

Service provider interconnect standardized to bring global reach to Carrier Ethernet

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ENNI ratification has profound implications for Carrier Ethernet services and the future of global networking



The MEF (Metro Ethernet Forum) announced that its latest quarterly meeting had ratified the key MEF 26 specification, defining Phase 1 of the External Network to Network Interface (ENNI). This specification, which standardizes the reference point between service providers' MEF Certified Carrier Ethernet networks and services, marks a significant advance in the MEF's Global Interconnect Program. It will greatly accelerate the current lengthy and complex process of matching different providers' Carrier Ethernet services. By supporting standardized interconnect and Ethernet services spanning multiple-operator Ethernet networks, and bringing issues such as CoS, SLAs and management into line, the ENNI will have a major impact on the industry, with new global business opportunities for service providers and vendors. It will also generate even wider opportunities for world business with its promise of fast and cost-effective global interconnection.

"ENNI is absolutely key to the future growth of Carrier Ethernet" according to Michael Howard, Principal Analyst, Carrier and Data Center Networks, Infonetics Research. "As operators increasingly migrate to all-packet networks, they are investing heavily in delivering Ethernet services to their customers. The ability to span these services in a timely and economical manner over multiple operator networks is a multi-billion dollar opportunity in waiting"

Today's MEF 26 ratification covers connection for both E-Line (point to point) and E-LAN (multipoint to multipoint) services ensuring that when two or more services certified to MEF specifications are connected, then the resulting link will also meet MEF specifications. End-to-end Class of Service levels and Operations Administration and Maintenance (OAM) will be maintained, and the protection of the ENNI is built into this standard.

Among the many business opportunities created by MEF 26, wholesale service providers will now be able to upgrade their basic Ethernet connectivity services to fully featured Carrier Ethernet networks

interconnecting with multiple service providers. That will mean more choice for the providers in addition to the obvious savings from their use of standardized connections and processes as opposed to piecemeal provider approaches.

While business as a whole has been waiting for faster global outreach of these services, ENNI also has important implications at the local, metro and national levels. Bandwidth provisioning for mobile backhaul networks has become a major issue with the surge in smart phone traffic, and MEF 26 opens up the market to local providers who can interconnect their networks to provide a solution and reach into a growing market.

Another significant development is ENNI's potential to facilitate deployment in the emerging Carrier Ethernet Exchange market. Recently launched Ethernet Exchanges offer a multi-lateral complement to the bilateral one-to-one connections between service providers. Instead of having to establish and maintain their own network and service connections, service providers benefit from scalability and greater flexibility of a managed exchange without the escalating cost and complexity of managing multiple links to multiple provider partners.

Above, Michael Howard, Principal Analyst, Carrier and Data Center Networks, Infonetics Research, at NetEvents EMEA Press Summit, Barcelona