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: Using Automation Versus Making Automation; Opting Out; Please remember to enable the images; the magazine looks a lot better that way!

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(aka The Project Plan)**

Issue Number 56

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The "Automatic for the People" issue.

Thought For The Week:
See you in Vegas.

1. Using Automation Versus Making Automation

by Greg Ferro

Here's another side of the debate around programming, automation, and orchestration. Are you a user or a maker?

Platforms Are 80/20

For the last 20 or 30 years, network management software has followed an 80/20 approach to customization. On the first deployment, you get about 80% of what you want, and then the work starts on the remaining 20% you need for your business.

The extra customization has always been a programming or scripting activity; that is, using Perl scripts for simple but specific tasks. In recent years, network management vendors increased configurability and even some task automation, but SDN has gone way past the features of SNMP.

Many people took the easy way out and accepted the 80% as good enough. They simply adapted their operations around the features they had. Or maybe someone wrote a few scripts that did some useful stuff and, you know, a year later that person moved on and no one knew how to maintain the scripts. Eventually they stopped working or broke something...

This is where an SDN tool can help.

Using Automation & SDN

The current generation of SDN platforms are more demanding than the SNMP network managers of *ye oldyn tymes*, but there are some similarities.

No SDN platform works out of the box. Any deployment requires some amount of customization for your specific circumstances. For those people who believe that "every network is a snowflake" while

surrounded by standardized components, protocols, and applications, this is your big chance to customize your unique, one-of- kind network.

This is roughly the same as choosing leather seats and the paint color for your car. I hope you realize that.

SDN platforms like VMware NSX, Apstra AOS, and Cisco ACI are clear examples of this. These platforms are inherently restrictive about the way they control the network because they have to be.

Making Automation

For most companies, the purchase of an SDN tool or platform is the final step: Buy a product, get it deployed, and turn it into a solution by using the features available.

For a few people, it's a chance to really value add. Just like the SNMP manager days, writing some useful scripts on the side can really improve the capabilities of the solution. But this time, the DIY software concepts are built in.

Your SDN product is software-ready with APIs and Github repos full of code. Open communities are thriving while vendors are funding online communities (e.g. Cisco DevNet). Low-cost, high-quality training for network engineers on Python and its libraries is widely available.

You can make automation. Don't passively consume what the vendor thinks customers want. Get in there and customize operations to your business. Modify the deployment to integrate with other silos in your business.

The widespread adoption of 'software defined infrastructure' has made it acceptable for infrastructure people to return to scripting. IT executives are besieged with DevOps, cloud, and orchestration, and in-house coding is the new hotness.

Why It Matters

I find this return ironic. Scripting was commonplace for network engineers, but for the last 15 years, vendors have been passively preventing this by focusing on the command line and haplessly letting APIs like SNMP wither away. Why fix the cost of operating the network when there is money to be made from "upgrades" to the next shiny thing?

Big technology transitions come along every few years; they're chances for you to change your role if you want to. Jump in early and make a career transition when no one else has the skills.

The divide exists between people who make networks and those who use them: operations vs. deployment, design vs. support. You can make automation or wait until it's time to use it. That's up to you.

Sponsor: Interop ITX

Where Tech Pros Go For Objective Full Stack IT Education

Interop ITX takes place May 15-19 at the MGM in Las Vegas. Join Greg Ferro and Ethan Banks for The Future of Networking Summit – a two-day session where we'll take a deep dive into next-generation developments in wide area networks, data center networking, network operations, and software-defined security.

Register for Interop ITX and attend other hands-on workshops like The Future of Data, Container Crash Course, Dark Reading Cyber Security Summit and the Open Source IT Summit. The event's Conference tracks focus on Security, DevOps, Cloud, Infrastructure, Data &

Analytics – all the technologies you need for a successful Full Stack IT strategy. If you're looking to accelerate your career, there are also plenty of sessions on leadership and professional development. Plus, check out over 100 vendors at Interop ITX's Business Hall where you'll have an opportunity to meet with leading and emerging tech vendors.

