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Profit proof: Why Wireless WAN wins at sites

How earlier openings, lower connectivity costs, and fewer outages translate into measurable financial impact

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Is investing in 5G worth it?

For distributed enterprises with branch locations, network connectivity is not just IT infrastructure; it's a revenue lifeline and a competitive edge. Yet many businesses remain tethered to wired WAN services that are slow to deploy, expensive to scale, and prone to outages, while still asking themselves, "Is investing in 5G worth it?"

According to an economic analysis by Enterprise Strategy Group (now Omdia), the answer is an emphatic yes. Enterprise Strategy Group's study, "Analyzing the Economic Benefits of Enterprise Cellular Solutions in Branch Locations," commissioned by Ericsson Enterprise Wireless Solutions, found that moving to a Wireless WAN (WWAN) architecture using 5G or LTE as WAN connectivity can:[1]

Accelerate time to revenue by opening new sites months faster than with wired lines, allowing businesses to capture new revenue 120 days earlier on average.

Improve financial performance through higher revenue and lower costs — including up to 2% incremental annual revenue growth and 43% lower WAN connectivity costs in an all-wireless scenario.

Strengthen business continuity by reducing network downtime events by 60% and shortening outage duration by 80%, protecting revenue and customer experience.

Simplify operations and reduce IT workload, resulting in fewer configuration errors and nearly 46% of WAN management effort being refocused to higher-value projects.

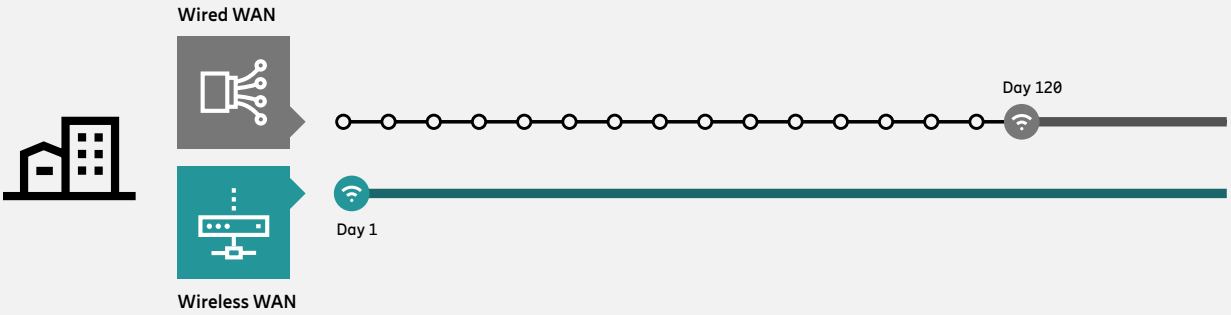
In Enterprise Strategy Group's modeled multi-site business scenario, these benefits translated to an annual net benefit of over $15 million in additional revenue and cost savings after adopting Ericsson solutions.[1] For medium-to-large enterprises unsure about the value of 5G, this clearly demonstrates that WWAN is a high-ROI investment that drives real business outcomes, not just faster network speeds.

[1] Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Economic Validation Report, "Analyzing the Economic Benefits of Enterprise Cellular Solutions in Branch Locations," commissioned by Ericsson, September 2024. All statistics and findings in this report are drawn from this Enterprise Strategy Group Economic Validation study (quantitative model and customer interviews).

Faster openings for quicker earnings

One of the most immediate returns from Wireless WAN is the ability to open and profit from new sites much faster than with traditional wired service. In Enterprise Strategy Group's customer research, enterprises noted that using Ericsson Cradlepoint routers shortened new-site deployment by an average of four months compared to waiting for wired lines. Put simply, a branch that might take ~120 days to establish a wired connection can often be online in a day or less with 5G, so business operations begin at least a fiscal quarter sooner.[1]

Wireless WAN removes months of lost revenue from new site launch delays



This "time to revenue" advantage is enormous. In Enterprise Strategy Group's financial model, those extra 120 days of sales across four new locations translated to $7.4 million in additional annual revenue for the business.[1] Faster connectivity directly accelerates revenue capture that would otherwise be lost to delays.

WWAN also gives enterprises the agility to expand into new markets or opportunities without waiting for infrastructure. Several organizations said they could target locations that competitors avoided because, as one survey participant said, "We can actually go into areas where wired service is unavailable or too slow, thanks to Ericsson."[1] 5G and LTE coverage is widespread and quick to set up, so businesses can roll out branches, pop-up retail, or remote operations wherever the opportunity arises, and be confident that connectivity won't be the roadblock.

