

Cisco Partners with F5 to Accelerate SDN Adoption



Sangeeta Anand, 2014-04-04

SDN, like every new technology, has begun maturing from its singular focus on standardizing networks to embrace a broader vision focused on addressing real challenges in modern data centers. SDN today aims to provide an automated, policy-driven data center capable of adapting to the rapid shifts in technology driven by cloud, mobility and massive growth in applications. Customers require a comprehensive approach to deploying applications that includes automating and orchestrating both network and application services.

Realizing this vision requires programmability and choices. For over ten years F5 has been delivering both to its customers with open APIs: iRules for the data plane, iControl for the control plane and iApps to capture and apply service definition policies. Last year we introduced Synthesis, which added orchestration via BIG-IQ and extended the reach of application services into the cloud. These industry leading innovations further enabled customers with choices for application deployment and orchestration through a robust partner ecosystem.

In November 2013 that ecosystem was expanded to include Cisco and its Application Centric Infrastructure (ACI). ACI addresses network challenges stemming from years of siloed network topology such as the inability to rapidly provision services and respond in real-time to conditions impacting application performance. While strides had been made to address those challenges, Cisco took a major step forward with ACI. Its focus on programmability as a way to automate and orchestrate the entire data center stack aligned well with F5's vision and capabilities, making support for ACI a natural extension of our architecture.

Partnering with F5 brings a sophisticated set of programmable L4-7 services to Cisco ACI and offers customers another choice in moving confidently toward adopting an SDN architecture that addresses the entire data center stack. Customers can choose to orchestrate F5's catalog of L4-7 services directly through our control plane API, iControl, via our orchestration product, BIG-IQ, or through ecosystem partner orchestration systems like Cisco APIC.

Once adopted, customers will be able to use Cisco ACI to orchestrate differentiated L4-7 services from F5 to address a variety of challenges and directly support business requirements related to application performance, security and reliability. Customers will be able to orchestrate L4-7 services with Cisco ACI that steer application requests based on device, user identity, location and application. Customers desiring to attach application security policies to existing applications will be able to use Cisco ACI to orchestrate insertion of the appropriate F5 services to reduce risk.

This week, Cisco announced an architecture and supporting control protocol to further expand customer choices in orchestrating the data center. The [OpFlex architecture](#) is a policy-based model that centralizes control and locally enforces policies using an open southbound API – the OpFlex Control Protocol. This complements F5’s existing architectural vision and though OpFlex is still in the definition phase, F5 is committed to supporting it.

F5 is delighted that this Cisco partnership offers customers expanded choices to move forward with SDN initiatives to automate and orchestrate the entire data center stack.

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