Another week of being a Human in IT Infrastructure. Are you still alive to talk about it?

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IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE: Predictions For The Next Market Transition; How To Say No. Please remember to enable the images; the magazine looks a lot better that way!

PACKETPUSHERS
Human Infrastructure Magazine
A Newsletter About a Life in Networking

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(aka The Project Plan)

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The "To Grandmother's house we go" issue.

Thought For The Week:
Two words: food coma

1. Next Market Transition? Cheaper Buying, Less Selling

by Greg Ferro

The cost of selling products to the Enterprise is large. How large? As a rough guide, **20% of a typical IT company's cost is sales and marketing**.

That cost rises when a company pushes to grow quickly (Palo Alto Networks' sales cost rose to 35% in 1H2016).

That cost shrinks when profits become more important. Staff are discarded as a secondary effect of that shrinkage. (And the effects of getting rid of "the most valuable assets" of the company--the people-- are conveniently ignored.)

The Food Chain

The typical IT food chain looks like this:

Manufacturer -> Vendor -> Distributor -> Reseller -> Customer

Why do we have this long and inefficient product chain? Because twenty years ago, holding items in warehouses was difficult, costly, and time consuming. It was hard to move stock around, costly to do the accounting, and companies would fail if they got their inventory predictions wrong.

Distributors took the risk and responsibility of shipping and warehousing while providing capital to hold vendor stock.

In 2016, it's different:

- The speed of shipping has decreased from months to weeks

- The time to manufacture & ship has been reduced from years to months

- Inventory management software is now mature and well understood

Resellers are the final link to the customer. They are expected to provide custom solutions, software integration, and value-added technical services.

In 2016, it's different:

- There are fewer IT vendors. Blended/converged solutions are the new hotness. "Vertically integrated" is another term

- Open source software is replacing proprietary software

- It's about using the assets, not owning the assets

- Customer focus is shifting from owning products to operating solutions

Software Defined Future

We haven't quite moved into the era of commodity hardware, but software is forcing the transition. Routing is just one function of WAN device. Data center switches are bundled in hyperconverged systems. NFV is peeking its ugly little head around the toilet door.

In five years, the **features** we want from networks will come from software automation and orchestration. You cannot afford the internal cost of hundreds of hours in "vendor presentations" just to buy a handful of servers, storage units, and switches.

That's because the greatest value for a customer has shifted from vendor products/solutions to the **configuration and operation of the software**.

In-House Not Outhouse

Oh, one more thing. DevOps is inherently a in-house activity. Executing an "iterate fast, change fast, fail fast" strategy means fast communication loops with the business. That works when everyone is on the same team and able to communicate clearly.

Future Of Purchasing

First: Less work, fewer meetings - they don't add value to the solution. When I say "Cheaper Buying" I mean the cost of purchasing, meeting, reviews, proof of concepts and all of those costs must be reduced.

Second: Products will trend cheaper because the value isn't in owning them but in how you use them.

These two things result in "Less Selling." Don't let vendors waste your time on "architectural pitches." Focus on real work, not on buying stuff.

2. Volunteering: When To Say Yes & No
by Ethan Banks

I don't have a lot of spare time, and I expect you don't either. That doesn't leave us much room for volunteering, and yet I know that we often want to do more. We want to do things for others as a way to give back to the communities that have given us so much.

Not that we're all so noble. I suppose another version of volunteering is that some of us just can't say, "No."

I have been drawn into the volunteering trap many times. That is, someone asked me to do something, and I agreed to do it out of fear of disappointing the asker. While I might not have minded the project, I didn't exactly want to do it. I didn't especially care about the project I was volunteering for. And I really didn't have time to do the project, either.

And yet I said "Yes."

The end result is over-commitment. It's impossible to perform well at everything I've agreed to do. Stress levels climb. Work hours stretch. Family and friends tend to get the short end of the stick. Why? Somehow, it's easier for me to disappoint the folks close to me than the casual acquaintance who asked me to do whatever it was I agreed to.