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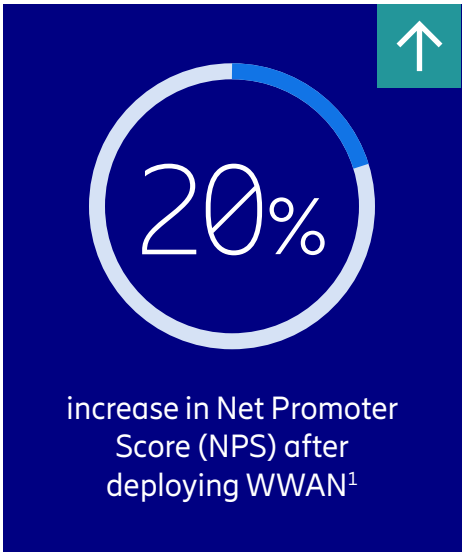
Resilient connectivity protects customer experience

Cellular WAN provides another agility boost by improving the customer experience, leading to higher loyalty and sales. With wireless failover and more resilient connectivity, locations stay online and serve customers when they might previously have suffered outages.

Enterprise Strategy Group found that eliminating network downtime at retail sites, for example, prevented customers from being turned away because systems were down. One interviewee reported a 20% increase in Net Promoter Score (NPS) after deploying WWAN, attributing it to the consistent uptime of their services.[1] Happier customers led to tangible financial impact: Enterprise Strategy Group modeled that reducing annual customer churn from 7.4% to 6.6% (an 8% improvement in retention) would save about $2.6 million in revenue per year for the company, or roughly $800K in profit when applying gross margins.[1] In short, better connectivity drives better customer satisfaction, which drives revenue retention and growth.

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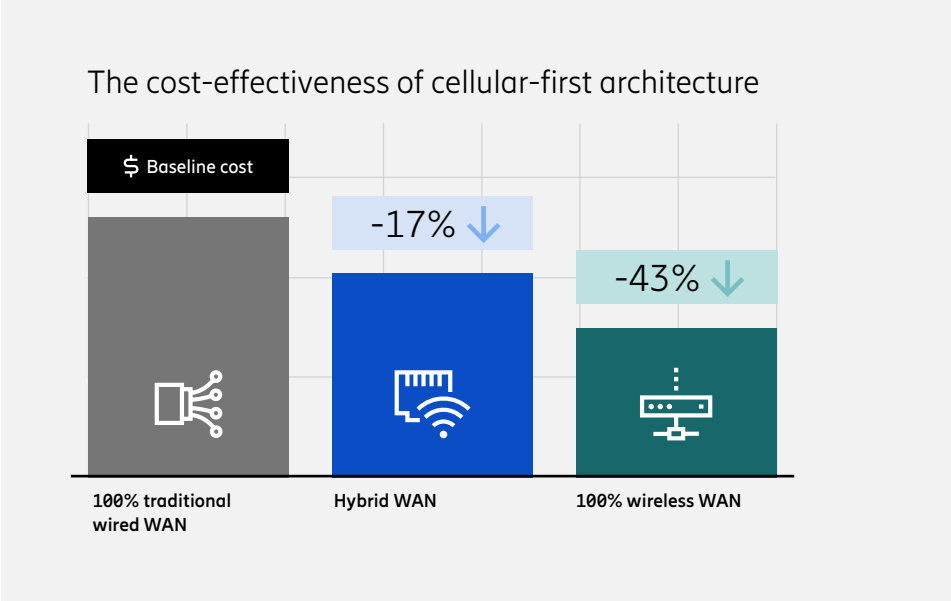
A network built for growth, not overhead

Wireless WAN doesn't just get sites up faster; it can also boost the top line and shrink the cost base on an ongoing basis. Enterprise Strategy Group found that organizations using Ericsson Enterprise 5G solutions saw meaningful increases in revenue beyond the initial time-to-market gains. Using a conservative 2% revenue increase in its model, Enterprise Strategy Group estimated that for a $450M business, that equates to an extra $9 million in annual sales attributable to WWAN deployment.[1] This growth comes from a combination of factors: more sites (market expansion), improved uptime (capturing sales that would be lost in outages), and new capabilities (such as mobile services or IoT applications that drive revenue). In essence, better connectivity translates to more business.

On the cost side of the equation, WWAN can significantly lower the ongoing expenses of WAN connectivity and management. The most dramatic savings identified were in bandwidth costs. Cellular data plans and devices, when used at scale, proved cheaper than wired contracts in many cases. This was especially true when factoring in the flexibility to optimize data plans through Ericsson NetCloud monitoring.

