CISCO APPLICATION CENTRIC INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE ONE-YEAR MARK

Cisco and Intel® partnering in innovation

Cisco Senior Vice President Soni Jiandani and other industry insiders discuss the swift and broad adoption of a breakthrough software-defined networking architecture.

It's been just over a year since Cisco® Application Centric Infrastructure (Cisco ACI™) and associated products—including the Application Policy Infrastructure Controller (APIC) and Cisco Nexus® 9000 switches—began shipping. If customer and partner adoption are any indication, the breakthrough software-defined networking (SDN) architecture is being very well received.

"ACI is outpacing other SDN platforms by more than two to one in terms of adoption," says Soni Jiandani, senior vice president of the Insieme business unit at Cisco. "We recently announced our one-thousandth ACI customer—Danske Bank, the largest financial institution in Denmark—and hundreds of organizations are already in production and realizing exceptional results."

She points to Symantec as a prime example. Cisco ACI has helped the global leader in security reduce application development time by 87 percent while boosting the efficiency of its network operations staff by 79 percent.

"We did the planning, design, and execution for this whole software-defined ACI approach in four and a half months," says Sheila Jordan, senior vice president and CIO of Symantec. "That kind of speed is unheard of when implementing a leapfrogging technology."[1]

All told, Symantec projects a whopping $145 million in business benefits over a five-year span as a direct result of deploying Cisco ACI—representing an ROI of 441 percent.

"We don't look at deploying ACI as a network refresh but as a way of changing how our data centers operate," says Vince Spina, vice president of IT, global network infrastructure, and data center services at Symantec. "We need to move at the speed of business and be an enabler, not an impediment. ACI helps us focus on delivering the applications the business needs rather than the plumbing supporting the applications."[2]

OPEN ARCHITECTURE, EXPANDING ECOSYSTEM

A growing number of technology leaders—including Apprenda, Citrix, CliQr, Data Torrent, F5 Networks, Intel®, Microsoft, Puppet Labs, SAP, Vnomic, and others—have integrated with Cisco ACI to bolster the development, control, and security of their solutions.

"Over 45 prominent technology providers have adopted ACI, providing integration, automation, and policy control up and down the stack," says Jiandani. "This growing ecosystem of partners is helping push the benefits of ACI well beyond the networking layer."

- Cisco ACI is an open architecture that allows any application—whether virtual, bare metal, or container—to be deployed at scale in heterogeneous environments through the use of application programming interfaces (APIs).
- It also accommodates a variety of firewalls, load balancers, hypervisors, cloud management tools, and L4-L7 appliances.

Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) calls Cisco ACI a "surprisingly open technology."[3]

"Cisco ACI is far more open than the industry gives it credit for," the analyst firm contends. "EMA recommends that enterprises looking for open programmable solutions assess ACI to determine whether it meets their requirements. Its approach to providing an open and programmable network may contrast sharply with the approaches adopted by advocates of bare-metal switching and open source network software, but Cisco is offering a degree of openness that was previously unheard of in Cisco networks."

"We want to enable maximum choice," Jiandani says, "while also providing simplicity through automation and programmability."

CONTINUED MOMENTUM, FOCUS ON ANALYTICS

According to Jiandani, Cisco will continue to advance the architecture's capabilities in the coming months, with a distinct focus on data analytics.

"We want to double down on infrastructure analytics to deliver the insights that no one else can," she says. "ACI will soon be able to analyze and act on relevant data in motion."

- That means dynamic data centers that can automatically discover and recommend policies in real time.
- And it means greater application mobility throughout virtual, bare metal, container, and multicloud environments.

"Integration, automation, security, and control are necessary in today's application-centric world," says Jiandani. "ACI will continue to deliver on all of these fronts through ongoing innovations."

1 http://images.forbes.com/forbesinsights/StudyPDFs/Cisco-IT_as_a_Strategic_Business_Resource-REPORT.pdf

2 http://www.cisco.com/c/dam/en/us/solutions/data-center-virtualization/application-centric-infrastructure/benefits-aci.pdf

3 http://www.cisco.com/c/dam/en/us/solutions/collateral/data-center-virtualization/application-centric-infrastructure/ema-enable-agility.pdf

CISCO ACI BY THE NUMBERS

See how much time and money Symantec is saving through the use of Cisco ACI in this IDC Business Value Snapshot. And check out the Customer Momentum Infographic and other related resources on the Cisco ACI Resource Page at UnleashingIT.com.

This article first appeared in *Unleashing IT* Volume 5, Issue 1, and online at **www.unleashingit.com**.