

Cisco Takes on SDN

Written by Bob Snyder
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It might be arguably late to the software-defined networking (SDN) party, but Cisco is bullish as it reveals Application Centric Infrastructure (ACI), and the Nexus switch lineup supporting it.



The technology comes from SDN-focused "spin-in" Insieme Networks, one Cisco now wholly owns following the acquisition of the 15% it didn't. The price for Insieme acquisition could reach up to \$863 million.

Anyway, back to ACI. Cisco promises the technology will unify all IT components (networking, storage, compute, network services, applications, security) within a shared architecture. So far so SDN, even if Cisco promises it goes "beyond" mere networks. It consists of the Application Policy Infrastructure Controller (APIC), the Nexus 9000 switch portfolio and an enhanced version of the NX-OS operating system.

The APIC is the "unified point of automation and management" for ACI fabric, policy programming and health monitoring. It amounts to a scalable software controller able to manage 1M endpoints while, unlike traditional SDN controllers, operating independently of switch data and control planes.

To help customers migrate to ACI Cisco offers professional and technical services such as Readiness Planning, Quick Start (for Nexus 9000) and Accelerated Deployment, as a Technology Migration Program to assist migration from legacy infrastructure.

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Supporting ACI further is a Nexus 9000 switch selection complete with modular and fixed 1/10/40 gigabit ethernet switch configurations. All operate either in standalone NX-OS or ACI mode, and include the Nexus 9508 8-slot compact 13 RU switch, the Nexus 9396PX 960G switch and the Nexus 93128TX 1.28T switch.

Cisco says H1 2014 will see more Nexus 9000 offerings, including a 4- and 16-slot system and additional top of rack switches.

ACI also sees support from various vendors-- namely BMC, CA Technologies, Citrix, EMC, Embrane, Emulex, F5, IBM, Microsoft, NetApp, OpsCode, Panduit, Puppet Labs, NIKSUN, Red Hat, SAP, Splunk, Symantec, VCE, and VMware. The technology leverages open APIs, allowing integration with virtualisation platforms such as Hyper-V, KVM and vSphere, among others.

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