Manufacturers and operators form CloudEthernet Forum

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Alcatel-Lucent, HP, Tata or Citrix founded organization focused on making Ethernet more suitable for cloud services operating between data centers.

A group of 11 providers and cloud customers, and technology manufacturers, founded**CloudEthernet Forum** , which was presented at Ethernet Innovation Summit, held last week in Mountain View, California.

As founding members have the support of Alcatel-Lucent, Avaya, Citrix, Equinix, Huawei, HP, Juniper, PCCW Global, Spirent Communications, Tata Communications and Verizon.

Originally a technology for local area networks (LAN), Ethernet is increasingly used for WAN (long distance). Now CloudEthernet Forum aims to make Ethernet more suitable for cloud computing services on a large scale and can operate from multiple data centers.

Version 2.0 of Carrier Ethernet has been prepared to support the best cloud computing environments. But Nan Chen, president of the Metro Ethernet Forum (MEF), in a statement to Computerworld, explains that it is still necessary to define and establish the most suitable protocols for use in several areas: "multicast, broadcast, storage, among others," he says.

And this is what the new organization will do well. Companies and Cloud computing providers have grown to the point where they can have millions of virtual machines and thousands of customers.

In this aspect, the Ethernet can begin to show some limitations, said James Walker, president of CloudEthernet Forum. On the one hand, because the Ethernet generates a lot of traffic for the purpose of record keeping and finding resources on the network said.

With the large number of clients and virtual machines that can be active, the administrative traffic can multiply up having an impact on the network packets that must carry. For service providers, it is traffic that does not generate revenue, says Walker, who is also vice-president of Tata Communications.

The Forum CloudEthernet can look for ways to reduce the administrative traffic in networks of cloud computing, for example. Another limitation of the Ethernet cloud computing is the limit for the number of virtual LAN that can be configured on a network.

The limit is about 4000 VLAN, which might be appropriate for a company, but it is just for a cloud computing network, said Walker. If there are hundreds of thousands of customers housed in the data center of a service provider, and each VLAN networks want to separate the database, Internet and other operations, the capabilities of Ethernet fall short of expectations.

The CloudEthernet Forum also wants to bring more consistency with the standards for storage in Ethernet networks. There are many competing standards and different deployments of such standards, said Walker.

Some storage Ethernet standards such as Fibre Channel over Ethernet, may require adjustments to meet the needs of networks in cloud computing, said Walker. Through a technical committee, the CloudEthernet Forum will define the problems and work to solve them: want to make sure their own standards or ask another standards body, such as the IEEE and MEF, said Walker. The group will be part of the activity of MEF but is an independent body, in accordance with this responsibility.

There are some notable absences in the Forum, including Cisco. For Nan Chen, this manufacturer is "just delayed." But eventually admit that the accession process will be long and difficult.

New committee for service operations MEF has also launched a new committee dedicated to service operations. Its aim, said the president, is to normalize and thus make easier the process of sale and purchase of Carrier Ethernet services. This work will be developed according to the same three main vectors:
- addressing the procedures for qualifying service between operators, suppliers and customers;

- Streamlining contracting between suppliers;

- In the process of order, to create a "template" for the same. *(with Stephen Lawson / IDG News Service)*