibility: Many SASE solutions prioritize cloud visibility while lacking adequate support for monitoring on-premises application performance.

Challenges and Strategies

Beyond technology gaps, Williams-Sonoma faces challenges in procuring and managing last-mile internet connectivity:

Limited provider options: Mall locations often restrict internet provider choices or may even act as a local carrier with exclusive rights, creating potential single points of failure.

5G implementation complexities: Using 5G as a secondary connection faces hurdles due to signal limitations and physical constraints within large mall environments.

To mitigate these challenges, Williams-Sonoma will adopt a phased approach:

Pilot deployments: Testing SD-WAN and SASE solutions in select stores will help identify real-world performance and address potential integration issues.

Exploring managed services: Evaluating the feasibility of managed SD-WAN and SASE deployments through an MSP could provide access to best-of-breed solutions and accelerate implementation.

Hybrid approach: Combining SASE with a centralized SD-WAN hub could offer a balance between security and control while facilitating the transition to a zero-trust model.

The Role of MEF

Williams-Sonoma sees a crucial role for MEF in shaping the SD-WAN and SASE landscape:

- **Standardization:** Establishing industry standards and testing methodologies will ensure interoperability and allow for evaluating vendor solutions based on clearly defined criteria.
- **Collaboration:** Fostering collaboration between network and security vendors will help bridge existing gaps and drive the development of integrated solutions.
- **Security Enhancements:** Promoting standardized APIs for security threat information sharing will enable proactive threat mitigation and improve overall security posture.

Conclusion

Williams-Sonoma's journey towards SD-WAN and SASE adoption showcases the evolving needs of modern retail businesses. Addressing current technology gaps and fostering industry collaboration through organizations like MEF will be crucial in unlocking the full potential of these technologies and enabling a secure and seamless digital transformation.

About MEF

MEF is a global consortium of service, cloud, cybersecurity, and technology providers collaborating to accelerate enterprise digital transformation. It delivers standards-based frameworks, services, technologies, APIs, and certification programs to enable Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) across an automated ecosystem. MEF is the defining authority for certified Lifecycle Service Orchestration (LSO) business and operational APIs and Carrier Ethernet, SASE, SD-WAN, Zero Trust, and Security Service Edge (SSE) technologies and services.

MEF's [Global NaaS Event](#) (GNE) convenes industry leaders building and delivering the next generation of NaaS solutions. For more information about MEF, visit [MEF.net](https://mef.net) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and YouTube.

For more information on the role of SASE and SD-WAN within NaaS, see MEF's *NaaS Industry Blueprint* at <https://www.mef.net/naas/>

To engage with MEF on SASE and learn more about SASE certification, contact SASE@mef.net.

