

Aruba Podcast – transcript

How an Aruba Cloud Managed Network can help a business

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of Tech Data's podcast. I'm Ian, your host for today and joining me we have a panel of tech experts ready to delve deeper into today's chosen topic.

In this episode, we're going to look at cloud managed networks and chat a little more to our guests to really get to the bottom of what this is, and how an Aruba Cloud Managed Network in particular can help a business.

So, to start let's find out a little bit more about today's panel. We've got Junior and James, first of all, James just tell me a bit more about you and your role at Tech Data.

James – Yes of course, thank you. So, I'm James Izzard, Solutions Architect at Tech Data. I've been at Tech Data for around 3 years now and I am purely dedicated to Aruba HPE portfolio. And I've been looking after Aruba for around about 10 years now.

Fantastic, thanks James. Secondly, we've got Junior. Again, a bit about you and your role at Tech Data please.

Junior – My name is Junior Rawlins. I'm quite brand new to Tech Data really, I've been here for a month or so. I'm a technical pre-sales specialist working out of the Aruba team. Been working with Aruba at the product set for around 6 years now.

Thanks Junior, that's great. Now we know one of the great benefits of an Aruba cloud managed network is that it allows businesses to work from just about anywhere, and given the current situation that we are going through in the world at the moment with so many people working from home, let's delve a little deeper into how an Aruba Cloud Managed Network allows remote working.

James I'm going to come to you first to give an overview about what we are going through at the moment and how it can help.

James – Yes of course, we're all facing these challenges at the moment and most of these challenges are around keeping people connected, making sure they have got access to secure applications, to the resources that they need to enable them to work from home but also to make sure the user experience they are having is as good as being in the office. This is something that Aruba has done for a number of years. They've always supported remote working and they've believed in a true mobile workforce and people being able to work from wherever they want with whatever device they want. Obviously to enable this we need to make sure, especially in these times we are able to quickly and easily deploy a remote working solution for home, for pop up facilities such as hospitals or areas you wouldn't of thought we'd needed coverage that are now being utilised for other things. Who would of

thought a year ago that we'd be using the London excel conference centre as a pop-up hospital, completely changing the usage of that building and also we need to extend the security of those hospital networks, out to those kind of sites. We also need to make things like the installation and deployment of these solutions simple and easy for whatever level of experience the people have on site. We are seeing a lot of volunteers at the moment, that are helping people get connected, that are helping people get things installed so we need to make sure we can deploy these networks for people that have varying levels of expertise and experience. We need to make sure we choose the right solution and we can scale that solution, size it to meet the customers' requirements or the demands at the time. We also need to be able to support users own devices for things like bring you own device, extend that corporate security policy from the HQ to the home worker to small branches. When all this kicked off there might be people that are office based, they might not have laptops, they maybe had desktops, they maybe had thin clients installed. So how do I now enable that person to work from home, I have to give them a laptop, I have to give them a device. How do I enable IT to be able to deploy that device quickly, easily and meeting the IT security policies. We also need to be able to provide maintenance and service levels for these people. We are now trying to trouble shoot people in their own home environment, maybe smaller branch offices. Now people are talking about the new norm, where we don't have these big offices with hundreds and hundreds of people in. We have more of a dispersed workforce where people work from smaller branches scattered around or more home working and a balance between the two. So how do we provide trouble shooting, remote visibility of what that users experience is when they are at home or in smaller branches where the IT staff aren't. The Aruba Cloud Managed Networking portfolio provides a solution within its portfolio. We have things called secured gateways, vpn concentrators that are deployed in the cloud. We have a vpn client called Via which allows workers with a single device to easily and securely connect back into the corporate environment, such as the traditional road warrior with a single laptop which is trying to get connectivity from wherever they are. We need to make sure they can access resources and sources they need securely. We have got the remote access points that extend the corporate office environment for the home worker. All of the wireless network, the infrastructure that they see in that corporate office is now being broadcast at home for them so they connect to the network, they authenticate exactly the same as if they were sat in the office and have the same access to the same resources, securely like they would be if they were sat at their desk. And that's for wired and wireless devices. We've got the instant VPN solution which provides branch office support, which allows us to support multiple access points, multiple users and multiple devices and we can scale quite large with that offering as well, again making sure the clients are connected back into the head office, the resources they need. We've got the SD branch offering which provides that full branch office solution so for wired and wireless policy where we can truly extend the corporate HQ security policy for the wired and wireless network, from HQ down to the branches. We have things in that portfolio such as link load balancing that we can make sure the traffic is balanced across the connectivity between those sites correctly but also to make sure things like the internet based traffic and internet applications people are utilising doesn't get tunnelled all the way back to the HQ, it can just break locally at that resource, at that site and better serve the clients experience. From a trouble shooting perspective we have the UXI sensors, so this is the user experience part of the portfolio from Aruba, all cloud managed. We have basically a true user experience trouble shooting tool, these are dedicated user sensors effectively that are scattered around the building and it could be one per site, one per floor, one per area, a sensor outside a VIP area of the business but we can actually start to see a true

