

Cloud changes CIO role: Brocade

AvantiKumar | April 11, 2011

Coverage of NetEvents APAC summit in Langkawi, Malaysia.



PHOTO - Brocade vice president and chief marketing officer, John McHugh

LANGKAWI, MALAYSIA, 11 APRIL 2011 - Networking trends such as cloud computing have reached a level of maturity that is changing the role of CIOs in Asia and the rest of the world, said US networking solutions provider Brocade.

During his opening keynote address at the recent NetEvents APAC summit in Malaysia on networking trends, Brocade vice president and chief marketing officer, John McHugh, said networking trends like cloud computing are being driven mainly by customer demand rather than technology or vendors. "There is a fundamental transition of information technology in the cloud that is unlike any other technology trend. Within 10 years, the difference made by the cloud will be more than that of contract management during the 1980s in the manufacturing industry."

"The cloud will continue to change the CIO's role," said McHugh. "It's interesting to note that the explosion of digital data continued despite the recent economic downturn and video traffic is expected to grow seven-fold by 2014."

He said the industry is moving towards real time infrastructure with storage and network capacity that can be selected by the CIO. "The CIO can go through the Internet and bring in required capacity. This is the real value of the cloud that is coming. A solution such as 'cloud in a box' is a step backward. Customers want a flexible model.

Focus on fabric

McHugh outlined the basic steps to cloud computing models, which included moving from server virtualisation to distributed virtualisation. "Fabrics are the critical element in separating tools and application from the hardware. Between now and 2012, the focus will be on fabric rather than the traditional network tree structure. For instance, many vendors are bringing out a fabric story - such as Juniper's QFabric. Fabric is about connecting many to many in a flat manner."

"However, Brocade already shipped its first fully-functioning Ethernet fabric to the market in 2010 with VDX," said McHugh. "The next step is to connect distributed data centres. Incidentally, one of my favourite quotes is - 'Every data centre wants to be a service provider and every service provider wants to be a data centre. Fabrics are here to stay as these enable simplicity, performance and non-stop connectivity.'"

"The third stage involves transitioning from private cloud to stage four - the hybrid cloud," he said. "This part is where business agility is the critical key to drive through legal, security and other issues. Addressing trust issues is the key challenge when trying to mature the public cloud, which probably may happen by 2020."

"In a fully matured cloud services industry, there needs to be features such as full open standards, with security inherent in all services, which offer 'on-the-fly' brokering to customers," said McHugh.

CIOs should focus on the 'I' in IT

"CIOs and IT departments seem to be polarised either by being dazzled by the hype or at the other end of the scale - the fear of losing jobs," said McHugh. "However, the cloud trend is slow and will continue to build for the next 10 years: there will be a great deal of refreshing of infrastructure that will demand IT expertise, as businesses must continue to move upwards up the growth escalator."

"CIOs must now focus on information, the 'I' in IT and not the T," he said, "Service provisioning is the primary economic and procedural model for the CIO who needs to champion the most valuable physical asset - the network," said McHugh, adding that business objectives needed to be drivers in all cloud roadmaps. "There must be a clear business value for each move."

"CIOs should go for capacity and open architecture," he said. "Data sovereignty is key and most cloud implementations are currently at the private cloud stage. Security is the technology enabler of being able to move further along the cloud roadmap."

"Virtualisation is here today and is already providing immediate value," said McHugh. "Eighty per cent of the customers I talk with already have fewer servers running, yet with

more applications, as well as better capacity and energy management. Choice and agility is driving the next wave of cloud adoption, not technology as such."

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