Worse than that, my time is fragmented by all of my little projects. I have a day job that tends to be busy. And now I'm burdened by these little responsibilities I've collected along the way. Taken individually, they don't seem like much, but they add up.

And all of a sudden, I've gone from busy to requiring medication. All because I couldn't say, "No." Or failed to recognize just how much was on my plate already. Or out of some poorly adjusted sense of duty.

I'm not against volunteering. Over the years, I've done many things in the networking & religious communities I'm a part of for no money or recognition. My motivation was to help other people get things done, to bring people together, to foster education, etc. Those are good things, and I know many of you have similar stories.

But as I've gotten older, I've realized that being highly stressed because I've spread myself too thin is silly. It's hard on me. It's hard on my family and friends, because I'm a miserable prick to be around when I'm too wound up by things to do. It's hard on my body. At a conference this week, someone said that they "eat their feelings," and I know exactly what they mean.

These days, I restrict my volunteering to where I feel I can have the greatest impact. To accomplish that, I've learned how to say "No" to the lesser opportunities. My track record is still not perfect. I'm still overcommitted. But I'm getting better at reducing the number of responsibilities in my life so I can excel at the ones that remain.

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Internets Of Interest

A collection of pre-loved links that might interest you. "Pre-loved" because I liked them enough to put into this newsletter. It's not *true* love.

By Drew Conry-Murray

How the SoC is Displacing the CPU

This article on Medium examines the technological and market drivers that are shifting more interest in on-chip functions, and spurring new advances in System on a Chip (SoC) designs.

> *"Form-factor, cost and power-per-function are now critical drivers in the mobile market and that in turn has increased the importance of on-chip integration of functional hardware (e.g. power management, computing, audio/video, graphics, GPS and radio)."*

New Kubernetes Certification Available For MSPs

The Linux Foundation and Cloud Native Computing Foundation (CNCF) have announced the creation of a new training and

[certification program for Kubernetes](#) for managed service providers. The goal is to train service providers to be able to offer Kubernetes consulting, support, and professional services to enterprises.

The course should be available in the second quarter of 2017, but you can pre-register now. The course is being offered at $99 for a limited time. The regular price will be $199.

Arista Wins US Import Approval In Cisco Patent Fight

Network Computing reports that [Arista has won an important battle](#) in an ongoing patent dispute with Cisco Systems. Arista's redesigned EOS software won't fall under an exclusion order issued against the company, so Arista's products can be imported into the United States.

> *"Arista said it redesigned its EOS to address the ITC's findings. The infringed patents covered Cisco's private VLAN and SysDB technologies."*

Google's DeepMind AI Now Capable of 'Deep Neural Reasoning'

Google's DeepMind AI research lab is [experimenting with a neural network that's augmented with external memory](#) that allows the neural network to perform more complex tasks.

"This new, hybrid architecture is called a Differentiable Neural Computer or DNC, combines a neural network with the advantage of memory storage that's external to the network. It works in a similar fashion to how a computer's random access memory (RAM) would function — which boosts the "reasoning" power of the model overall."

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Watch This!

Where we collect some videos that make us reflect, think about our inner lives, or just entertain us.

Computing pioneer and Rear Admiral Grace Hopper on the David Letterman show, circa 1986.

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Quick Survey: Cooking Gadgets

It's Thanksgiving in the U.S, which means a lot of chopping, slicing, roasting, basting, and boiling. Aside from a tablet propped up on a counter to read a recipe, how gadget-intensive is your holiday meal prep?

[A.]() A frenzy of cooking toys & gadgets
[B.]() Four or five totally useful appliances
[C.]() Two or three standard items
[D.]() A knife and some fire

Did We Miss Something?

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The End Bit

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Human Infrastructure is bi-weekly newsletter with view, perspectives, and opinions. It is edited and published by Greg Ferro and Drew Conry-Murray from PacketPushers.net. If you'd like to contribute, email Drew at drew.conrymurray@packetpushers.net.

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