

Nominee: Dimension Data

Nomination title: Software-defined Networking Development Model

What are your product's / solution's key distinguishing features and/or USP?

Dimension Data's Software-defined Networking Development Model is a consulting service designed to give organisations greater clarity on SDN, so they can get responses to many unanswered SDN architecture questions including; how an enterprise's new network will interface with the rest of its ICT infrastructure, what skills will be required to support SDN, and what its impact will be on their broader ICT strategies? Designed to educate enterprises on all aspects of SDN, the Model also analyses an organisation's readiness to deploy SDN through four lenses: infrastructure readiness; operational readiness; organisational change and business alignment.

The Model delivers:

- Improved knowledge – providing comprehensive education about what SDN is, the differing approaches to SDN, industry bodies for SDN, and the terminology used to standardise the discussion
- Greater understanding of the impact of SDN – exploring the effect of SDN on existing ICT infrastructure, operations, the organisation, and business alignment
- A clear vision – identifying possible business use cases and describing the organisation's overall goals and strategy related to SDN
- A defined 'as-is' and 'to-be' state – detailing the current state and the desired state to ensure more clarity in terms of the approach
- A deployment roadmap – planning a route from the 'as-is' to the 'to-be' state, including recommendations to get started

The Model provides a practical approach to SDN through a set of actionable recommendations. Using Dimension Data's market experience and extensive knowledge of network design and operation, while also taking on board the latest innovative thinking from the industry, it is proven to deliver SDN architectures that are tailor made to meet both current and future business objectives.

(263 words)

What tangible impact has your product/solution had on the market and your customers?

For today's enterprises, the network is critical to how their businesses operate. It's the platform for all commercial interactions and communications, and is facilitating their transition to virtualised data centres and cloud computing services.

Today's networks are undergoing a significant evolution with the advent of software-defined networking (SDN); a new and innovative approach to network architecture. By taking the functionality traditionally found in networking hardware and moving it into software, SDN creates a software control layer that can be programmed. In comparison to traditional infrastructures, a programmable network can save costs and respond to business requirements much more rapidly, so it's ideal for organisations undertaking transformative change. But SDN can also be confusing, and networking and ICT teams often struggle to understand the benefits, how it can be applied and where to start implementation.

Adding to the complexity is the market hype surrounding SDN. Start-ups are constantly bringing new products to market, while established vendors regularly announce their latest SDN strategies and solutions.

The SDN Development Model is a strategic process with a consulting-led, facilitated workshop at its core. The first step is to gather information. This is done in two stages. A pre-workshop call is scheduled with key enterprise representatives. Dimension Data takes responsibility for creating the workshop agenda, goals, and deliverables, and creates a list of key stakeholders. The team also ensures all participants are well prepared and have enough information.

The next stage is the workshop itself; the most important step in the delivery of this service. It includes a detailed education session on SDN and related terminology. Experienced consultants facilitate a discussion, focusing on the four dimensions mentioned above: infrastructure readiness, operational readiness, organisational change, and business alignment. Each dimension has a number of attributes which together span all aspects of an organisation's operations, from technical requirements such as security and virtualisation, to more business-orientated factors such as budget, skills and change management. This deep level of understanding allows the team to develop a set of recommendations that exactly match the organisation's ongoing business objectives.

Following thorough analysis of all the data collected during the previous stages, Dimension Data then prepares a comprehensive report providing detailed recommendations on whether the organisation is ready to transition to SDN, what needs to change in the organisation to facilitate the move and what advantages the organisations can expect to achieve as a result. This is an honest and balanced report. If a migration to SDN is not appropriate or cost effective, the recommendations will reflect this.

Dimension Data utilises its expertise in networking, data centres, and transformational ICT technologies as the basis for these recommendations, and includes action points on how to start a SDN programme and to ensure its success.

(452 words)

What are the major differentiators between your product/solution and those of your primary competitors?

Dimension Data offers a unique blend of capabilities, assets and experience, setting it apart from other ICT service providers. It has a strong heritage in systems integration, mature managed services skills and technical expertise – not only in networking, but also in other areas. Its expertise extends to data centre solutions, security solutions, end-user computing solutions and ICT services. This means it is ideally placed to determine the most appropriate SDN strategy for an organisation, oversee the migration to SDN and then manage the network infrastructure, no matter which underlying architecture an organisation chooses.

Dimension Data has a 30-year history of designing, building, deploying and managing networks for enterprises that need reliable, robust, highly performing and cost-efficient networks to underpin their operations. In addition, it has an extensive history of assisting clients through network transitions such as the move to TCP/IP and the convergence of voice, video and data. SDN is the latest shift of this nature.

Consultants have unrivalled technical and commercial credentials to provide relevant insights and practical advice, with an average of ten years of ICT infrastructure/consulting experience.

A move to SDN has the potential to be disruptive and complex, but Dimension Data's SDN Development Model means that needn't be the case and places organisations in a strong position to transition to SDN in a structured and coherent manner.

Why nominee should win

The Dimension Data Software-defined Networking Development Model helps organisations mitigate the complexity and potential disruption of moving to software-defined, delivering:

- Improved knowledge –comprehensive education about what SDN is, the differing approaches to SDN, industry bodies for SDN, and the terminology involved**
- Greater understanding of the impact of SDN – exploring the effect of SDN on existing ICT infrastructure and operations**
- A clear vision – identifying business use-cases and describing the organisation’s overall goals and strategy related to SDN**
- A full deployment roadmap – planning a route which involves informed and actionable recommendations**