Join us at Interop ITX this May. Use promo code: **PACKETPUSHERS** when you register, and you'll receive 20% off any pass.

We want to see you in Vegas, so visit interopitx.com and reserve your spot today.

2. Opting Out

by Ethan Banks

I just finished reading a short book on minimalism called Do Less. **Do Less** was a little different than some other minimalism-related books; rather than just addressing, for example, a cluttered home, **Do Less** analyzed the goal of simplification anywhere possible.

The guiding principle of **Do Less** is creating freedom. Engaging with the wrong activities makes it difficult to do the things that we really want to do. For example, if we engage with Facebook and fall into the purposefully created trap of scrolling and scrolling and scrolling, we are enslaved by that platform. We are not free to do something else during the time spent in The World Of Zuck (pronounced "suck").

Do Less applies this idea of creating freedom not only to the whipping boy of social media, but also to our shopping habits, commuting, hobbies, and volunteer activities, among other things.

- Buying things creates an enslavement to the things we've purchased. Those things need one or more of care, attention, closet space, time, etc. Also, having more stuff than we need introduces choices that we must make. Do I wear shirt A, B, C, D...or Z? Fewer shirts equals easier decision making.

- Commuting is a type of enslavement to time. If we commute, we do not have the freedom of time that would be available if we were not commuting.

- Hobbies can take away time and money. Perhaps you actually want to do whatever your hobby is. Fantastic! But **Do Less** points out that often our hobbies are expensive and don't make us any happier. Some people do their hobbies to impress their online audiences. Hobbies can even add to our personal debt. The need to impress others and financial indebtedness are not freedom.

- Like hobbies, volunteer activities can be good things that we genuinely want to do. However, volunteering can also be something we do because we think others expect it. Thus, something as seemingly noble as volunteering can impinge on our freedom.

Do Less reminded me of all the ways in which I have enslaved myself. When I have chained myself to certain things, I have prevented myself

from doing other things. The chains prevent me from going where I want to be.

My takeaway from **Do Less** is to review all of my attachments--the things I *am doing* now--and the compare them to the things I *want to be doing*. Are there things in my life I can opt out of that would break the chains, and create the freedom required to do something else, something I really want to do?

What is it you're not getting done that you really want to? Maybe there's some opting out required.

- **Social media.** Put a massive filter on what you consume from social media. [Social platforms are purposefully designed to keep you engaged.](#) Resist those manipulative bastards making billions by capturing your attention. Respond with rage and medieval brutality. Reclaim your otherwise lost time. Delete login accounts. Remove apps from your phone. Kill notifications. Be mercilessly selective about what you consume. Take back control of your digital life with gritted teeth and a clenched fist. Fight!

- **Volunteering.** If saying no is a superpower, get on that. Back out of volunteer commitments that you really don't want to be doing. Do it as gracefully as you can, but get that time back. If what you were doing was truly needful, someone else who really wants to do it will fill in the gap.

- **Choice.** Look at any aspect of your life where you must make a choice, and eliminate that choice if possible. You get back time and mental energy that creates freedom to do something else.

Keep a simple wardrobe. Eat repeat meals. Maintain a consistent daily schedule.

Most of these ideas came from **Do Less**. The book takes a short time to read. If you're an Amazon Prime member, you can read it for free.

If you're wondering what all of this rejiggering of your life and freedom creation is for, that's up to you. I suspect that you already know what it is that you're not accomplishing that you wish you were. The modern, connected life is getting in the way of your goals. **Do Less** to achieve what's important to you.

If you're attending Interop ITX in Las Vegas, you're invited to join Viptela, the Packet Pushers, and your networking peers for live event with food, drink, and great conversation.

Bring your questions, challenges, and future projections to discuss, and get an opportunity to learn about the latest in SD-WAN from network architects and engineers. And don't forget to say to 'Hi' to Greg Ferro and Ethan Banks from the Packet Pushers.

Register here and we'll see you in Vegas!

