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Take back the network

Enterprises need SDNs so they can control their own networking destiny

By Jim Duffy on Thu, 03/06/14 - 7:04pm.

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What do enterprises need from SDNs? Perhaps more than anything, control of their own networking destiny.

That was clear from a talk Matthew Liste of Goldman Sachs gave this week at the Open Networking Summit in Santa Clara, CA. Sure, Goldman Sachs wants more cohesion and consistency in the pre-SDN piecemeal programming it's done over the past 10-15 years. Such uniformity would allow the firm to pursue common, easily extendible programmatic control planes, independent control and data planes, bare metal switches with common hardware abstraction, Linux-like operating systems for switches, commodity scale architectures and "software-defined everything," Liste says.

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But the end result would be a network under Goldman Sachs' direction.

"We're big believers in open standards and open architectures...so we have a say in how things evolve," Liste told the audience at ONS.

SDNs will help enterprises build secure, highly automated and orchestrated private clouds to gain back some control of their network, says Sunil Khandekar, CEO and founder of Nuage Networks. A private cloud with agility and flexibility comparable to a public cloud will help keep sensitive data within an organization and quell quiet mutinies, he says.

Security in SDNs is not a given though.

"Large enterprise customers are virtualizing data centers but have lived through the pain of zero automation," Khandekar said. "Lines of business will keep going around them to (Amazon Web Services). They're worried about loss of control, loss of security... and they're very nervous about not having the compliance. Their only choice is to build a private cloud."

Or a hybrid leveraging many cloud providers, according to Cisco. Its recently-announced InterCloud system, a data center feature of the CiscoONE programmability framework, allows enterprises to move workloads between different private and public cloud data centers, and different hypervisors. Customers, in essence, become brokers of private cloud services, says Cisco President Rob Lloyd.

InterCloud in use in two different service providers, and in early field trials with others, Lloyd said. It will be rolled out into production in three to six months.

Part of controlling network destiny also includes the ability of an enterprise to consolidate the number of installed network elements and appliances without losing any functionality. Network Functions Virtualization (NFV), a phenomenon in the service provider world, enables network services such as firewalls, load balancing, WAN optimization and Layer 4-

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NFV also applies to the enterprise; Goldman Sachs is adopting the NFV model to virtualize Layer 4-7 services. And [Adara](#), an SDN/NFV company that says it's been doing SDN for enterprises for 10 years, has a top-of-rack server/switch that virtualizes network functions and performs service chaining in [an OpenFlow SDN](#).

"When you're minimizing hardware you can bring in more functions," says Karthikeyan Subramaniam, chief software architect at Adara.

And perhaps bring more of the network under your own control.

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