Enterprise Strategy Group compared three scenarios for a hypothetical 71-site company: (a) 100% traditional wired WAN, (b) hybrid WAN (wired primary + wireless secondary), and (c) 100% wireless (primary and backup via cellular). The hybrid approach saved roughly 17% in WAN bandwidth costs, while the all-wireless approach saved 43% of WAN costs — nearly half the cost — versus the all-wired baseline.[1] These savings accrue from reduced circuit fees, better pooling of data, and the avoidance of many telco charges and construction costs. It's clear that a cellular-first architecture can be far more cost-efficient for wide-area networking, particularly as 5G performance enables it to replace costly wired links.



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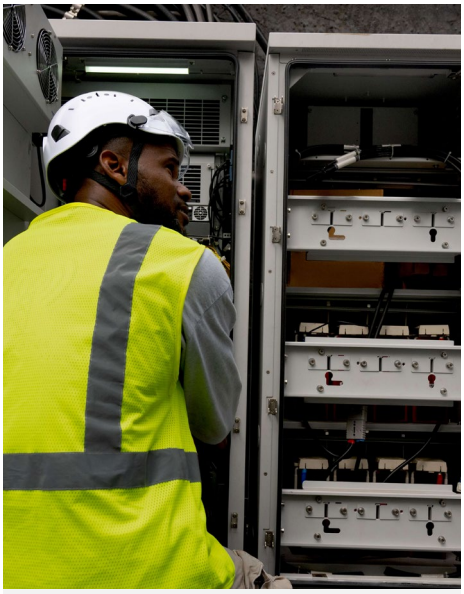
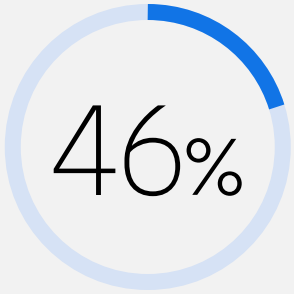
Doing more with less WAN busywork





increase in WAN management efficiency after switching to cellular WAN[1]

"Before, we had three of our most expensive engineers tied up troubleshooting WAN issues. Now, one person handles everything."[1]

Beyond bandwidth fees, operational and support costs are also lower with WWAN. Customers reported needing fewer network engineers and fewer truck rolls after deploying Ericsson solutions. One IT leader said, "Before, we had three of our most expensive engineers tied up troubleshooting WAN issues. Now, one person handles everything."[1]

Enterprise Strategy Group quantified this efficiency: roughly 46% of WAN management effort (measured in full-time equivalent hours) was reallocated to other tasks when moving from legacy to cellular WAN solutions.[1] In the model, the company was able to repurpose two out of six WAN engineers, yielding about $315K per year in labor cost savings.[1] Similarly, simpler centralized management and more reliable equipment led to fewer human errors and emergency fixes. Enterprise Strategy Group projects that annual network configuration errors would drop from 29 to 16 for the modeled company, and that the cost to remediate those errors would also fall by ~35% due to better tools. The result is an additional $773K saved annually by avoiding downtime and misconfiguration-related issues.[1] Fewer mistakes and less time "fighting fires" means IT teams can focus on strategic projects that add value, rather than constantly troubleshooting the WAN.

It's worth noting that WWAN cost advantages often enable greater resilience and coverage without breaking budgets. Companies reported that, because 5G and LTE solutions were more affordable, they could justify deploying backup links at more sites (improving reliability) and even opening more locations than originally planned (driving growth). These qualitative benefits — greater agility in scaling the business — complement the direct financial ROI. Enterprise Strategy Group kept its financial estimates conservative but acknowledged that many organizations achieve even higher returns by leveraging savings to invest in expansion. The bottom line: 5G WWAN can simultaneously raise revenue and reduce costs, a combination that directly improves operating profit and ROI for a multi-site enterprise.

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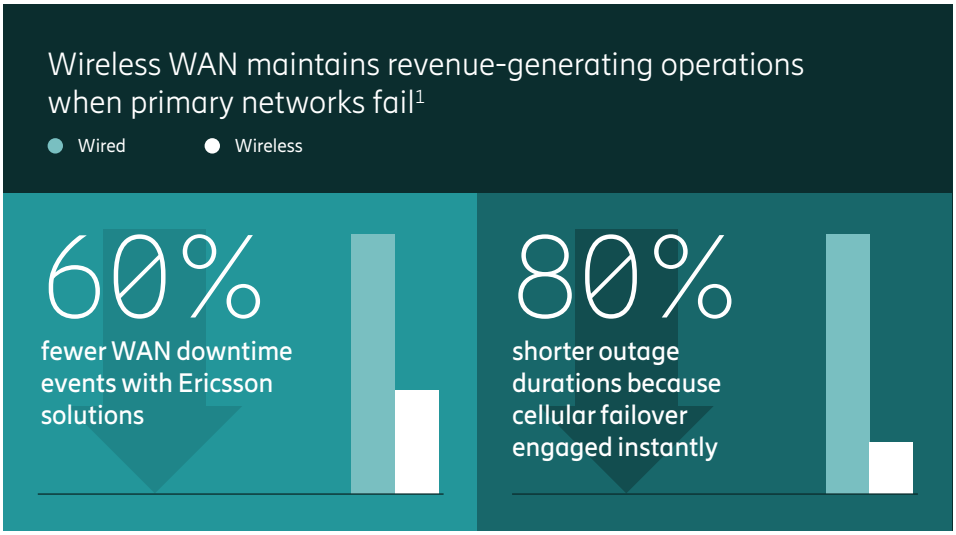
A WAN designed for real-world failures