When: Monday, May 15, 6:30 pm
Where: Centrifuge MGM
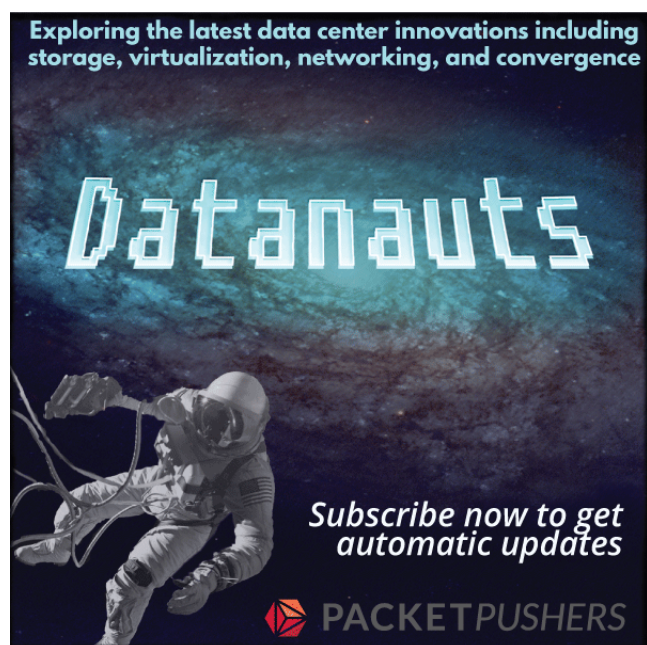
Join the Datanauts on their mission to bust silos and explore the latest developments in cloud, convergence, data centers, and more. Sign up free here.

Network Break is a weekly podcast that delivers news & analysis on the networking industry in a fun, fast-paced style. Subscribe here!

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 Greg Ferro and Drew Conry-Murray

Take The Packet Pushers' SD-WAN Survey

The Packet Pushers have talked about SD-WAN a lot over the past couple of years, so we thought it might be a good idea to shut up and give you a chance to tell us what you think about it.

We put together a survey to get an idea about your interest in SD-WAN. Our goal is to get some vendor-neutral data on questions like current and potential adoption, WAN challenges, and relevant features and functions. If you have a few minutes, we'd appreciate your responses.

LINK

The Future Of Ops

Blogger Tyler Treat outlines a vision for the evolution of the operations team that incorporates both operations and infrastructure, with the goal of delivering highly automated infrastructure services to the organization--in particular, making it easy for developers to deploy--and fix--applications and services with minimal Ops intervention.

"The NewOps model instead should essentially treat Ops like a product team whose product is the infrastructure. Much like the way developers provide APIs for their services, Ops provide APIs for their infrastructure in the form of tools, UIs, automation, infrastructure as code, observability and alerting, etc."

Net Neutrality Part 2: Revenge Of The ISPs

The FCC is currently accepting public comments on a plan to eliminate net neutrality regulations that were put in place during the Obama administration. For a quick (and amusing) primer on the benefits of net neutrality, watch comedian John Oliver's take on the issue, and then use the Web site he set up (gofccyourself.com) to help Americans participate in the public comment period.

The Weekly Show channel is our one-hour deep dive on networking technology. Subscribe today!

Priority Queue tackles niche and nerdy tech topics and cutting-edge research projects. Subscribe here!

Recent Podcasts

The last five podcasts published on Packet Pushers

PacketPushers.net - The Last Five

[Datanauts 083: Diving Deep Into vSphere Host Resources](#)

[Network Break 134: Cisco Buys Viptela; Data Centers Not Dead](#)

[Show 338: Tales From The Trenches With Connection (Sponsored)](#)

