EMA™ IT & DATA MANAGEMENT RESEARCH, INDUSTRY ANALYSIS & CONSULTING

2026 Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) Research Calendar

Network Infrastructure and Operations

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Network Management Megatrends 2026

The ultimate benchmarking study of enterprise network operations returns! EMA's biennial "Network Management Megatrends" research explores the effectiveness of today's NetOps teams and their tools with statistics on alert noise, reactive troubleshooting, and tool strategy.

In 2026, the megatrends research will examine how industry trends – including enterprise AI initiatives, hybrid and multi-cloud architecture, network engineering skills gaps, and automated Day 2 operations – are impacting network operations strategy.

Networks as Code: Aligning NetOps with DevOps Through Network Automation

EMA research increasingly finds that network engineering teams are adopting DevOps principles to improve their approach to network automation and to align network services with DevOps and cloud groups. As NetDevOps takes hold in enterprises, these teams are developing and buying tools that align with infrastructure as code and CI/CD principles.

This research will explore the state of NetOps and DevOps alignment and how it impacts network automation strategy.

Striving for a Single Pane of Glass: Exploring the Realities of IT Observability Tool Consolidation

Tool sprawl is a fact of life for large IT organizations. Across networking, systems, storage, applications, cloud, and security groups, each has its preferred tools for monitoring and observability. This practice creates operational silos and a war-room mentality where mean time to innocence is an informal but essential metric.

With this new research, EMA will explore interest in consolidating and integrating tools across functional groups. It will identify the drivers and goals of these consolidation efforts, which tools fall within the scope of the project, and which are excluded. The report will also explore cultural and technical barriers to achieving a consolidated toolset. EMA will ask IT leaders to identify how they attack the problem of tool sprawl, including full-stack platform adoption, AI-driven tool rationalization, and multi-vendor integrations. Finally, this research will identify the benefits organizations experience with observability consolidation and the mistakes they made along the way.

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NetSecOps: Exploring Partnerships Between Cybersecurity and Network Engineering

EMA's biennial NetSecOps research explores the deepening partnerships between network infrastructure and operations teams and cybersecurity teams. Technical and cultural gaps traditionally undermined these partnerships. In EMA's 2024 NetSecOps report, 86% of IT professionals reported that these teams increased their level of collaboration., but nly 45% reported that these partnerships were completely successful.

This new research will explore drivers of NetSecOps collaboration, the key technical enablers of collaboration (including automation and observability), and the challenges that undermine convergence.

Open Networking: Exploring Enterprise Engagement with Disaggregated Solutions

Vertically integrated network hardware dominated the IT industry for decades, but open networking is gaining ground. Hyperscalers consistently champion open networking, but enterprises are starting to inch in that direction, partially thanks to a maturing vendor ecosystem for the open source network operating system, SONiC.

This new research will survey enterprise IT stakeholders about their disposition toward open networking platforms. It will reveal their interest in adopting open solutions for data centers, campus networks (switching and Wi-Fi), and beyond. EMA will also explore drivers and barriers of adoption, as well as best practices for implementing and operating networks based on open platforms.

Zero Trust Networking: Modernizing Network Segmentation and Secure Remote Access

Network infrastructure and operations teams rarely lead a zero trust security initiative, but they are almost always drafted into implementing and managing core components of zero trust – especially secure remote access and network segmentation.

This research will explore the role that network teams play in enabling zero trust. It will reveal their technology strategies for zero trust network access (ZTNA) and microsegmentation. The report will also explore how to leverage the power of network teams' automation and observability solutions to collaborate with security groups and achieve a successful zero trust implementation.

EMA™ Radar for Network Operations Observability

This report updates the "2024 EMA Radar for Network Operations Observability" report. With this primary research, EMA will assess the leading vendors that offer solutions for network fault and performance monitoring, troubleshooting, assurance, and capacity planning.

This report will assess NetOps tool vendors by overall solution impact, vendor strength, and cost of ownership. By exploring the experiences that customers have when they evaluate, procure, implement, and use these products, this Radar will serve as a guide for IT organizations that are creating vendor shortlists for a new investment in network operations observability solutions.

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Network Compliance: Strategies for Improving Resilience and Eliminating Risk

Compliance is an essential function of network engineering. In EMA's experience, network teams vary wildly in their ability to fulfill this mission. Network compliance requires the establishment, enforcement, and auditing of network design and configuration standards. These efforts ensure infrastructure resiliency, reduce security risk, and prove compliance with regulatory standards.

Unfortunately, many network engineers tell us they cannot establish a standard to serve as the basis of compliance due to legacy infrastructure, complexity, and a lack of documentation and tools. This research will explore the state of network compliance and identify key benchmarks for establishing a successful compliance strategy.

Connectivity for Critical Infrastructure: Strategies for Infrastructure and Operations

Many enterprises and government entities have critical infrastructure that enable operations, including factory automation, oil and gas production, utility networks, and logistics and warehouse systems. These systems often have more stringent requirements for network connectivity than traditional IT infrastructure, but the operational technology (OT) teams that own them lack networking expertise.

In this research, EMA will explore how network infrastructure and operations teams collaborate with and support OT teams as they build and operate resilient networks for critical infrastructure. It will identify the infrastructure and security solutions, management tools, and expertise that network teams bring to the table to ensure OT excellence.

Network Observability for Unmanaged Networks

Network teams have tools that excel at monitoring and operating their managed networks, such as data centers, campuses, and branches. However, today's enterprises typically have a mix of managed and unmanaged networks across their digital infrastructure. This includes public cloud environments, the internet, SaaS applications, remote worker connectivity, and partner and customer networks. NetOps teams lack administrative access to these networks, which limits their ability to collect telemetry from them.

This report will survey IT stakeholders about how to gain visibility into these unmanaged networks. It will explore shifts in strategy around data, tooling, and operations. Many network teams simply add a new tool to their existing toolset, which fragmentation and sprawl already undermine. EMA will identify how enterprises can adopt a more integrated strategy to ensure effective operations in today's complex network environments.

Network Infrastructure and Operations

Shamus McGillicuddy

VP of Research

Shamus leads the network infrastructure and operations practice at Enterprise Management Associates (EMA). His practice focuses on all aspects of managing enterprise networks, including network automation, AI-driven network management, network observability, multi-cloud networking, and WAN transformation.

Prior to joining EMA, Shamus worked as a technology journalist for nearly a decade. He served as the news director for TechTarget's networking publications. He led the news team's coverage of all networking topics and published hundreds of articles. Shamus was previously a daily newspaper journalist who covered crime, education, government, and politics.

About Enterprise Management Associates, Inc.

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading IT analyst research firm that specializes in going "beyond the surface" to provide deep insight across the full spectrum of IT management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services at **www.enterprisemanagement.com**. You can also follow EMA on **X** or **LinkedIn**.

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