user experience, the applications running across the network, we can test the applications, we can test the resources and test from a user perspective on how those applications are performing both wired and wireless and how the network itself is performing. We can start to identify problems with such as DNS failures which could be prohibiting users being able to get access to certain resources, we can get all that visibility in a single, easy to read, cloud based dashboard and we can also test the web application experience which is a new feature, so we can actually go and record somebody logging in to a web application, where they tend to go, what they do as a test account, save that as and run it on these user experience insight sensors where you get the full flow visibility of someone trying to use the network, and if something breaks somewhere or they are experiencing bad performance. So I think you can agree within a single Aruba based portfolio from the cloud based platform we've got a lot of feature sets to support pretty much whatever customer requirement is.

Fantastic, thanks James, that's great. Now, in terms of what this means for a business and with so many companies and so many people working from home at the moment. Junior, what would you say the main benefits of having a cloud managed network that can be used remotely?

Junior - Like most, I'm working from home. The main challenge is going to be how businesses maintain continuity with almost a shift to 100% distributed workforce. So, businesses are having to deal with very real issues such as increased network utilisation and larger than usual workloads on some of the more critical servers.

As users we take for granted the technology with just sort of work. I.T I would imagine having these systems tested in this way has been quite daunting. The benefits are really going to be how companies can deploy their networks maybe around temporary facilities. Aruba in particular have tools and mechanisms such as zero-touch provisioning, and installer apps which allow field-based individuals with no technical expertise to just position devices into the network directly. Things like this are going to help and give those companies the ability to move very quickly and have that level of agility in difficult times.

We have also got to bear in mind that security can't really be a trade-off, so users have to really be maintaining a secure connection to the network at all times and those policies have to be the same as when they were working in the office for both wired and wireless devices.

That's great, thanks very much Junior. So, let's take a look now a bit more in depth at what a cloud managed network actually is, and James maybe you can drill down for us on this.

James - Yes certainly. So, a cloud managed network is basically the ability to manage network infrastructure using the software as a service model that's been used already by many businesses to power their cloud-based applications such as Office 365.

A cloud managed network is a way of managing and controlling a business network remotely through resources externally hosted rather than having onsite controllers or management software. It uses the software as a service model to make it easier to be controlled and analyse on premises network devices such as wireless access points, switches, branch office gateways and provide visibility of users and devices from a single pane of glass. Meaning that employees can work wherever they want or need, securely without geographical concerns making cloud managed networks especially valuable for businesses or employees connecting from multiple locations.

Great, thanks very much James. Junior let's throw this over to you now and maybe you can run through how a cloud managed network actually makes a difference within a business and any other thoughts for me.

Junior - Definitely, we already see that the customers are moving to a cloud first approach when thinking about how they want to consume IT services, in particular applications, which are obviously very important. Examples of this would be sales forces and workday to name some of the more major applications. You even see things like unified communications with applications like Teams, so I guess, why not gain the benefits of moving your network to the cloud as well.

The difference is really is going to be in the agility and convenience it brings, being able to produce more tangible business outcomes like lowering upfront costs or kind of allowing them to move from a capex model to an opex one. You could think of this more like a pay as you grow where the company is able to scale the solution at their own pace, adding services where they see fit or where a really good use case or business need is presented. The obvious one is having no hardware to maintain or subsequently patch. Patching and updating, just that on its own can really be a risk to a business' uptime should something go wrong.

Great, thanks very much Junior. So now let's move on to look more specifically at Aruba cloud managed networks and let's have a look at the differences between this and say a regular cloud managed network. James what are your thoughts on this?

James - Yes, some other vendors offer a slightly stripped down product set to simplify usage only offering things like managing and monitoring capabilities. Aruba's cloud managed network builds on the traditional capabilities that are integrated with AI user-based insights and IoT discovery and profiling. While Simplicity is obviously very important, business cloud solutions tend to require more. Aruba has a broad portfolio of products and solutions that utilise the best industry best practices including those commonly used in cloud-based banking and e-commerce. It's important that it is stable, it's secure and it's a trusted platform.

