

NETWORKWORLD

BEST OF ENTERPRISE NETWORK 2024

THE BEST AND MOST INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS OF THE YEAR

Network World celebrates the year's best products

In many ways, networking is a mature, stable industry, based on established technologies like Wi-Fi and Ethernet, which just celebrated its 50th anniversary. But networking vendors are constantly innovating to keep pace with skyrocketing volumes of traffic that need to move securely and reliably across complex multicloud environments.

Many of the categories and terms in this year's Best of Networking (BENNY) technology awards didn't even exist a decade ago:

secure access service edge (SASE), SD-WAN, networking as a service (NaaS), and network detection and response (NDR).

Then there's the impact of artificial intelligence (AI)—AI and generative AI have created exponentially greater demands on networks to move large data sets. On the flip side, networking vendors are incorporating AI and machine learning into their toolsets to analyze vast amounts of telemetry data and provide actionable intelligence.



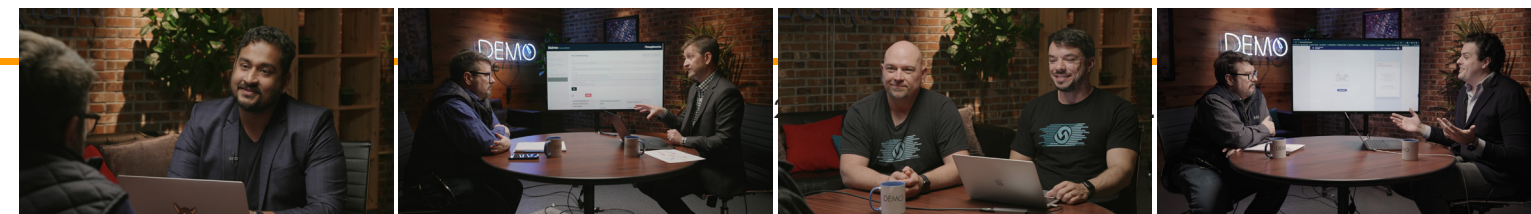
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Award categories

The categories in this year's BENNY Awards reflect the rapidly evolving nature of networking:

1. Network performance management
2. Network automation
3. SD-WAN, SASE
4. Network visibility and observability
5. Automated backup and recovery
6. SDN/NaaS
7. Cloud/edge solutions

'Best of the Rest' recognizes innovative entries that didn't fit into our main categories. Read on to meet the winners and finalists. ►

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Network Performance Management

WINNER: NETSCOUT NGENIUS

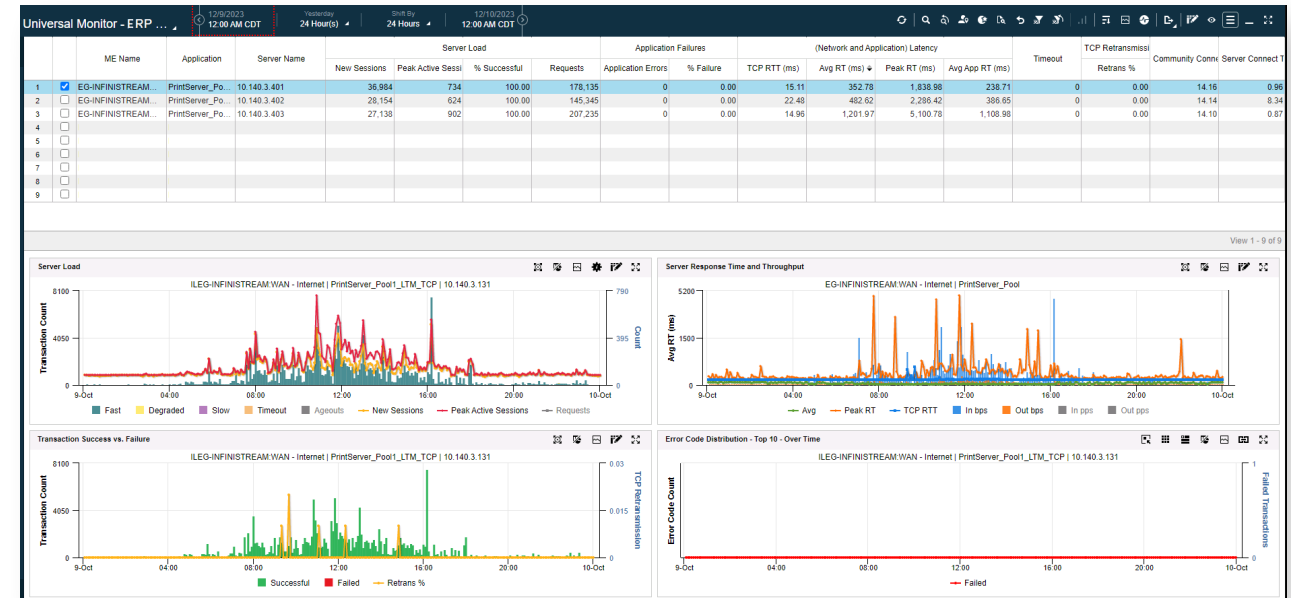
From the winner

NETSCOUT's nGenius Enterprise Performance Management brings observability throughout multi-cloud environments to solve application performance issues across technological and organizational boundaries. Digital transformations, cloud migrations, SaaS/UCaaS adoption, and the hybrid workforce have increased complexity and created visibility gaps that hinder problem resolution. nGenius Performance Management solutions assure a high-quality experience in any network, location, or service, for



any user, regardless of where they perform their jobs. nGenius provides borderless observability across multiple domains, including network and data center/ cloud service edges,

for application and network



FROM THE JUDGE

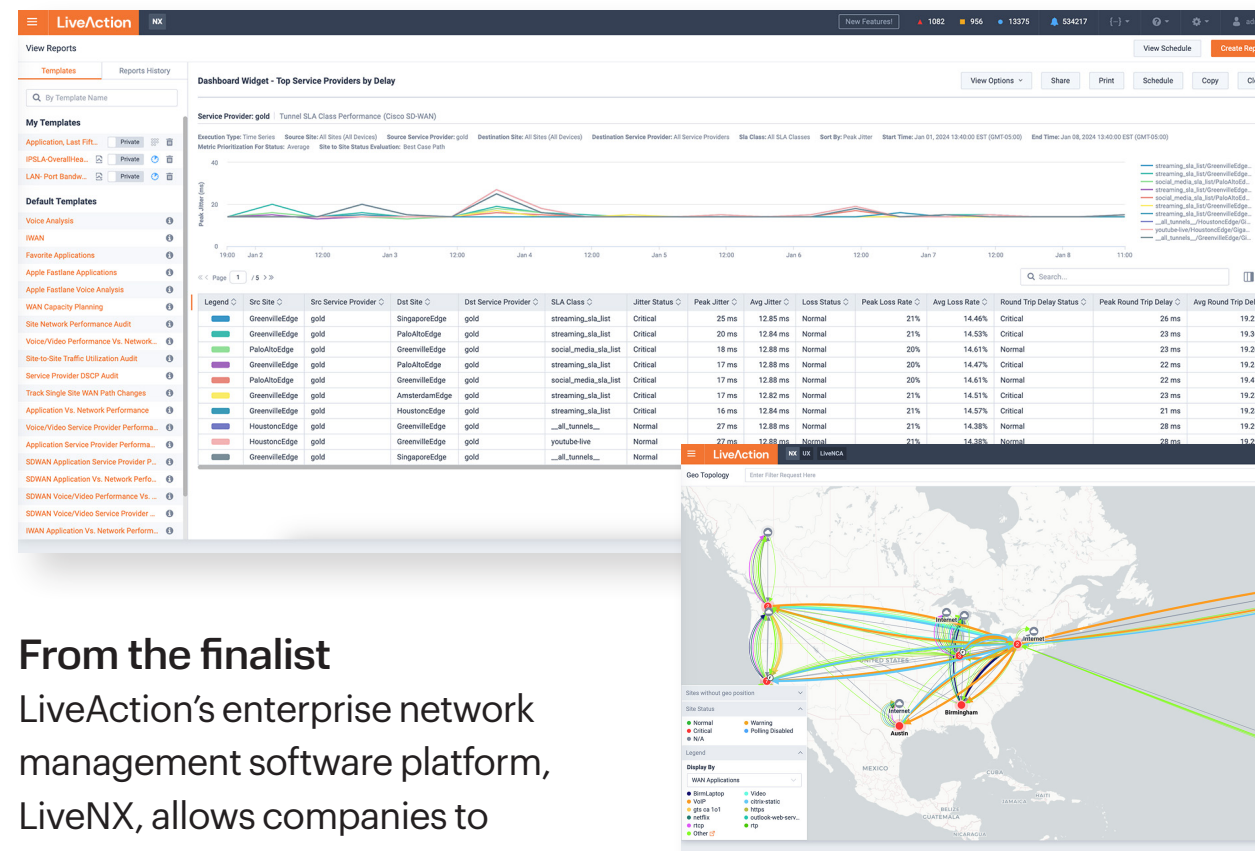
Built on a foundation of packet-level insights, nGenius performs synthetic testing at critical client edges, delivering observability into the availability and performance of applications from the user's perspective. IT gains early warnings to pinpoint issues and determine the root cause of degradations to dramatically reduce the mean time to restore performance.

