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HP's novel SDN app store draws praise, users | #HPDiscover

MARIA DEUTSCHER | DECEMBER 26TH

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Few trends have adapted as well from the consumer world to the enterprise as application marketplaces. Dell recently rolled out a provider-neutral catalog of cloud services, Salesforce.com Inc. is launching a selection of partner-developed extensions to its Desk.com platform and now HP is joining the fray with one of the most original adaptations yet: an app store for its software-defined networking (SDN) controller.

Michael Zhu, who helps lead the initiative, appeared on theCUBE from the company's recently concluded enterprise event in Barcelona to share the inside track on the trailblazing project with hosts John Furrier and Dave Vellante. The underlying rationale, he explained, is fairly simple. It's all about simplicity.

Modernizing the networking infrastructure of a large organization with legacy investments without incurring downtime is a complex undertaking. The best way to approach the shift to software-defined networking is to split up the task into smaller and more manageable chunks. That's what HP is aiming to accomplish with the pioneering marketplace.

"You have to be able to break the problems into smaller pieces, and for SDN, we are able to cleanly separate the issues into three different layers: the application layer, the controller layer and the infrastructure layer," he detailed. "We believe that if we can provide a platform that takes care of the controller and the underlying infrastructure, we can accelerate the innovation at the application layer."
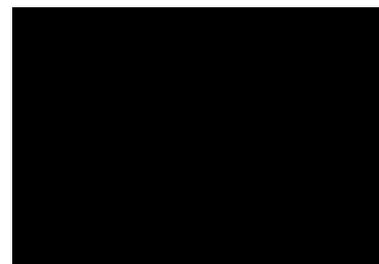
Most of the new solutions that developers are building to take advantage of that functionality fall into one of three categories, Zhu said. One is automating the orchestration of network building blocks such as load balancing and message routing, which have traditionally been tied to dedicated appliances with different management interfaces. The second area is security, where partners are exploiting the increasing amount of data available on user activities. The third is traffic management.

Although perhaps the least conspicuous of the three, that field is one of the most active, Zhu said. He pointed to a recent collaboration between the company and Microsoft that produced a utility for prioritizing packets from the latter's Lync communications application, thereby eliminating much of the jitter affecting team conversations. But it's not only large software vendors that are signing up to the company's SDN App Store.

Smaller channel partners that may not have been in the application development business before are also jumping on the bandwagon, too. Zhu said HP boasts over 85 vendors on its marketplace currently developing 35 apps for its software-defined networking platform.

HP is also seeing a steady influx of users; its controller has been downloaded over 5,000 times, he said. More than two dozen paying customers have signed up for a beta program for the service and a handful have
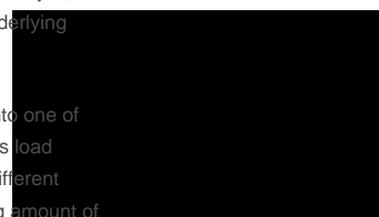
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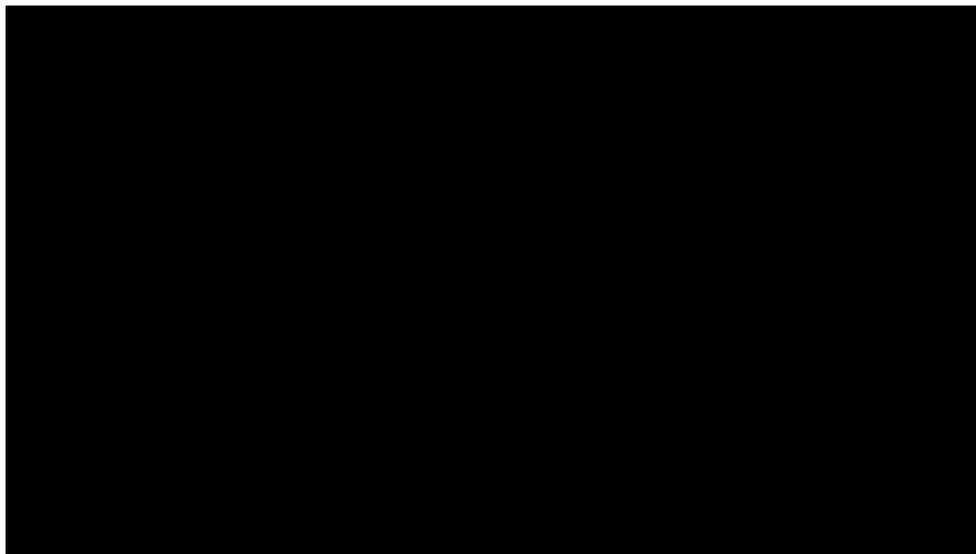- Editorial Masthead
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deployed partner-developed applications on their production networks, according to Zhu.

That's impressive considering that the store only launched in October. Zhu credited the business model, which bundles software with support, professional services and other components that organizations need to deploy it in their environments.

"That's the beauty of the ecosystem, the can take applications from the ecosystem that have been validated for our controller and the underlying infrastructure," Zhu said. "It's packaged as a solution supported by both the application partner and HP."

Watch the full interview (27:21)

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About Maria Deutscher

Maria Deutscher is a staff writer for SiliconANGLE covering all things enterprise and fresh. Her work takes her from the bowels of the corporate network up to the great free ranges of the open-source ecosystem and back on a daily basis, with the occasional pit stop in the world of end-users. She is especially passionate about cloud computing and data analytics, although she also has a soft spot for stories that diverge from the beaten track to provide a more unique perspective on the complexities of the industry.

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