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Top 10 Networking Newcomers to Watch

Software defined networking, virtual networking, virtual desktops, cloud ... all these areas are spawning a whole new group of networking companies -- some of whom may, at some point, become the next household name.

By Robert McGarvey | Jun 11, 2012



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You know the names. Cisco, Juniper, HP, IBM, Brocade, Alcatel-Lucent ... big companies, with big names doing big work in the world of [enterprise](#) networking. But they aren't the whole story. There are the other companies to know; the networking newcomers that the insiders who track up and comers already have their eyes on.

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Be ready to be dazzled because lots of exciting innovation is happening just below the surface.

How not to compete with Cisco

"Few are successfully going head to head against Cisco," said Jim Frey, managing research director Enterprise Management Associates' (EMA) and an acknowledged guru on matters pertaining to networks. The excitement is in the nooks and crannies of networks, in places where Cisco and the other behemoths have not flexed their muscles.

Such places are multiplying fast, however, mainly because the nature of the enterprise network and the traffic on it is changing so rapidly.

Case in point: "[virtualized](#) networking." This is a whole new growth area. Very surprising," said Frey who fingered Santa Clara based [Arista Networks](#), which provides cloud networking solutions for large data centers, as a leader to watch in this emerging field.

Another case in point: San Jose based [Talari Networks](#) -- "compelling options for lower cost optimization of WAN," said Frey.

For its part, Marketing Director Donna Johnson said that Talari is riding the wave of huge spikes in network traffic, driven in large measure by increased enterprise use of VoIP, desktop virtualization, and [video conferencing](#).

"They are very sensitive to quality," said Johnson and tools that may be good enough to handle large files moving across the network do not necessarily work with [VoIP](#). "Real time traffic is our strength. We analyze every single link."

The upshots are high quality, little data degradation and, said Johnson, satisfied users on networks where the quality of data genuinely matters.

Another top watcher of network innovation is Bob Laliberte, a senior analyst with Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG), who said "the most exciting thing in networking right now is software defined networking (SDN). The concept is to remove the control plane from the forward plane in the switch and leverage a centralized controller."

Laliberte stressed that there remains a lot of experimentation around SDN. Different companies have different solutions but, as he recently wrote in his [blog](#), this is an area we can all expect to hear much more about.

As for companies to watch in the SDN space, he pointed to a constellation of newcomers - [Big Switch](#), [ConteXtream](#), [Nicira](#), [ADARA](#).

Big Switch using software to define networks

At Big Switch, the mantra is using software to define networks and to work with a commitment to open standards. ConteXtream's focus is delivering cloud based network [virtualization](#) frameworks. Nicira is a network virtualization platform play while ADARA aims to improve network access to Web-based content and applications. Each company has its own accent but SDN is potentially a very big tent with space for many high flying performers.

Laliberte also indicated that BYOD continues to rock the enterprise network and he pointed to [Enterasys](#) with its [OneFabric](#), which aims to create consistency in network experience for all users, as a company to watch. "Pretty cool" is how Laliberte characterized the Enterasys "end to end solution."

Cloud continues to be top-of-mind

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Cloud also continues to be top-of-mind, said Frey, who pointed to [Skytap](#) as a company to watch. Its forte is self-service cloud automation and helping enterprise provision hybrid clouds.

Frey also likes [Aryaka](#), in Milpitas, Calif, which touts itself as "the world's first [cloud-based](#) WAN optimization company."

Last on the list, mainly because this particular niche is so unexpectedly hot, is [dinCloud](#), a Los Angeles based innovator in providing desktops as a service, said Karin Kelley, an analyst with 451 Research.

"This area is so new," he said. "It's for the IT department that wants to do virtualization but they lack the expertise. Managing desktops, which is what dinCloud does, takes a lot of time and it also requires a lot of skill."

The word from multiple analysts is doing this is not easy because employees want and need seamless access to resources, with no latency, no data burps but the companies that have a handle on this, such as dinCloud, according to Kelley, are in the pole position speeding into the remainder of 2012.

"Every user now is remote, at least in theory," explained Frey, in talking about why desktop virtualization is suddenly garnering so much attention.

*As a busy freelance writer for more than 30 years, [Rob McGarvey](#) has written over 1,500 articles for many of the nation's leading publications ranging from *Upside* to the *Harvard Business Review* and *The New York Times*. He has covered mobility since the birth of the cellular industry and PCs since the 1980s. He writes often about networking and security issues. Somewhere in there he also files a regular "Mobility Matters" on mobile banking for the *Credit Union Times*. While he does most of his writing on a Samsung Chromebook, he admits to Macbook Air envy and owns four tablet computers.*

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