Network Performance Management

WINNER *continued*

performance analysis and troubleshooting throughout complex hybrid, multicloud environments. nGenius Performance Management uniquely addresses multicloud and hybrid network and application performance challenges. It also addresses delays logging into hosted resources, latency, errors, packet loss with newly migrated cloud applications, and degradations affecting multiple remote-access applications; handles problems related to business-critical applications for end users in branch or remote locations; and includes service dependency mapping. ■

FINALIST: LIVEACTION LIVENX



From the finalist LiveAction’s enterprise network management software platform, LiveNX, allows companies to manage large and complex networks by unifying and simplifying the collection, correlation, and presentation of application and network data—making it actionable for network management teams.

The easy-to-use interface allows teams to drill down from a global view to a location, a single hop, or even an individual packet. LiveNX customers have full visibility into the

network and application performance across multivendor, multidomain, and multicloud environments for increased productivity and better user experience. Network management teams can also optimize their network performance by proactively identifying, troubleshooting, and quickly resolving network and application performance issues regardless of where they occur—speeding time to repair and avoiding costly downtime. LiveNX simplifies network monitoring and accelerates troubleshooting, enabling IT staff to focus on more strategic initiatives. ■

Network Automation

WINNER: GLUWARE INTELLIGENT NETWORK AUTOMATION



From the winner
Gluware's Intelligent Network Automation empowers enterprises to conquer complex network



challenges with ease and efficiency, delivering the innovative capabilities required for intelligent, self-operating, and self-healing

enterprise networks. Gluware's prebuilt solutions automate critical yet time-consuming tasks like network discovery, eliminating the need for manual device identification and inventory creation. It also automates drift detection, ensuring



consistent configurations across devices, and streamlining OS upgrades—freeing up IT teams from carrying out these repetitive processes. Gluware's code-free approach delivers the control and cost savings needed for

FROM THE JUDGE

The shift from manual to automated processes leveraging AI is top-of-mind for network operators. Gluware has moved quickly into this area, launching Gluware.ai, a suite of prebuilt, intelligent automation tools. The first offering, Gluware Co-Pilot, enables network operators to streamline troubleshooting and data gathering, proactively manage software vulnerabilities and OS updates, and unlock deep insights into life-cycle management.

Network Automation

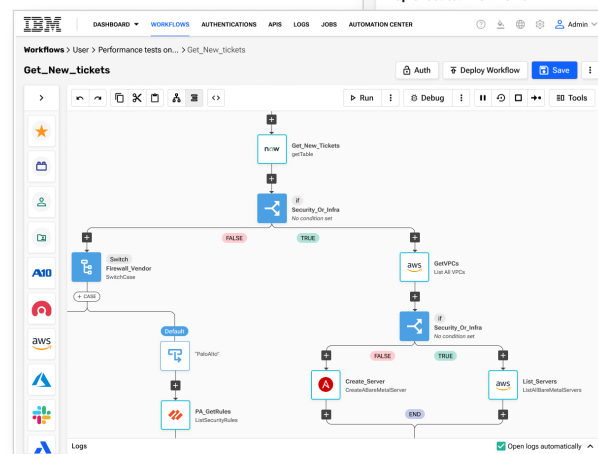
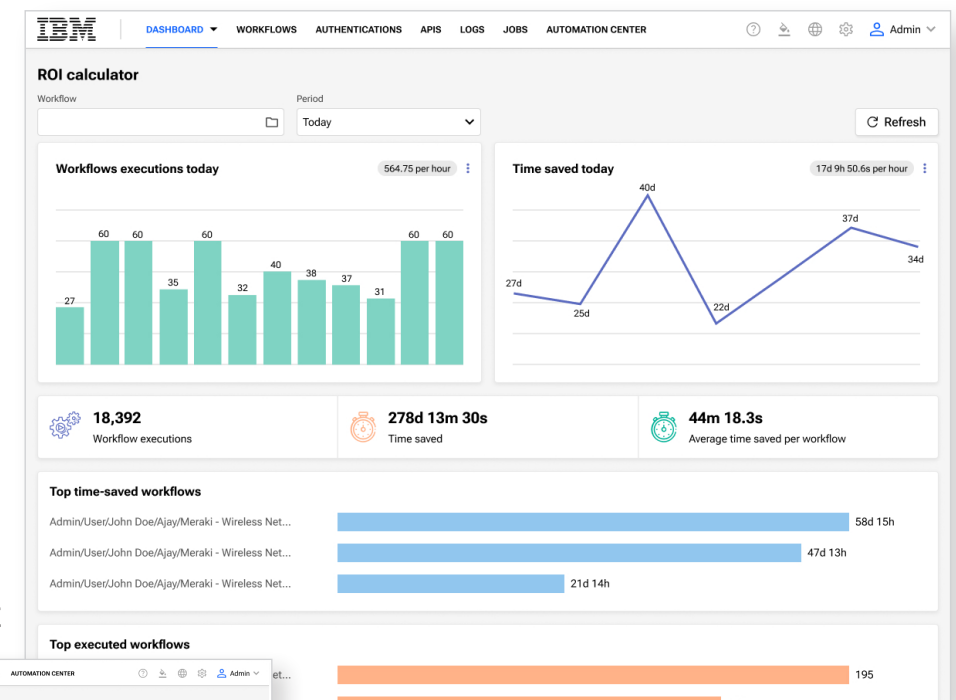
WINNER *continued*

hyperautomation at scale. Customers experience powerful results with Gluware: a 95% reduction in network outages; a perfect 100% network security policy compliance rate; and a 300x speed increase for OS upgrades compared to manual methods. Gluware's approach allows organizations to implement self-operating network capabilities in just three months—and see ROI within a year. Gluware delivers new features and enhancements to its platform several times a year. Gluware 5.1 streamlined workloads; Gluware 5.2 added 40 major features, and Gluware 5.3 focused on IPv6 support, plus enhanced integrations with ServiceNow and Cisco. ■