Application availability and connectivity is also very important. This is why it is a must to use a trust and approved network provider. Aruba's portfolio is designed to deliver the confidence required to support face paced mobility first environments. It's got the adaption

of new features such as AI based solutions that require access to scalable computer storage to deliver value that could be cost prohibitive. Cloud managed networks themselves is providing the resources required to collect and analyse data, identify patterns and trends and provides insights to improve network applications without the customer having to invest in hardware on-site.

Thank you, James, now when it actually comes to businesses, how does an Aruba cloud managed network really make a difference, Junior maybe you could run that one through for me?

Junior - I think everyone would agree that any business is going to greatly benefit from focussing on its core competencies. Key concerns like network uptime, maintenance are no longer problems that have to be addressed for them. This allows them to move onto improving the experiences of the users, for example, having the ability to proactively understand the quality of a user's connection, actually means that you could take steps to resolve the problem before the call is raised.

The users experience of the network is a very reliable one and as we all know, a happy user is a goal. That same example would also be relevant for looking at something like efficiencies within the IT team. So the network admin isn't having to trawl through pages of logs and spend a lifetime on the phone with support to try and find the problem or the information that they actually need because once the calls start coming in with the dreaded sort of Skype won't connect or the internet is slow you kind of know you are in for a hard morning or sometimes if it's really bad, a hard day.

Very true Junior I think we have all been there at sometime haven't we? Now let's move on to talk about Aruba's mid-market range of solutions and look at the different products that come together to create an Aruba cloud managed network and I'm going to throw this over to you James first to give us some insight into this.

James - So the portfolio itself as we've mentioned is designed with the confidence needed to support fast paced mobile first environments. So, we've got things like Aruba Central which is a unified cloud native networks operative insurance platform. That provides a single pane of glass management for our wireless network, our wired infrastructure, user visibility, application visibility and all those kinds of things. We then have an SD branch solution, that basically allows us to provide a simplified security in branch solution. It expands security policies out from the core from a head office to the remote branches, so you get a unified security approach whether you are working from a branch office or working from a head office. We've also got the device Insights which basically provides intelligent machine learning based solution for device discovery profiling visibility. The big thing in security and protecting networks is actually being able to see what is on the network and what is connected in the first place and this is what device 'Insights' does for us. Each of these solutions work as an individual, or they can work collectively to support Aruba's full portfolio of indoor/outdoor access points, switches and branch gateways.

Great, thanks very much James. Now, Junior can you tell us a bit more about Aruba Central, where does that come into play and how does it stand out, particularly against the competition?

Junior – With the release of Aruba 2.5 this marks a very exciting time at least for a techy like me. Customers now have more features at their disposal but not just features for features sake, very important, hitting the heart of where the problems lie. The introduction of artificial intelligence-based analytics into the central platform essentially gives users a way to expand visibility into the network at that level of existing products and learning technology Aruba already had with their main insight platform. The serious pain points for IT teams are when it comes to troubleshooting. This feature in particular will help them detect potential connectivity issues and hopefully resolve and isolate root causes amongst other things. But Aruba Central as a platform really separates itself in ways like investment protection and flexibility. You can choose between local cloud or mixed architectures without losing intractability. Also, a change in architecture without having to re-invest in new hardware. Some other solutions, to be honest don't have that flexibility and force you to make that choice between one or the other. Survivability as well, it is part of the solution, there's no loss of network control or performance if connectivity to the cloud is lost. With some other cloud managed solutions, they actually rely on additional hardware to be implemented in order to achieve the same level of service. The last one I would say would be analytics. Aruba have a lot of patented RND, it's really a collection of technology around client services, AI now and then advanced application visibility. The collection is the key here not all vendors are going to have this sort of portfolio or technology and features. Most industries tend to force customers to buy additional appliances to achieve the same level of application visibility for example, and a lot don't even have predictive insights to say the least.

James - I'd just like to jump on a couple of those points if that is ok? Junior, a couple of things that you mentioned are really good, so things like the adaption of artificial intelligence as Junior covered. We've got the ability in the software to basically start to predict how the network is going to behave and how to fix things. An example of that, we can see whether clients are sitting in certain radio frequencies, would they be better performing in other frequencies or on different Radios and using the user insight intelligence that Junior has just covered we're actually able to make a recommendations on how to change the configurations of the network to best suit your needs and how you're using it. So as Junior said it takes away a lot of that trouble-shooting, trying to find out why things have gone wrong and using this AI ability in there to be able to pretty much guide you to the exact issue that the client might be having before the client even phones you up and says they are having one.

