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# SDN Watch: ADARA Networks Makes Big Bet On Channel

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ADARA Networks isn't the flashiest of the [emerging software-defined networking \(SDN\) startups](#), but it's way out in front of a challenge few of its SDN brethren have tackled thus far: articulating a value proposition for the VAR channel behind a commercially available SDN platform.

The SDN space -- and by extension, the network virtualization and software-centric data center segments -- is flush with interesting startups. But very few have solidified channel strategies, let alone launched programs and opened up through two-tier distribution. ADARA has done all of those things and a major reason for that is also pretty simple one: advocacy.

"What you hear a lot of is that these companies see the channel as an annoyance," Eric Johnson, ADARA's CEO, told CRN in a recent interview. "We understand that the care and feeding of that distribution model benefits the enterprise customer. I will tell you we've also had a lot of service providers approach us and say, 'Would you deal with us directly like the other SDN vendors do?' But we believe in the channel."

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San Jose, Calif.-based ADARA offers what it describes as a "full-stack network," in that customers can acquire pieces of a fully virtualized, flexible network infrastructure or go whole hog and purchase a Full Stack Engine (FSE) that integrates each of the seven layers of the OSI network model.

The individual products include its Apollo access point routers, Gemini multicast routers, Mercury application delivery routers and Taurus gateways. The Mercury, Gemini and Taurus products, along with its Orion cloud computing and SOA platforms, combine for the FSE implementation. ADARA supports all levels of network virtualization, from flow, path, interface and route to intra- and inter-domain and VLAN scaling, and can offer virtualized object storage.

Johnson said ADARA needed to have a commercially available product as soon as possible because as customers grow more aware of the SDN concept, they're not going to want development-grade tools. They're also going to want it to work as much as possible with their existing network infrastructure, he said, so the addition of SDN assets has to include overlay.

"A lot of the [SDN] vendors talk about that what customers have to do to deploy this is just rip and replace and put their system in. That's incredibly irresponsible. What customers invested in is a good

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investment and your system should be able to leverage it as much as possible," Johnson said. "The most egregious cost is when you're asking customers to use specific, proprietary technology, but if you're on every open standards body there is, saying 'We're open,' and then you hook them with a proprietary product, that's even worse."

Johnson and his team also didn't see the benefit in focusing on just one or two areas of the networking stack, as several of ADARA's SDN brethren do.

"Some of these guys make great virtual switches, but they make only virtual switches," he said. "Some of them make virtual controllers, some of them make virtualized load balancers. We think you have to do all the things that virtual networking is able to provide."

With ADARA and other SDN startups coming onto the radar, venture capital investment and M&A activity are expected to heat up. [VMware's blockbuster \\$1.2 billion deal for Nicira](#) over the summer served as a kickoff to what many analysts believe will be a few years of SDN-centric acquisitions, and Johnson freely admitted to CRN that ADARA is open to offers.

"We're in play," Johnson said. "But what you will see, if we're independent, is us heading toward a public offering. We want to work with progressive-minded, value-added partners and have the best relationships."

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