FINALIST: IBM RAPID NETWORK AUTOMATION

From the finalist
 IBM Rapid Network Automation helps break automation silos apart through low-code workflows spanning the entire tech stack. Users can seamlessly blend proprietary APIs with abstracted vendor APIs for unparalleled integration flexibility. With built-in support for major automation platforms and scripting languages, users can easily and securely reuse and modify both new and existing automation, consolidating multiple tools into one secure platform. IBM Rapid Network Automation provides a robust, automated solution to validate, diagnose, and quickly resolve incidents. It reads and updates ticket data from the ITSM system in real time to enable automated incident

resolution. IBM Rapid Network Automation gathers data or events from any monitoring system and intelligently responds by automatically taking actions, enabling closed-loop automation. It



is designed to accelerate mean time to resolution, reduce time to market for new services, increase scope to cross-stack automation, and increase automation security and compliance with centralized security and policy control. ■

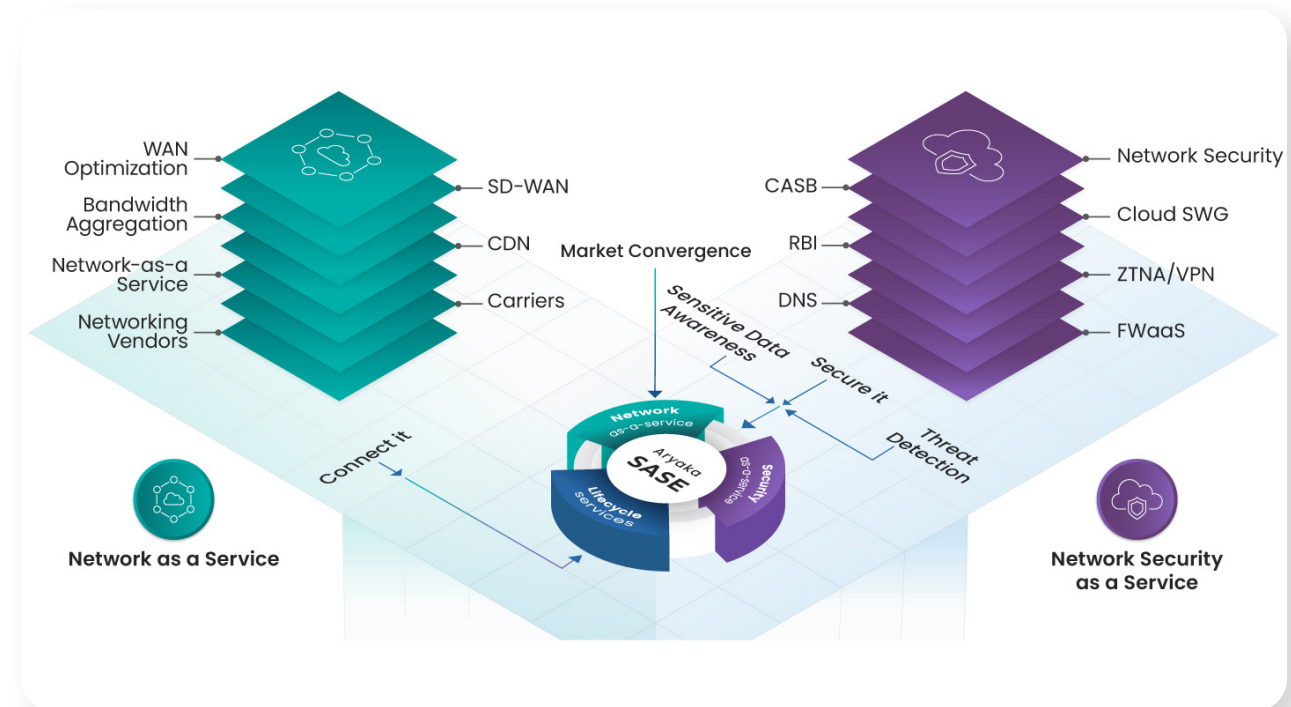
SD-WAN, SASE

WINNER: ARYAKA UNIFIED SASE AS A SERVICE

From the winner

Aryaka’s Unified SASE as a Service integrates all essential security and networking functions into a single, cloud-delivered platform. It is the first and only secure networking solution built to deliver performance, agility, simplicity, and security without tradeoffs. This eliminates the need for complex, siloed tools—simplifying security management and enabling seamless, secure access from anywhere. Built on top of Aryaka's global private backbone, Aryaka Unified SASE as a Service goes beyond high-speed connectivity.

By adopting a zero-trust approach with backbone deployments in over 100 countries, Aryaka ensures the highest level of security in an ever-evolving threat landscape. Its flexible delivery options empower enterprises to choose their preferred approach for implementation and management. In June, Aryaka launched Aryaka AI>Perform, a groundbreaking offering. Delivered natively on the Aryaka Unified SASE as a Service, it ensures that customers have high-performance access to AI workloads, both globally and at scale. ■



FROM THE JUDGE

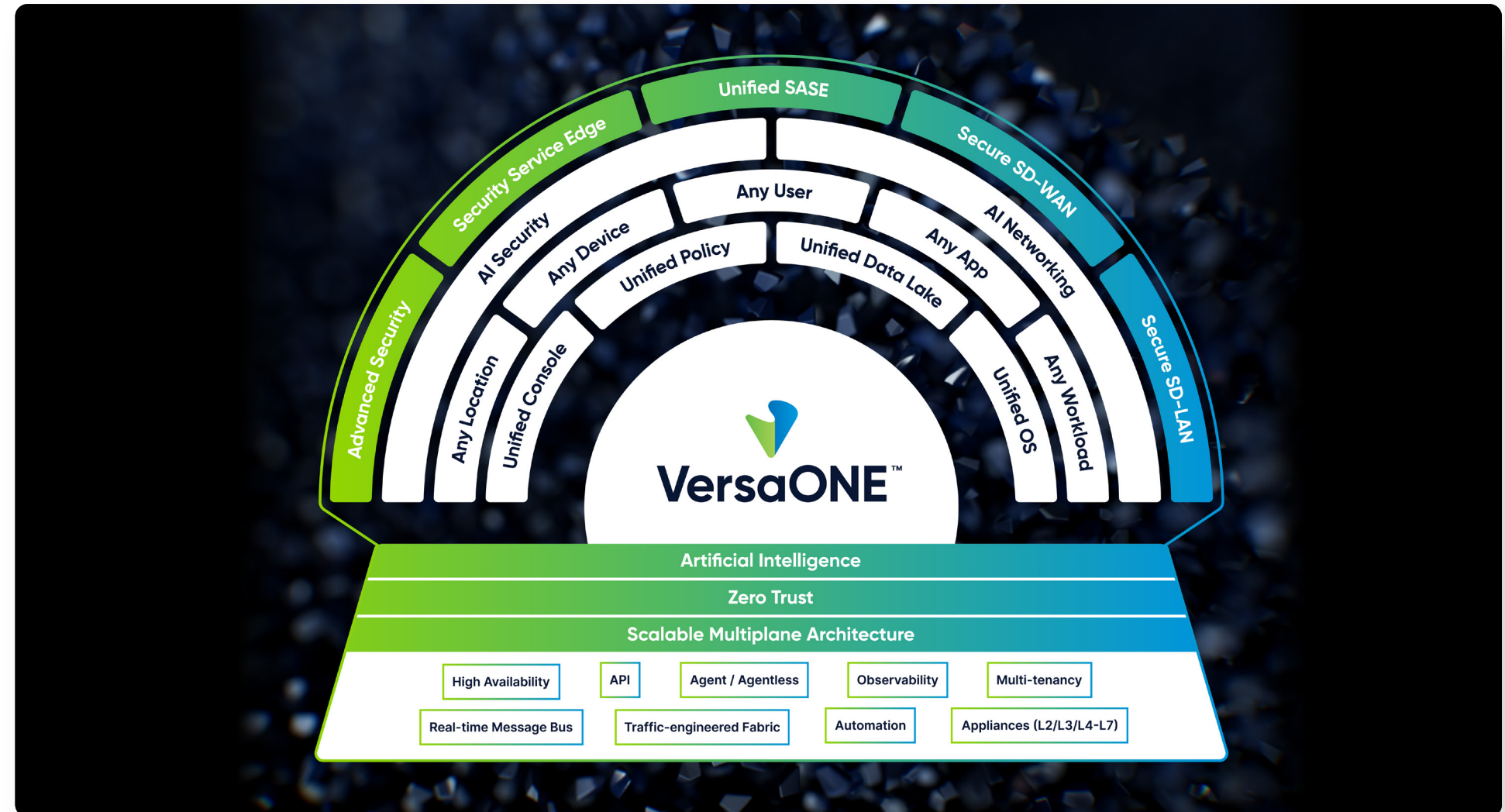
The challenge for SASE vendors is how to integrate multiple features and functions. Aryaka accomplishes this with its OnePASS Architecture. Built on the Aryaka architecture and private global network, Aryaka services provide comprehensive solutions, including integrated security, SD-WAN, application acceleration, WAN optimization, observability, and third-party integration services.