"With Ericsson's solution, we know that recovery will be faster and more complete than with our previous wired network."[1]

In an era where every minute of uptime matters, Wireless WAN delivers a step-change improvement in network resilience and business continuity for distributed sites. With traditional single-provider wired networks, a digger cutting a fiber cable or a local outage could knock a branch offline for days, halting sales and operations. By contrast, cellular WAN links provide an independent, rapid failover-ready connection that keeps locations running through incidents.

Enterprise Strategy Group's research confirms significantly less downtime with Ericsson's solution: customers experienced 60% fewer WAN downtime events, and when an outage did occur, it lasted 80% shorter on average because the cellular failover engaged instantly, restoring connectivity.[1] In the model, the wired WAN business suffered about 12 outages per year at 6 hours each (72 hours of downtime total), whereas the WWAN business saw outages drop to roughly 5 per year and only ~1 hour each (about 5 hours total).



This improvement translated into annual savings of $95,000 in avoided downtime costs, according to Enterprise Strategy Group's conservative estimate — and many interviewees indicated their actual uptime savings were much larger.[1] For example, one retail organization had frequent micro-outages (2–5 minutes) that disrupted transactions; since moving to Wireless WAN, failovers are so seamless that they haven't needed to dispatch technicians, and their previously frequent multi-day outages have been virtually eliminated.[1] Ensuring that POS systems, cloud apps, and customer Wi-Fi stay operational even during a primary link failure means the business keeps earning revenue when competitors could be forced to go dark.

Continuity that goes beyond outages

Crucially, this level of resiliency is not just about disaster recovery; it's about everyday reliability that safeguards the customer experience and productivity. A nearly 100% available network instills confidence: every credit card swipe will process, every digital sign will be online, and employees can always access cloud systems. The cost of lost customer trust due to a network outage can be far greater than the hard dollar losses during downtime. By virtually eliminating lengthy outages, WWAN protects the brand and revenue streams.

Moreover, in truly critical scenarios (such as natural disasters or rapid relocations), cellular connectivity can be deployed within hours to restore operations in a new location — far faster than reinstalling wired lines. This gives organizations the ability to respond to change and continue operating in the face of adversity. WWAN provides a level of continuity and revenue insurance that wired networks struggle to match. As one IT manager said of preparing for disruptions, "With Ericsson's solution, we know that recovery will be faster and more complete than with our previous wired network."[1]

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Results that compound: Revenue, savings, resilience

For medium and large enterprises evaluating next-gen connectivity, the findings are compelling: 5G Wireless WAN delivers clear ROI and strategic advantages for fixed sites. By combining the capabilities of traditional WANs with the flexibility of cellular networks, Ericsson's solutions allow businesses to move faster, spend less, and stay online more reliably. The Enterprise Strategy Group economic analysis quantified how these benefits translate into financial impact, from millions in additional annual revenue thanks to accelerated openings and expanded markets, to substantial cost reductions in networking and downtime. Equally important, organizations gained new agility to respond to opportunities (or crises) without being constrained by wireline bandwidth.

WWAN turns the network into an enabler of business growth rather than a bottleneck. It provides fast, anywhere connectivity that keeps pace with modern enterprise needs, whether that's launching a pop-up location overnight or ensuring customers never see a "system down" message. And it achieves all this while often lowering the total cost of connectivity ownership. The concerns that often give executives pause — reliability, security, coverage — have been resoundingly addressed by real-world deployments of 5G solutions, which are now mainstream and proven in enterprise environments.

The evidence shows that WWAN can pay for itself many times over. It drives revenue acceleration, operational savings, and resilience in ways that directly hit the business's bottom line. In a world where connectivity equals productivity and customer satisfaction, 5G is more than a network upgrade — it's a business upgrade.

Learn more about enterprise wireless solutions