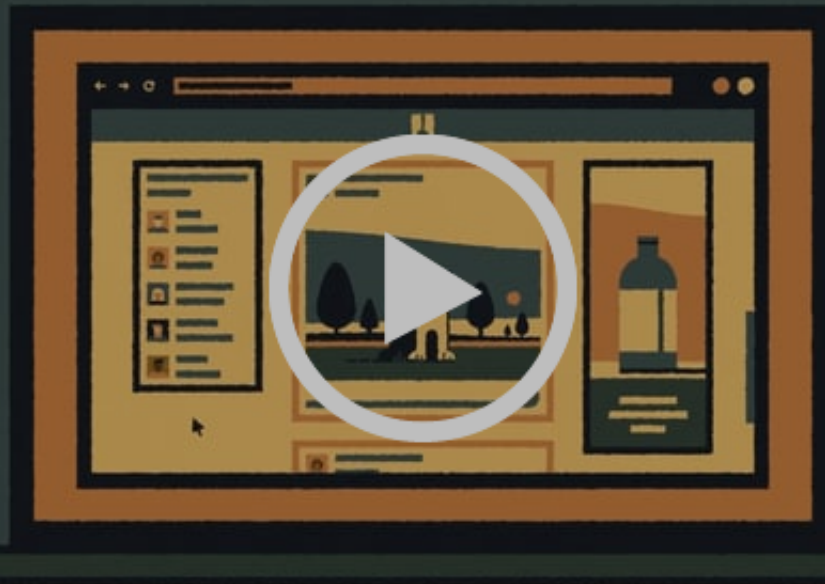[PQ Show 114: Hackathons: Rough Consensus, Running Code At IETF 98](#)

[Datanauts 082: The Path To Automation & Coding For Ops Teams](#)

Watch This!

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

What do you get when you combine cool animation and a jaded take on social media? This video.

Link Propagation Newsletter

Our weekly newsletter delivering essential headlines, announcements, and useful news to your inbox

Can't get enough newsletters? Check out Link Propagation, our newest publication. We send you a free weekly digest with tech news, interesting blogs, and industry announcements, all curated by the Packet Pushers. It's an easy way to keep up and stay informed. Subscribe at packetpushers.net/link-propagation.

Quick Survey: What Do You Dislike About Las Vegas?

Tech conference season spins into high gear this time of year, which means one or more visits to Las Vegas. Sure, the rooms are cheap and plentiful, and there's entertainment around every corner, but the Vegas conference experience can get tedious. If you could get rid of one aspect of Vegas, what would it be?

[A. Endless corridors](#)
[B. Crappy WiFi](#)
[C. The people who are there on vacation](#)
[D. The iniquity](#)
[E. I wouldn't change a thing](#)

Last Issue's Survey Results

Besides the office, where do you get the most in-person interactions with other IT pros?

Reader Responses
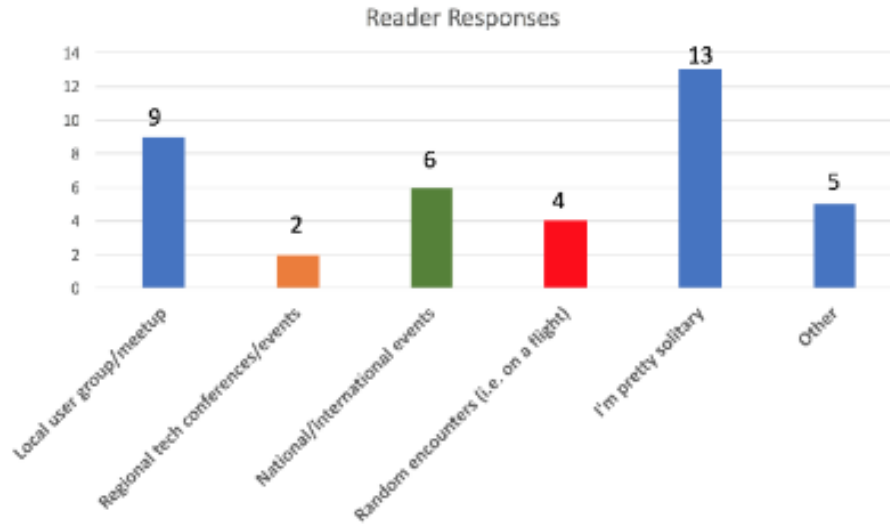
Source: Packet Pushers Human Infrastructure Survey, April 26, 2017. 39 respondents

Did We Miss Something?

Got an link or an article to share? Email it to
humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net