SD-WAN, SASE

FINALIST: VERSA UNIFIED SASE PLATFORM

From the finalist

The Versa Unified SASE Platform consolidates multiple security and networking products into a single solution. It begins with a unified software stack integrated at the operating system level rather than bolted together with APIs. Versa works with an ecosystem of third-party tools such as identity providers, SIEMs, netdevops, cloud infrastructure, and VNFs. These integrations extend the platform’s use cases and enable IT teams to build an architecture that avoids vendor lock-in. Versa SASE services can be implemented on-premises in various locations such as branch, home and regional offices, headquarters, data centers, and the



cloud. Versa’s management platform can be deployed in a public cloud, private cloud, or on-premises. Branch or corporate offices use a Versa

Secure SD-WAN or third-party device to enable users to access workloads in private or public clouds or connect to other corporate sites.

Using Versa SD-WAN as an onramp delivers end-to-end observability and control for user/device-to-app performance and security. ■

Network Visibility and Observability

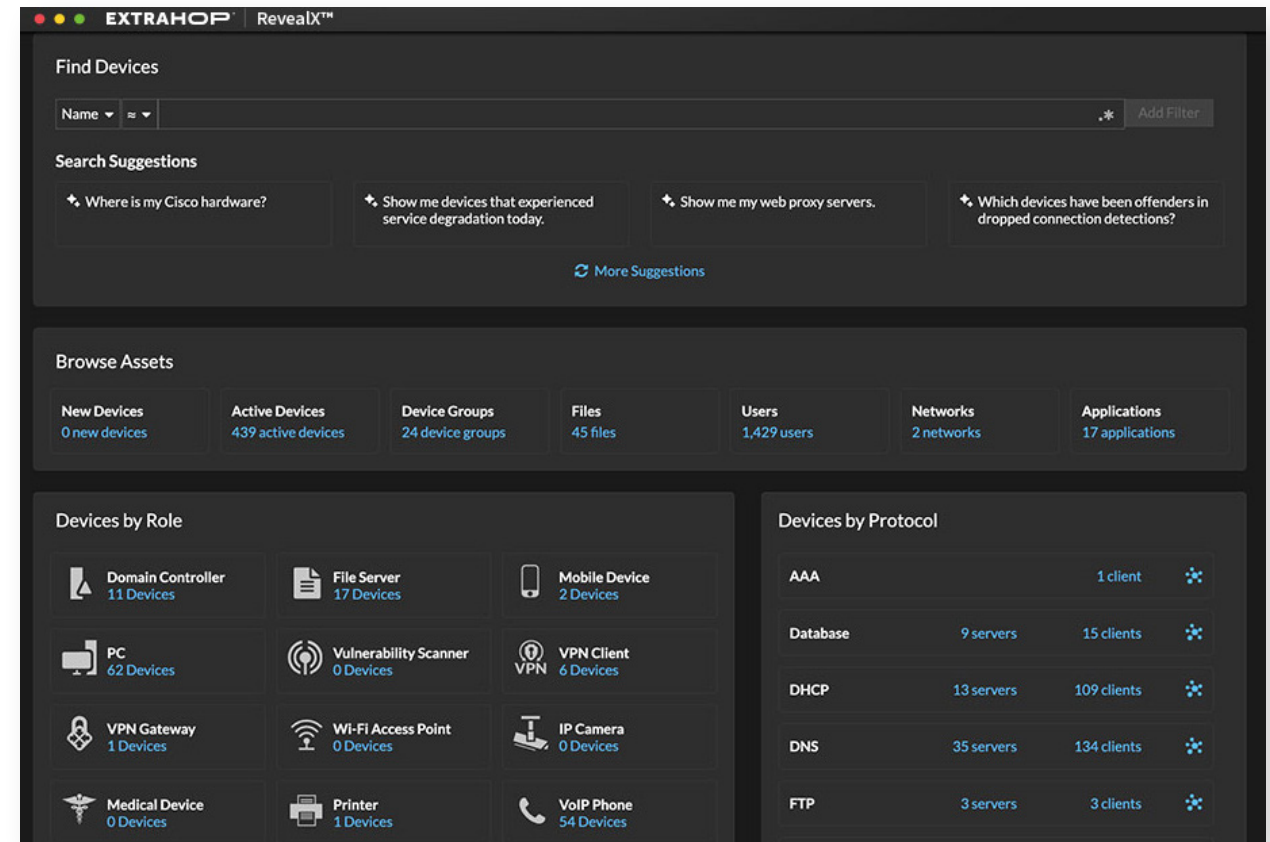
WINNER: EXTRAHOP REVEALX

From the winner

ExtraHop RevealX is the only network intelligence platform that delivers 360-degree visibility into everything on a network—every user, application, asset, transaction, service, and workload—across data center, cloud, and distributed environments. With insight into the cyberthreats, performance issues, and vulnerabilities that evade existing network tools, NOC and SOC teams can triage efficiently, mitigate issues quickly, and keep operations running



smoothly. This deep level of visibility powers network performance monitoring and NDR within the RevealX platform, offering a powerful source of truth and transparency



FROM THE JUDGE

There are many tools that capture network flow data for the purpose of network performance optimization. ExtraHop adds a security component that takes network visibility and observability to the next level. ExtraHop performs NDR by identifying suspicious network activities that other tools may overlook and automating an appropriate response.

