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New Era Networks

Cisco Buys vCider, Bulks Up Network Virtualization Efforts

By Jeffrey Burt | Posted 2012-10-04   📧 Email   🖨 Print

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Cisco will integrate vCider's virtual network overlay technology into its larger ONE strategy, which involves cloud, network virtualization and SDN.

Cisco Systems is buying vCider, a privately held California company whose virtual network overlay technology will become a key part of the networking giant's Open Network Environment, or ONE, strategy.

Cisco officials announced the acquisition Oct. 4, saying vCider will be integrated into its cloud computing unit. No financial details were disclosed.

vCider's technology, in particular its multi-tenant distributed virtual network controller, will offer particular support to Cisco's work around OpenStack, an open-source cloud orchestration effort.

Cisco joined the OpenStack initiative 18 months ago, and has helped contribute to the development of the Quantum API project under OpenStack. OpenStack Quantum involves creating a network-as-a-service between devices within the network. Cisco's virtual network plug-ins are among those supported by the Quantum project.

"Quantum becoming a core OpenStack service, it's clear that programmable networking is quickly becoming an important component in large-scale, multi-tenant, cloud computing environments," Hilton Romanski, vice president and head of corporate business development at Cisco, said in an Oct. 4 blog post. "Cisco's Quantum plug-in is designed to give application developers increased programmability of both virtual and physical networks Open Networking Environment (ONE)."

The vCider group will report to Lew Tucker, CTO of cloud computing at Cisco.

Cisco in June unveiled its ONE initiative as part of its efforts around cloud computing, virtualization and software-defined networks (SDNs). SDNs are a key trend in the networking space, and are getting a lot of attention from established players like Cisco, Hewlett-Packard and Juniper Networks, startups and smaller vendors like Big Switch Networks, Vyatta and Adara, and companies like VMware and Oracle, which while they don't have networking pedigrees, are looking to add capabilities to their data center solutions portfolios.

SDNs essentially lift much of the networking intelligence and programmability out of switches and other networking hardware and put them into software controllers, which proponents say makes networks more flexible, dynamic and scalable, and brings them in line with the trend toward virtualized and software-defined data centers.

Analysts have said that SDNs could pose a threat to established vendors like Cisco, HP and Juniper, which make millions of dollars by selling expensive and complex network switches. However, these and other networking companies are pulling together initiatives around SDNs. For example, HP on Oct. 2 unveiled a broad SDN strategy, and Cisco began making its case with the announcement of Cisco ONE.

In an Aug. 2 blog post, Padmasree Warrior, CTO and chief strategy officer at Cisco, dismissed the idea that her company was threatened by SDNs, saying that such environments will not commoditize the underlying networking infrastructure, and that Cisco will play a significant role in the development of SDNs. The company is developing the technology to meet the various demands that are giving rise to SDNs and virtual networks, Warrior said. Cisco ONE offers a software controller, a ONE Platform Kit with APIs, and an SDN offering that includes virtual overlay networks that extend support for OpenStack, various hypervisors, and VXLAN gateway capabilities for physical and virtual networks.

"Cisco understands very well the requirements and opportunities driven by network virtualization and is driving this market evolution," Warrior wrote.

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