http://www.telecomasia.net/blog/content/oss-inhibits-rush-toward-sdn?Joseph%20Waring

OSS inhibits rush toward SDN

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While most everyone in the industry can hardly contain their excitement about the potential for SDN to reduce complexity in the network and take costs out, there's one critical element that no one is talking about – the back office.

MEF president Nan Chen said the OSS part is very difficult and vendors haven't really touched that or talked about it.

Speaking at a NetEvents' conference in Singapore yesterday he said: "The white elephant in the room is the OSS, which is absolutely prohibiting people moving to SDN/cloud. You need to break it down, so each part doesn't have to be customized. "

Marcus Weldon, Alcatel-Lucent CTO and Bell Labs president, echoed that sentiment last week, prefacing a presentation on network virtualization by saying, "I won't talk about the OSS part because it's too difficult."

He said it's extremely complicated to reconcile the old way of doing things in the physical world, which has specific management systems that know about each box, with the new virtualized world.

He had a one-word answer of how the industry can move from the way networks work today, with hundreds or even thousands of OSSs, to the virtualized network world, where the software is ripped out: "Magic."

Chen argues the overall innovation pace of the network equipment vendors has been much faster than for software. The industry's focus was on TDM, which was very simple. "It's really hard to retro fit [the software] for Ethernet – there are so many parameters that do different things. This gives flexibility on SLAs like speed, but it makes it difficult."

He also noted that operating systems have been developed by IT people who generally have no idea about the network. "So it's a tremendous process and organizational issue to converge and break these traditional boundaries. The IT and networks guys are not talking the same language."

An example of how difficult it will be, Chen said it's like telcos making their own switches and routers. "It would be impossible for service providers to do that. That's what they have to do with the OSS."

Operations need to be automated. "It can't take 60 days to provision an Ethernet circuit in the future, when Ethernet traffic accounts for 75% of global bandwidth use, which MEF forecasts in 2017."

Weldon said telcos now realize they need virtualization and a new OSS. "They are waking up to this. But someone needs to lead the revolution."

He suggests that the embedded OSS vendors will propose that the world move the way it does today and add knowledge of virtualized machines into that, and that's the new world. "There is a certain logic to that. That world could work, but would look ugly and you don't get the efficiencies [of virtualized networks]."

Chen said, "we have a huge job ahead of us. I'm tired of how slow the telecom vendors have been at innovating and have been holding us hostage. Everything has to be customized."