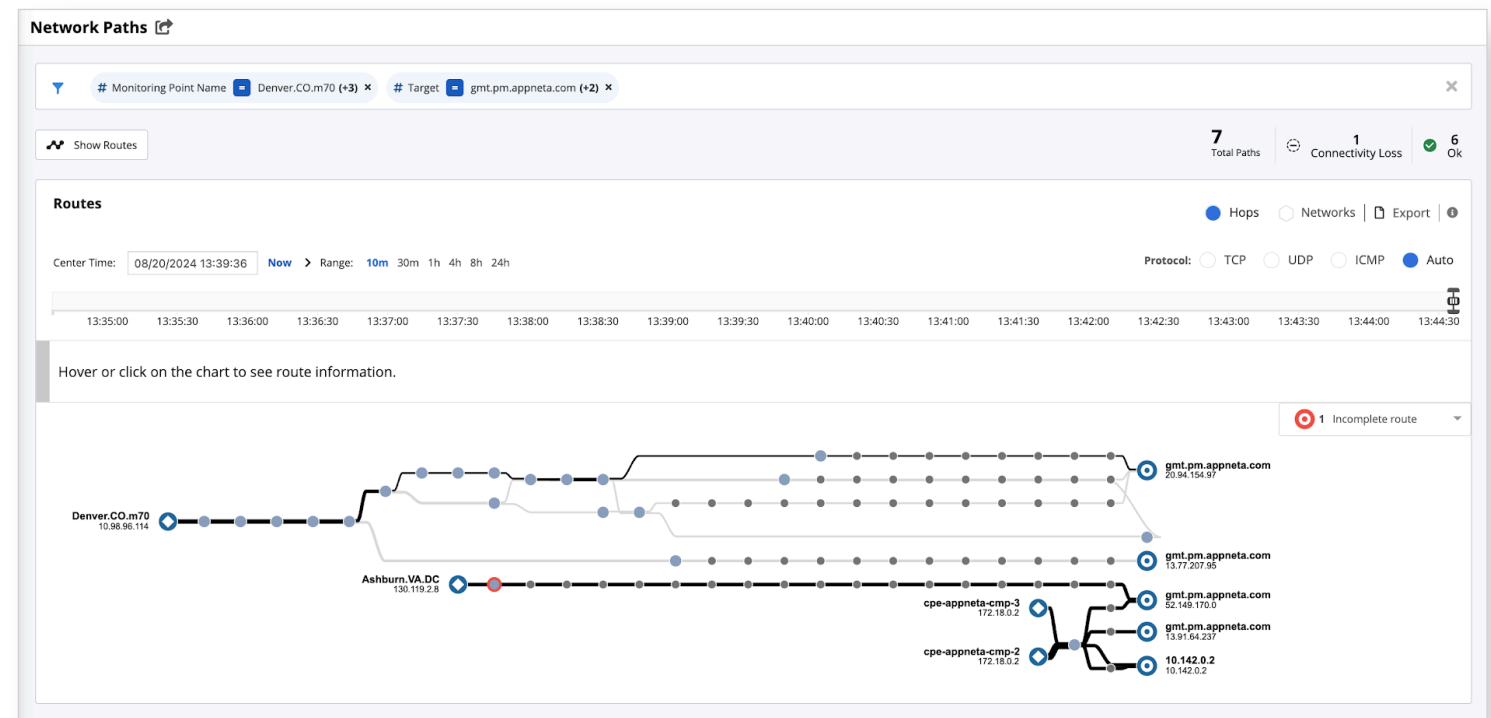
Network Visibility and Observability

WINNER *continued*

across the network. RevealX leverages six forms of AI: LLMs, predictive models, graph algorithms, deep learning, clustering, and clustering link prediction. Cloud-scale ML/AI analyzes network streams in real time, applying more than one million models across 5,000+ attributes. An estimated 70% of network traffic is encrypted, making decryption capabilities critical. RevealX decrypts traffic in real time at speeds up to 100 Gbps. Amid an increase in ransomware attacks, RevealX spots signals and attacker behaviors other methods miss, dynamically adjusting cloud-scale machine learning to changing environments. ■

FINALIST: BROADCOM NETWORK OBSERVABILITY

From the finalist Network Observability by Broadcom delivers end-to-end coverage across any network and any vendor technology at any scale, with modern capabilities that help enterprises understand, optimize, and evolve complex hybrid networks. The tool provides rapid and accurate isolation of issues in modern networks to combat the dramatic growth in network usage and siloed tools, as well as the adoption of software-defined technologies that have served to create a proliferation in network data, events, and alarm volumes. It provides insights that



enable network teams to go from reactive to proactive, and forecast trends in network data sets to improve decision-making and avoid outages. It also helps organizations tame complexity by simplifying modern network deployments and management

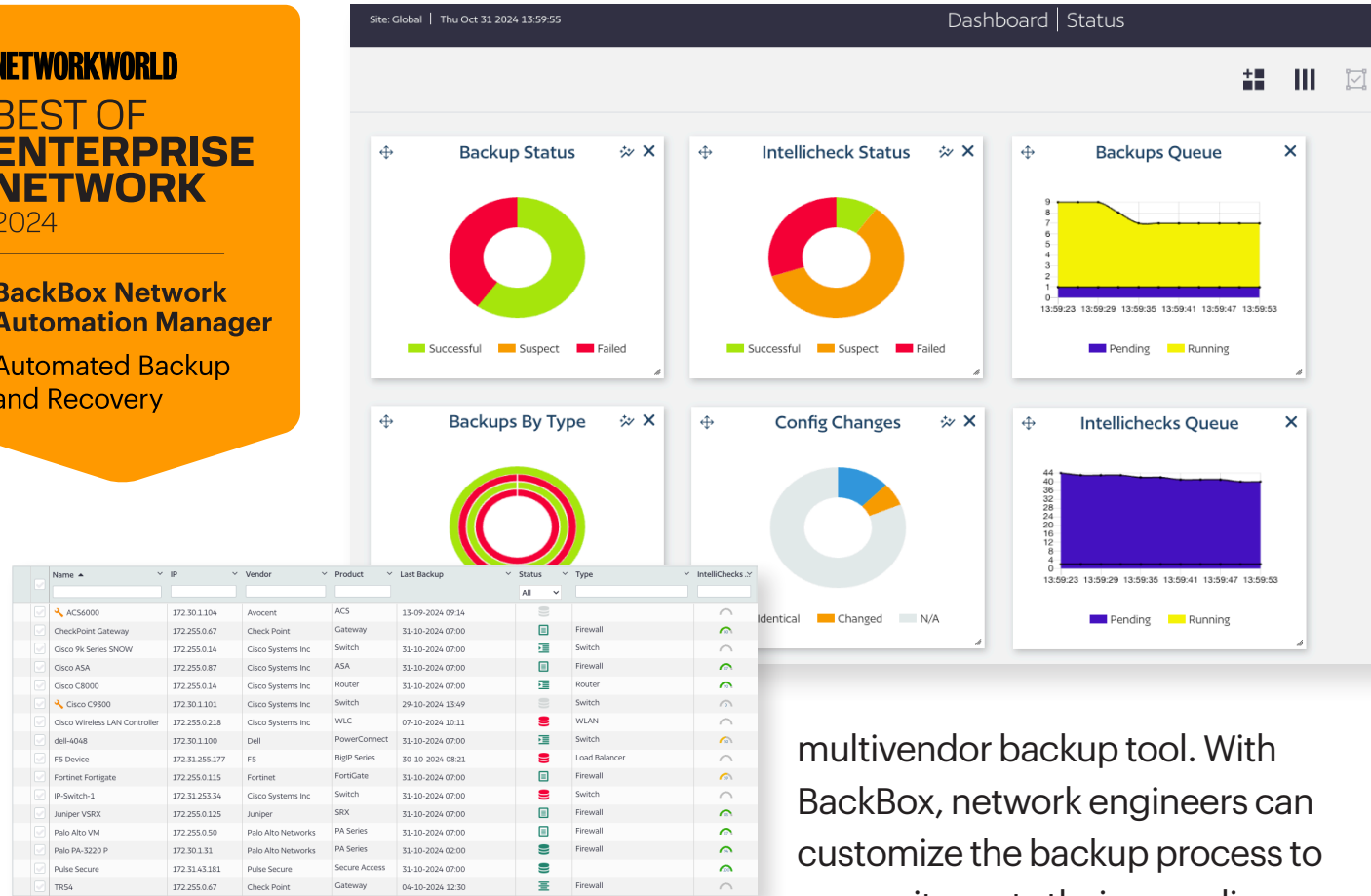
with SD-WAN overlay and underlay performance correlation; network performance impacts on user experience; and end-to-end network path visualizations from home office, to residential ISP, backhaul ISPs, SaaS, and cloud providers. ■

Automated Backup and Recovery

WINNER: BACKBOX NETWORK AUTOMATION MANAGER

From the winner

The BackBox Network Automation Manager automates backups across 180 different network vendors, ensuring reliability and easy restoration. BackBox runs automatic checks after each backup to ensure that the backup file can be restored. These include: checking for file corruption, ensuring it's not a zero-byte file, size deviation, size mismatch, and validating the encryption checksum hash. If any of these checks fail, the backup is flagged for investigation. BackBox's single-click restore works by storing all backup



files in a single place and validating before restoring. When compared to other vendor products, BackBox differentiates by being a flexible

multivendor backup tool. With BackBox, network engineers can customize the backup process to ensure it meets their compliance needs. Using a multivendor tool ensures that backups are done the same way across the entire estate of network devices. ■

FROM THE JUDGE

Automated data backups are critically important in the face of ransomware and other types of cyberattacks. But that's only half the battle. Organizations need to quickly and securely restore data. With BackBox, the restore process is initiated with a single click that triggers validation of backup data, followed by rapid restore.

