

SDN - Software Defined Networking. Its sooooo last year!



Nathan Pearce, 2012-06-07

There's a lot of noise about SDN (Software Defined Networking - [link](#)) in the media at the moment and everyone is trying to claim it as their own. SDN in summary (from previous link):

"The firmware of network switches and routers (control plane) has traditionally remained proprietary, locked and under the control of the companies that manufactured the equipment. Software defined networking (SDN) seeks to change this disposition, and to make the control plane remotely accessible and remotely modifiable via third-party software clients, using open protocols such as OpenFlow. SDN is in large part about understanding and managing a network as a unified abstraction. Thus SDN allows for:

- quick experimenting and optimization of switching/routing policies, and for
- external access to the innards of switches and routers that formerly were closed and proprietary."

In essence, these goals were bound up in F5's vision over a decade ago, resulting in the delivery of [fiRules](#) and [iControl](#). Hence, the reference to 'Agility' in much of our collateral "F5 Networks. IT Agility. Your Way.". This concept is NOT new. However, for traditional Layer 2/3 networking vendors, who have always suffered from rigid/static deployments, protocols like Openflow have provided an opportunity for them to begin their journey down the Dynamic Data Centre path. Unfortunately, the lack of Application (Layer 7) visibility/coherence will be an issue for them to reach the level of agility-accuracy F5 enjoys today.

From the 'What is iControl' link below (released over 10 years ago):

"iControl is the first open API that enables applications to work in concert with the underlying network based on true software integration." <- the goal of SDN

F5 press around SDN-type thinking (as this material pre-dates the term SDN being coined):

- F5's award winning video (3 minutes in is the message):
<https://devcentral.f5.com/weblogs/psilva/archive/2012/02/22/2011-telly-award-winner-the-f5-dynamic-data-center.aspx>
- High-res downloadable of above: <http://www.f5.com/news-press-events/web-media/webcasts/dynamic-data-center-video.html>
- F5 Dynamic Services Model: <http://www.f5.com/pdf/white-papers/dynamic-services-wp.pdf>
- Press Release – F5 Delivers on Dynamic DC Vision: <http://www.f5.com/news-press-events/press/2011/20110725a.html>
- What are iRules: <https://devcentral.f5.com/HotTopics/iRules/tabid/1082202/Default.aspx>
- What is iControl: <https://devcentral.f5.com/hottopics/icontrol/tabid/1082201/default.aspx>

Networking vendors will, once again, try and provide application delivery. Where they have failed in the past is their lack of visibility. So, the question is, have they learned from their mistakes? Will they develop partnerships with Application Visibility vendors to avoid the dangers of a significant miss in Solution/Problem alignment?

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