



Are Today's NaaS Solutions Delivering on the Promise of NaaS?

The modern enterprise requires a solution that is purpose-built for “as-a-Service,” with the true promises of NaaS, including:

- The highest levels of enterprise-grade connectivity backed by guaranteed service levels
- User-based pricing aligned with a hybrid workforce
- The most fortified security posture, purpose-built on zero-trust principals
- Full-lifecycle management that includes planning, installation, and service bring-up

¹IDC document # US47128521, “Network as a Service Enables Flexible Consumption of Secure and Agile Enterprise Networks”

²Key Criteria for Implementing Emerging Enterprise NaaS Models, Brandon Butler, IDC, April 2022.

³Hyper Cycle for Enterprise Networking 2022. Gartner. June 29, 2022.

⁴NaaS: What Is It, and Should I Adopt It? Jonathan Forest, Gartner. October 25, 2021.

Introduction

“As a Service” needs little introduction today. In the 2000s, “as-a-Service” took off with widespread cloud adoption. Software-as-a-Service, Platform-as-a-Service, Infrastructure-as-a-Service – the list is long and continues to evolve. The modern enterprise has come to embrace as-a-Service benefits, including consumption-based billing, shifting capital expenditure (CAPEX) to operational expenditure (OPEX), alleviating daily burdens on IT teams, and realizing business value from technology investments.

So what is Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) with regard to the enterprise network? IDC defines NaaS as a “flexible, OPEX model of enterprise network infrastructure that includes hardware, software, licenses, and life cycle services - in a single offering.”¹ A big driver of NaaS is the sheer complexity and scale of enterprise networks, which is driving modern enterprises to seek simple and efficient solutions.² According to Gartner, “Buyers increasingly seek full life cycle management of their network estate, not simply all-opex network products procurement where operational leases (rentals) have long served the purpose of amortizing payment for networking products.”³

Enterprise interest in NaaS is increasing. Gartner predicts that “by the end of 2024, on-premise NaaS will be adopted by 15% of all enterprises, up from less than 1% in 2021.”⁴ NaaS provides a relief as organizations think of shifting focus from daily enterprise network management to business-critical initiatives and digital transformation goals. This is especially true with network skills shortages, business demands, and market pressures.

Is NaaS Today Truly “as-a-Service”?

Perusing vendors, articles, and blog posts on NaaS, it is clear that NaaS is not defined consistently. For this reason, NaaS offerings should be evaluated closely; even “vendors are misusing the term. Most NaaS offerings in the market are limited to pricing/licensing changes.”⁵ Upon closer examination of the different offerings in the market, services might fall under:

Managed Services: Under this arrangement, the environment is co-managed or fully managed by a Managed Service Provider (MSP). In most cases, the enterprise still owns the hardware and must purchase additional hardware as needs change. Some Managed Service Providers (MSPs) focus on a particular vendor or technology, naturally lending to vendor bias and lock-in. MSPs may also rely on other vendors to manage network security.

A new trend is evolving with MSPs who own the hardware and provide network management services, but these are not purpose-built solutions. These solutions are creatively financed packages with bundled services. Service delivery is highly dependent on the customer, creating certain conditions for the services to be delivered and met.

Remote Monitoring Services: In this scenario, an equipment vendor steps in and manages the existing enterprise network. Services are a subset or a perceived full range of network services, including maintenance, device monitoring, monthly reporting, upgrades, patching, and user administration. Network security is broken as a result, exposing organizations to security risks. The enterprise owns and purchases the hardware and software, and the

⁵Hyper Cycle for Enterprise Networking 2022. Gartner, June 29, 2022.

⁶Hyper Cycle for Enterprise Networking 2022. Gartner, June 29, 2022.

vendor typically does not provide life cycle management services.

Service Providers: Service Providers offer network connectivity in addition to security, virtual network, and other services. These providers offer services piecemeal without full life cycle management services, and ultimately the organization purchases and owns the network equipment.



Today's Providers are Falling Short on the Promise of NaaS

Is NaaS as we know it today truly delivering on the promise of NaaS? Looking ahead to predicted NaaS adoption “through 2024, 70% of vendor offerings marketed as “NaaS” will not meet the core definition of network as a service (NaaS)”.⁶ The primary reason enterprises want NaaS is the promise of a single, flexible offering that encompasses network infrastructure, licenses, and life cycle management.

Network costs are difficult to grasp. They extend beyond the initial purchase of network hardware and software. Upfront costs include:

- Acquisition: evaluation, proof of concept, vendor selection

- Planning: network hardware and software, interoperability, professional services
- Implementation: site survey, network design, cabling, installation, and tuning
- Life Cycle Management: daily operations, maintenance, support, patching, and technology refreshes

But what happens after implementation? This is the most expensive part of network operations.

Enterprises overlook these associated time and cost burdens since they blend into daily operations. As additional capacity is needed or with a technology refresh, the whole process of evaluation and purchase begins again, with the need for distribution and access switches, and access points. Now the implementation, planning, and tuning start again. What if capacity contracts? An enterprise has now over-invested in hardware, software, and support agreements that no longer meet organizational needs.

Today's NaaS providers offer network management of existing infrastructure. As the enterprise needs evolve, vendors and MSPs will recommend additional hardware and software to address the shortcomings of the existing environment. While day-to-day network management is outsourced, enterprises must continue to purchase hardware and corresponding support contracts. Every four to five years, as components reach the end of life, organizations are left with deprecated components that no longer offer the latest technology and security capabilities.

As the network expands and absorbs more components, refreshes happen incrementally. At any given point in time, the network is not entirely refreshed. Different parts of the environment remain dated.

Is Your Organization Ready for True NaaS?

Today's NaaS providers are not delivering what the modern enterprise needs. Most vendors cannot offer true NaaS because their technology was not purpose-built for "as-a-Service." NaaS should be more than packaging services bundled in a rental agreement.

We believe that the modern enterprise needs an innovative approach, purpose-built to deliver the network as-a-Service. Enterprise networks should be always-on, providing enterprise-grade connectivity 24x7, with all the benefits that prompted organizations to begin cloud and SaaS adoption. Network complexity should be alleviated from the enterprise, and deliver full-lifecycle management from planning, and implementation, to daily management. The modern enterprise requires a solution that is built expressly for "as-a-Service," that is owned and operated by a vendor with the true promises of NaaS, including:

- The highest levels of enterprise-grade connectivity backed by guaranteed service levels
- User-based pricing that scales up or down based on usage, and aligns with a hybrid workforce
- The most fortified security posture, purpose-built on zero-trust principals
- Full-lifecycle management that includes planning, installation, and service bring up
- Network capacity that scales without additional investment