Automated Backup and Recovery

FINALIST: KINGSTON IRONKEY VAULT PRIVACY 80 EXTERNAL SSD

From the finalist

The Kingston IronKey Vault Privacy 80 External SSD (VP80ES) is Kingston's first OS-independent, hardware-encrypted external SSD with a touchscreen for data protection. The VP80ES is a powerful data storage solution that represents a one-stop shop for small and medium-sized businesses, with its 8TB drive costing a fraction of similarly capable models. This unique advantage enables businesses to centralize all their critical data in one secure



unit, eliminating the need to distribute sensitive information across multiple smaller-capacity standard drives—a practice that hinders data accessibility and heightens the risk of security breaches. The VP80ES is a well-designed secure storage drive that balances high security with usability, incorporating advanced features that set it apart from other solutions in the market. It is equipped with an intuitive color touchscreen and dual password option. ■



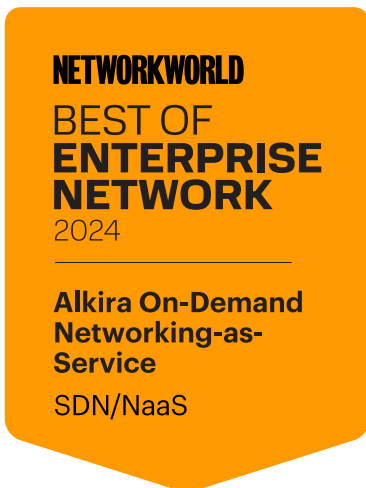
SDN/NaaS

WINNER: ALKIRA ON-DEMAND NETWORKING-AS-SERVICE

From the winner

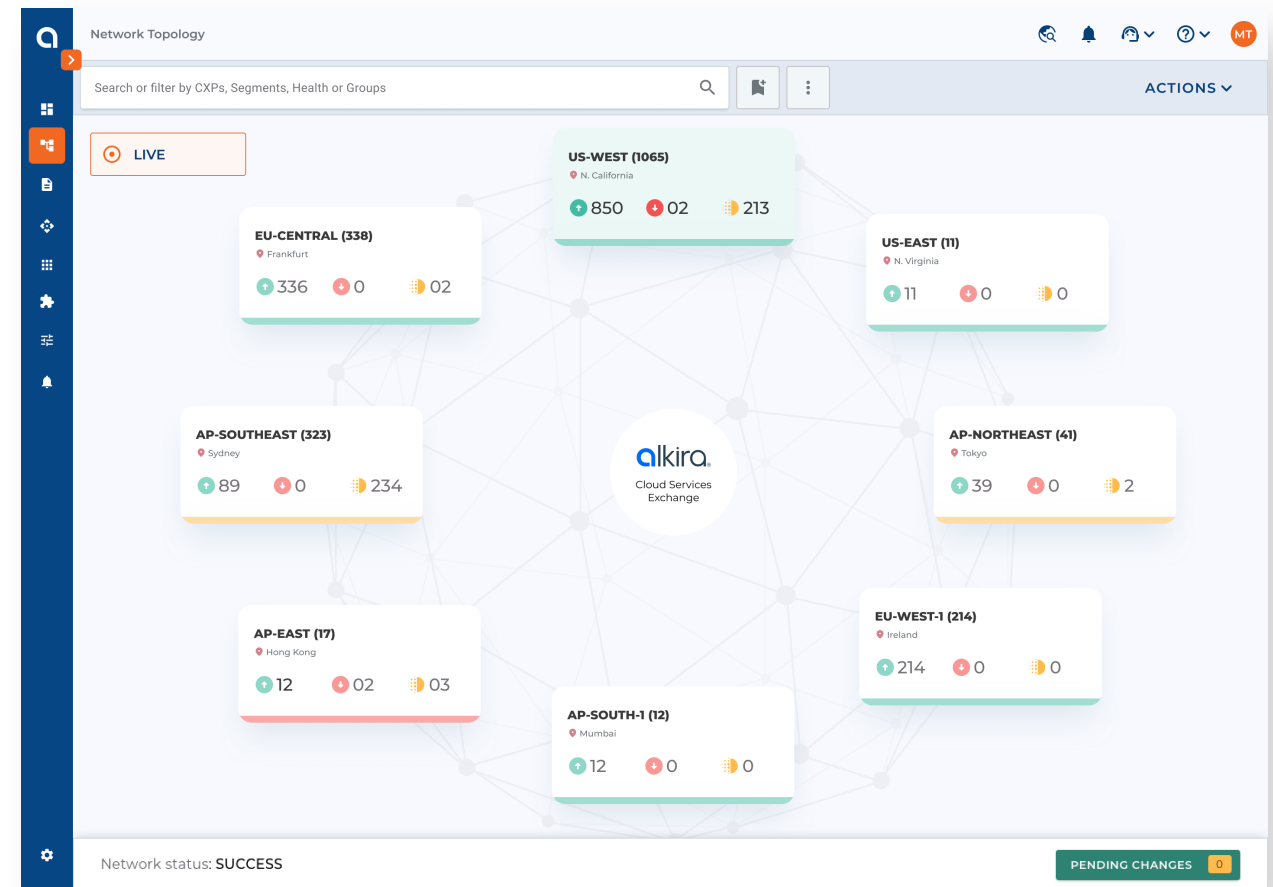
Alkira is a leader in networking infrastructure as-a-service. Its innovative approach integrates multiple clouds, sites, and users into a single enterprise network.

This method streamlines complex



multicloud connectivity, while

networking tasks, allowing customers to replace multiple point solutions with a single, user-friendly platform. Customers set up Centralized Exchange Points (CXPs) based on their needs, optimizing multiregion and



FROM THE JUDGE

Alkira's innovative approach to on-demand networking infrastructure, combined with its agentless operation, user-friendliness, robust security measures, and comprehensive partner ecosystem, makes it a standout solution in the industry. Its ability to streamline processes, enhance efficiency, and adapt to customer demands positions Alkira as a leader in networking.

simplifying management and troubleshooting. Alkira stands out with its agentless approach, which removes the need for complex agent deployment or management in network operations. This streamlines processes, reduces complexity, and enhances overall efficiency. Moreover, Alkira provides an

SDN/NaaS

WINNER *continued*

intuitive interface that simplifies the design, deployment, and management of networks. Security is paramount in today's digital landscape, and Alkira addresses this with its Cloud Insights, providing comprehensive visibility into network and security infrastructure across multiple clouds. This proactive approach to security gives users peace of mind and ensures robust threat protection. Alkira's extensive partner ecosystem further enhances its versatility and interoperability. Integration with major corporations like AWS, Azure, Google Cloud, and others ensures seamless connectivity and compatibility with existing infrastructure. ■

