Why developers are scrambling to innovate with AI now

Closed networks are out; open networks are in.

Enterprise CEOs and CTOs are demanding technologies and technology partners who are agile, price-competitive, and who embrace openness. They want the tremendous resources and broad portfolios of the industry's biggest players, but insist that those vendors remain open and interoperable. The industry's biggest players are embracing the vision, each with its own specific angle they believe will earn new customers, and more importantly, maintain the loyalty of existing customers. Even so, there's not enough business for every top-shelf vendor to succeed, not with enterprises pressing hard to cut costs.

This was discussed in a keynote session chaired by Brandon Butler, senior research analyst at Network Infrastructure, IDC, at the NetEvent Global Press and Analyst Summit held at Dolce Hayes Mansion, San Jose, California.

The network has never been critical, but it has never been more complex. Why is AI at a critical juncture right now?

Tom Burns, senior vice president, Dell EMC Networking and Solutions, pointed to two particular reasons why this is happening at the moment: digital transformation and technology change. "We believe very much in the way open source is going to change the industry. All these changes are happening very quickly and must be embraced by the industry, he said.
This was echoed by Sachin Gupta, senior vice president, product management, enterprise networking at Cisco when he added that today's modern networks are the "oxygen" for future business. "When we look at customers' mobility, there's going to be a million new devices connecting to a network every 20 seconds in 2020. The challenge for current network developers is how do we capture the analytics properly and make sure the data was delivered in the same proper manner?"

This is a concern similar to what Kevin Deierling, vice president of marketing, Mellanox, raised in the same session. "There is a massive amount of data: when people do something for instance on their phones, there's actually a lot of "arching" going on in data servers. There are a thousand times more data and as the industry is responding to that, we have produced faster processing, which require faster networks. Finally we are seeing a revolution and this revolution presents us with a challenge we must address right now which is why AI is so much more important now than ever.

Mansour Karam, CEO and founder, Apstra highlighted the pressing need for networks to be transformed now. "Enterprises are needing all these technologies that require intelligent, agile, and able environment. We have to provide all the improvements in terms of capacities of these networks. Today, finally we have the technology and finally we are able to leverage these. In networking, what's really missing is APIs. For the longest time we have closed ones, and what we had then is a large demand for these to open up," he said.