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As Cisco mulls SDNs, HP set to offer SDN SLAs

Partnership with Adara Networks will focus on programming, virtualizing the data plane

By [Jim Duffy](#) on Wed, 03/07/12 - 9:42am.

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While [Cisco's formulating its SDN and OpenFlow strategy](#), HP has been steadily working with an SDN company in US Dept. of Defense and enterprise applications. [Adara Networks](#) and HP have been collaborating on military communications for the past couple of years, specifically on software controlled TCP acceleration and flow-by-flow network management.

Now the two are looking to take that work into the service provider space and deeper into the enterprise, offering virtual switches and controllers designed to enable service level agreements for SDNs. They plan to make a announcement in April, perhaps at the [Open Networking Summit conference in Santa Clara](#), on their joint go-to-market strategy.

"What we learned in military working with HP, we want to take it to the enterprise," says Adara Chairman and CEO Eric Johnson.

The two have been collaborating on [the Navy/Marine Corps Intranet \(NMCI\), a \\$7 billion projects initially awarded in 2000 to systems integrator EDS](#), which [HP acquired in 2008 for \\$14 billion](#). NMCI is designed to serve as [a converged IP network that supports 700,000 users](#) but [the \\$9.3 billion project has been beset by problems](#), like [a worm infestation in 2003](#).

[NMCI cost EDS lots of money](#) so maybe it shouldn't be highlighted as an enterprise showcase. Regardless, the enterprise focus for Adara and HP isn't new, but it is recent. [Adara has been an enterprise partner of HP's for the past year](#). But now with [the advent of cloud computing](#), the two are taking their collaboration to cloud service providers targeting enterprise customers.

Adara's flagship product is the Full Stack Engine, which creates virtual distributed computing clusters to resolve the limitations of TCP/IP, SOA, and other IT staples. The ultimate goal is to improve the performance of applications and services across the network by creating a virtualized and federated service infrastructure.

HP and Adara want to offer what they call Affirmative Service Guarantees to SDNs, or essentially SLAs for SDNs. They want to extend software control to the data/forwarding plane instead of [the control plane, where SDNs usually focus](#), so flow-based service levels can be programmed in.

"You have to have SLAs or production environments are going to be hesitant to install it," Johnson says of SDNs.

Though their collaboration does include work on [OpenFlow, the popular SDN API](#), it's not the focus. Indeed, [HP's recent announcement of 16 OpenFlow-enabled switches](#) did not include any Adara code; it was all from HP Labs.

But rather than just "relocating the control plane" with OpenFlow, Adara and HP are offering Affirmative Service Delivery in SDNs by virtualizing and programming the switch data plane. So expect to see HP offering guaranteed SDN SLAs with switches and ProLiant servers bundled with Adara software, in addition to "relocating the control plane" with its 16 OpenFlow-enabled switches. Adara FSE already runs on the [AllianceONE Advanced Services application module on HP's 5406 zl switch](#). It will be pre-bundled on the HP's ProLiant servers too.

Top-of-rack switches are next, the companies say.

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