The other thing is just around the flexibility that Junior covered, this is one of the things I love myself about Aruba and we've got an end user I was involved in a couple of years ago actually around this, as Junior said other vendors can almost shoehorn you into 'you're a cloud managed solution' or 'you're on-premise management solution' so I actually worked with a large energy firm a couple of years ago that had invested in another cloud managed solution via another vendor and they out grew it, there was a bit of scalability issue with the product set and they outgrew the offering. They expanded very very quickly, lots and lots of

devices, lots and lots of users and they couldn't cope, But they had 2 choices – rip out all the access points and replace them with another vendor or stay with the same vendor but rip out the cloud managed solution and re-deploy a controller based on-premise solution which meant having again change all the access points out for something else.

If they had gone down the Aruba route we would have given them the flexibility of saying – we want local management on site, you can with the virtual controller inside the access point, if you want to add the cloud management part, you can – that's the option you have got all the benefits of the cloud. But if for any reason the business out scales that or you need something more you can keep the existing investment in the hardware you have bought as the AP's, buy an on-site controller or a virtual version of that controller if you so wish and just migrate your existing hardware or existing APs over to the new controller base, so again great flexibility and protection of investment for customers.

Well that's brilliant, that's a really comprehensive overview of Aruba Central guys. Now, let's move on to talk about maybe a little more in depth about Aruba Cloud Managed Networks, we did touch on it briefly earlier. But Aruba Cloud Managed Networks within a business, how many businesses are using this solution at the moment, that you know of. Maybe you can reference again some example and case studies of that? James, first of all maybe you?

James – So it is quite a hard one, so actually Aruba offering fits so many different verticals, so we've got customers from retail to healthcare to hospitality to enterprises, universities, education all using cloud-based networks. So yes, there are lots and lots of case studies available, lots of information out there pretty much across every vertical.

Fantastic, thanks James. Junior, how about you, what would you sight as some examples?

Junior – The numbers here aren't as relevant as how the product or the solution helps customers meets their requirement and so businesses use cases and Aruba do an excellent job because what it is all about is the services that are offered on-top. We have already spoke about the inherent benefits of moving to a cloud managed network and what a cloud managed network is. But the future for cloud managed network is going to be services and how they support a business. For example, Aruba have additional expansions around guests and presence analytics so those two in particular are real drivers of revenue and can transform a business into one that's simply mid-market that potentially could have the capabilities to move to more of an enterprise.

Fantastic, thanks Junior. Now we are getting towards the end of our podcast so maybe let's round things up and look maybe at some of the top things that a user would find beneficial from switching to an Aruba Cloud managed network. James – what would you say from your side?

James – Far too many to list. Just touching on a few of them – I suppose for me it is the wi-fi equipment that performs. We've got enterprise grade hardware. The hardware you buy as an access point for a cloud managed network are the same as the traditional controller based enterprise solution, it's identical, you don't get stripped down versions as they cut down the functionality so really it is the indoor/outdoor access points with the full feature set of enterprise features. They've got built in RF management, stateful firewalls, traffic shaping, smart endpoint roaming, prioritisation for skype business. All that enterprise tools that we have on our traditional controller platforms also follow into the cloud, so you get all the benefits of that as well.

Also I think for me the services for improving the IT user experience, as Junior touched on, guest wi-fi – various different levels of portals, self-registration choices, to make the ability of guest users of businesses get onto the network a lot easier. We have got services that are measuring things like connectivity, analytics, live monitoring, wireless access and authentication. Wired visibility as well, there's a lot of enterprise class feature set that's within the Aruba portfolio.

Fantastic, thanks James and I'm going to throw this over to you Junior, again give me some of those top things a user would find beneficial, switching to an Aruba Cloud managed network.

Junior – There's never been a better time to make that switch but if I were going to give 3, I would say the most important are simplicity, having an intuitive and contextual graphical user interface that replaces things like logins, line spaces and commands and all that kind of thing which technical guys quite like to use. Having a system that is smart that uses automation troubleshooting. Leveraging analytics as well as having a more traditional approach like reporting which you know collectively really allow an IT team to be proactive and then the last one I would say is security, I can't stress how important security is, I think we are all aware of that in today's environment but policy enforcement has been a crown jewel for Aruba having a policy enforcement firewall that allows you to apply securities to users and quality of service to actual traffic itself.

Great, thanks very much Junior, I mean I'm afraid that is all we have got time for today. I think we have covered everything in great detail.

I'd like to thank each of today's guests – James and Junior for coming together to share their Aruba knowledge, I'm sure you'll all agree it has been a really useful insight from two Tech Data experts.

If you've got any more questions about Aruba cloud managed networks or their mid-market solution make sure you visit Tech Data's website where you can find more training and resources just like this. Finally thanks very much for listening and hope to see you next time.