IDC Survey Spotlight: Which Application Delivery Controller Capabilities Will Matter Most to Enterprises as AI Workloads Scale?

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About this Presentation

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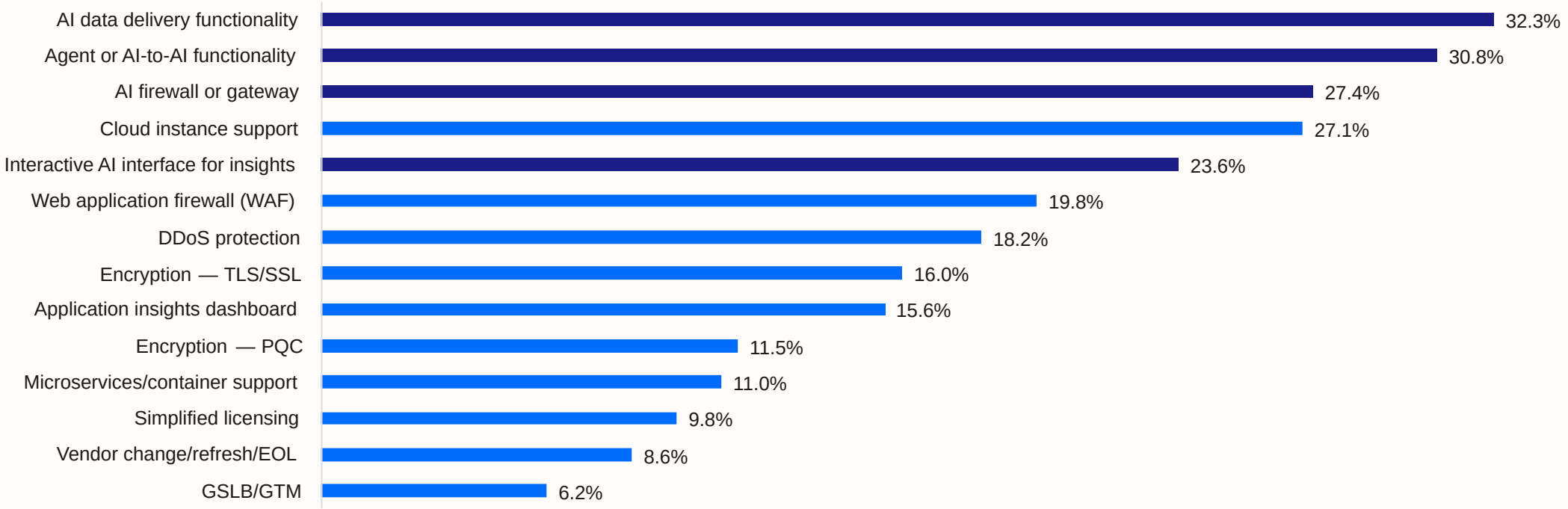
IDC Survey Spotlight

Which application delivery controller capabilities will matter most to enterprises as AI workloads scale?



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Q. Which application delivery controller (ADC) functionality or criteria will influence your choice of vendor in the next year? (Select up to three.)



Source: IDC's *Enterprise Infrastructure Pulse Survey,* July 2026 (n = 643)

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IDC's take

ADC buying criteria are being fundamentally reshaped, not just adjusted: Four of the top 5 are AI related, led by AI data delivery, with AI, cloud, and security as the top themes

1. AI-related criteria lead ADC vendor selection: Four of the top 5 criteria are AI related, led by AI data delivery functionality (32%), agent or AI-to-AI functionality (31%), and an AI firewall or gateway (27%), with an interactive AI interface for insights (24%) also in the top 5 alongside cloud instance support (27%). These criteria take precedence over long-standing priorities such as WAF (20%), DDoS protection (18%), and TLS/SSL encryption (16%).

2. The reshuffling reflects enterprises' preparation of ADCs to support AI workload deployments driven by rapidly evolving business initiatives. AI workloads' requirements can include delivering data efficiently to AI applications, managing traffic between agents and models, and inspecting and protecting AI traffic, while cloud instance support (27%) and microservices/container support (11%) show that these deployments span on-premises, cloud, and containerized environments.

3. For enterprise buyers, ADC evaluations should extend beyond performance and traditional application security to cover AI-specific capabilities; in this technology shift, buyers must weigh where to deploy AI features across existing and new network and security products. Cloud-deployable form factors and AI-aware gateway and firewall functions can ease deployment and increase velocity (e.g., consistent policy and traffic management across on-premises and cloud instances), while security remains a persistent theme, with WAF, DDoS protection, TLS/SSL, and post-quantum encryption (12%) selected by a meaningful share of buyers.

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