FINALIST: NILE ACCESS SERVICE

From the finalist

Nile's visionary new architecture combines cloud-native software delivery, AI and automation, zero-trust networking security, and custom-built wired, wireless, and sensor network infrastructure in an as-a-service offering. The Nile Access Service learns and adapts to the individual customer's needs. It automates most network management tasks, saving IT hundreds of hours monthly and virtually eliminating trouble tickets. Nile automatically performs software upgrades and capacity planning, while eliminating the need for hardware refreshes. Its modern approach to campus and branch network access results in the lowest TCO in the industry. Nile Access Service consists of Nile

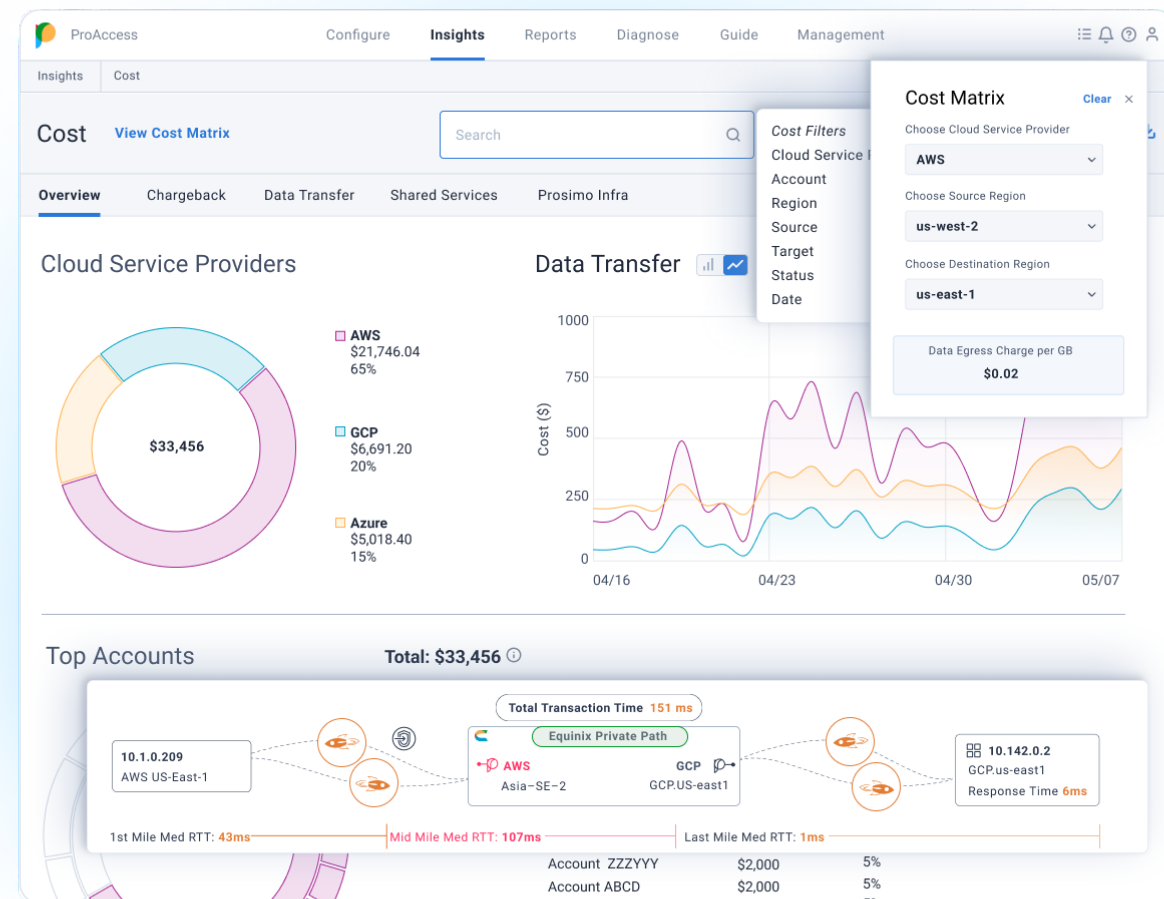
Service Blocks, Nile Services Cloud, and Nile AI Apps. Nile Service blocks include Wi-Fi access points, access switches, distribution switches, and Wi-Fi sensors. Nile Service Blocks integrate 10+

products and is delivered as a service while AI-powered hardware is purpose-built, with deep instrumentation across all layers using a deterministic system design. ■



Cloud/Edge Solutions

WINNER: PROSIMO AI SUITE FOR MULTI-CLOUD NETWORKING



From the winner

Prosimo's AI Suite for Multi-Cloud Networking (MCN) is a cloud-native platform that streamlines AI

adoption for enterprises. Prosimo's Networking for AI simplifies connectivity, security, and infrastructure building blocks for AI

workloads. This includes high bandwidth, ultra-low latency, multicloud connectivity, and built-in compliance and guardrails around LLM data sets. The AI Suite enables organizations to utilize cloud-native connectivity, helping teams deploy and manage workloads faster. Prosimo's platform

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**Prosimo AI Suite
for Multi-Cloud
Networking**
Cloud/Edge Solutions

takes a full life-cycle approach that includes Nebula, a conversational AI assistant enabling AIOps. Nebula uses natural language to provide recommendations, accelerate root cause analysis, and allow users to ask questions about the data flowing through Prosimo's

FROM THE JUDGE

Prosimo's AI Suite for Multi-Cloud Networking gives organizations everything they need for AI readiness in one vertically integrated platform. Prosimo's full-stack, cloud-native platform enables enterprises to take advantage of cloud-native connectivity designed for AI. Plus, the Nebula AI assistant is a cutting-edge generative AI chat interface that enables AIOps for multicloud networking.

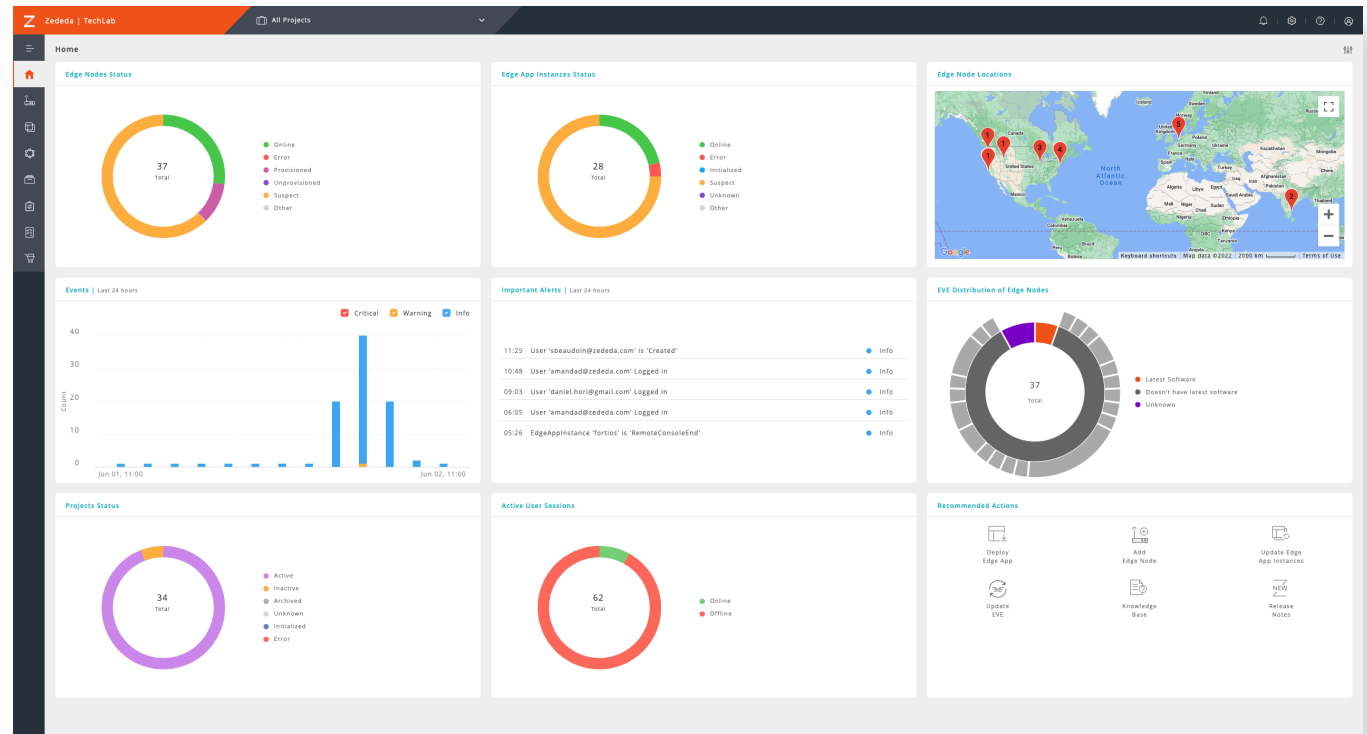
Cloud/Edge Solutions

WINNER *continued*

network. Proximo facilitates multicloud networking by collecting data on traffic flows, costs, alerts, policies, and other metrics from various cloud service providers, in turn enabling users to gain insights, troubleshoot issues, and track resource usage. The AI Suite for Multi-Cloud Networking offers enterprises a 30-50% increase in network performance, 4-8 times faster provisioning, and an 80% or greater reduction in mean time to identify (MTTI) incidents and mean time to resolve (MTTR). The AI Suite is the only solution on the market that combines AI and AIOps capabilities, delivering these benefits quickly and enhancing time to value for its customers. ■

FINALIST: ZEDEDATA

From the finalist
 ZEDEDATA offers a simple and scalable cloud-based orchestration solution that delivers visibility, control, and security for distributed edge computing. The ZEDEDATA platform gives customers the freedom to deploy and manage any app on any hardware at hyperscale, while connecting to any cloud or on-premises system. It is designed to meet the security, safety, uptime, and usability needs of both OT and IT organizations, enabling them to focus on driving business outcomes. In addition, the ZEDEDATA Marketplace provides customers with one-click deployment of both curated and custom applications. ZEDEDATA is optimized to address the



unique requirements for deploying computing at the distributed edge—outside of secure data centers—both on-premises and in the field. The solution leverages the open source EVE-OS from the Linux Foundation’s LF Edge organization

to provide an open, flexible, and secure foundation while abstracting the complexity of the diverse hardware, connectivity, and software at the distributed edge. This also eliminates vendor lock-in. ■

Best of the Rest

WINNER: ACCELSIUS NEUCOOL
(DATA CENTER LIQUID COOLING)

From the winner

As AI adoption grows, data centers are adding more GPUs to meet the growing demand for AI workloads. However, many data centers are unprepared to handle the heat



surge released by AI processors, as traditional air cooling cannot efficiently cool the servers. Accelsius' NeuCool two-phase, direct-to-chip cooling system addresses these challenges.

With NeuCool, highly engineered

vaporators (also known as cold plates) are mounted directly to targeted hot-spot chips. The solution then directs an ecofriendly, safe, dielectric refrigerant through the vaporators. The cooling process turns the liquid refrigerant into vapor, which then travels through an



FROM THE JUDGE

Data center operators need to be prepared to accommodate AI workloads, which run on heat-generating GPU chips, while keeping cooling and electricity costs under control. Accelsius' NeuCool two-phase direct-to-chip liquid cooling technology enables energy savings of up to 50% compared to air cooling and requires zero water consumption.

Best of the Rest

WINNER *continued*

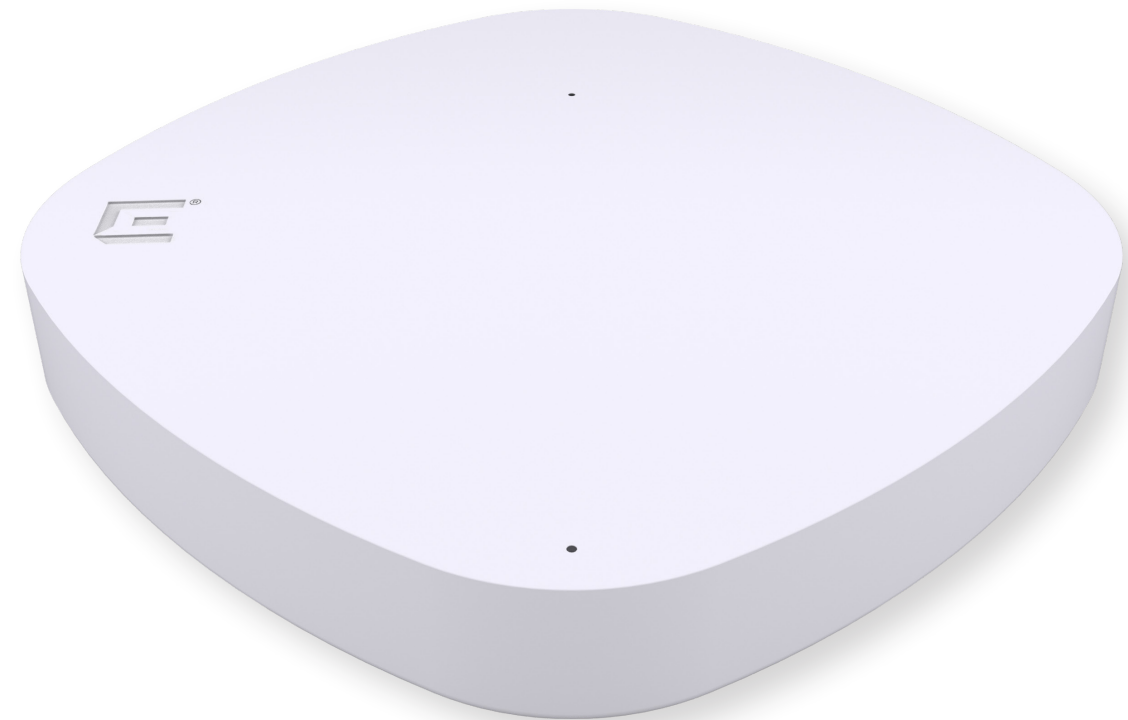
industrial manifold, condensing back into a liquid in a closed-loop system. The NeuCool architecture is driven by the iPCU, a highly engineered cooling distribution unit, with enterprise-grade redundancies, industrial components, and extensive safety testing to maximize uptime. NeuCool's modular design enables seamless integration into existing data center facilities via water-cooled doors, dry coolers, or other heat rejection methods. ■



FINALIST: EXTREME WI-FI 6E AND WI-FI 7 ACCESS NTS

From the finalist

Extreme's portfolio of Wi-Fi 6E and Wi-Fi 7 solutions enable customers to embrace 6 GHz, known as the next era of wireless connectivity. This spectrum creates a new superhighway for connectivity, allowing organizations of all sizes and industries to access dedicated connections for Wi-Fi 6E and Wi-Fi 7 devices. It provides faster data speeds, increased capacity, reduced interference, and improved latency. The newest generation, Wi-Fi 7, adds features including 320 MHz channels and multi-link operation (MLO). This increases bandwidth with additional channels and allows simultaneous usage of multiple bands and channels to maintain the best possible connection—in turn enabling more efficient and reliable



wireless connectivity. The Wi-Fi 6E and Wi-Fi 7 solutions from Extreme are backward-compatible to support all currently deployed connected

devices. Once APs are set up, management is incredibly simple, and customers can take advantage of AIOps management. ■

About our judge

Neal Weinberg is a freelance writer based in Massachusetts. He is a former newspaper reporter and was Features Editor at Network World.

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