

*IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE: Too Much Personal Sacrifice; Put Technology First, Not Sales. 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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**Issue Number 60**

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The "People" issue.

**Thought For The Week:**  
Summer time, and the living is easy

# 1. Too Much Personal Sacrifice

by **Ethan Banks**

Is there such a thing as too much personal sacrifice to succeed in tech? This question asks us to draw the line between hard work and going overboard.

Hard work is important in tech. I believe [personal sacrifice and lifelong learning](#) are keys to remaining a top-tier technologist. However, I also believe it's possible to go too far in the endless quest for IT knowledge.

## Humans: They Matter

Consider your human relationships when deciding how hard to push your career. When you choose to extend your work hours logging overtime, labbing, getting certified, and leading projects, you're also choosing to not spend time with the people who care about you.

If you're young and ambitious (and perhaps underpaid), the equilibrium that interpersonal relationships bring to your life might not be obvious. What other equilibrium is required than having a secure job and money in the bank, especially with growing children and a mortgage to pay off? Besides, BMW just announced the M edition of your favorite sedan, and those aren't cheap.

With that logic, you think you can skimp on people. Even family time can seem like a thing worth sacrificing. After all, you're doing it for them! Or so you tell yourself.

In reality, "making a better life for your family" is a excuse we sometimes use to justify our own ambition. The truth is that we're often pursuing peer recognition. We're looking for that raised eyebrow when we discuss the bleeding edge projects we're in charge of, the new POC lab we just deployed, or the fresh vendor-recognized letters we've added to our sig files.

I hear friends tell tales of alienated spouses, children they rarely spend time with, and friends they've lost touch with. For a certain group, conference travel constitutes the majority of their social experience--

they're simply too busy the rest of the time to take a moment to relax.

Those other humans in your life are the victims of your one-track mind. Ultimately, you, too, are a victim as those relationships slip away. Anything uninvested in withers to nothingness. You'll find that virtual routers, technical textbooks, and certification plaques are cold companions.

## **Burnout: You Matter**

What's more, constant pursuit of the next big thing in tech will lead to burnout. In burnout, you are the victim. Over the years, I've experienced two kinds of burnout.

1. **Short-term mental exhaustion.** I've found myself so worn out from balancing study, projects, commuting, and a packed schedule that I can't seem to focus. My mind drifts. I can't sleep. I struggle to produce. The most interesting things become food and television, the crappier of each, the better.
2. **Long-term apathy.** There have been times where, after months of pushing ahead, I lose the desire to push further. An attitude of "been there, done that" sets in. The pursuit of excellence in a corporate culture of mediocrity seems pointless. I start to give myself permission to settle in and be average. That's not "me," but after burning so brightly for so long, sometimes I run out of fuel.

The key here is balance. I need time for me, and you need time for you. Get outside. Ride a bike. Read a book...of fiction...for entertainment! Schedule time with friends to hang out, relax, joke, and tell tall tales. Create a few memories. Plan a vacation or special event around your significant other.

Do those things and whatever else you like to do preemptively, and not because you're so fried that you can't do anything else.

Enjoying guilt-free time apart from technology grants you the ability to focus during your work time--to be highly productive. Hours spent away from stress and pressure enables you to continue the personal sacrifice and lifelong learning that is a part of being a top-tier technologist. Without the balance, you'll burn out, and that won't help anyone.



## 2. Put Technology First, Not Sales

by Greg Ferro

As time passes, I'm becoming more certain that the future of technology companies isn't about selling, closing deals, and account

management like we have today.

Today we demand that humans 'learn' technology and 'make a business case'. Vendors are required to 'educate customers' because they don't understand what they are buying or what the new technology can do for them. That's an expensive mode of operation.

## Supply Chain

As a rough guide, 30-50% of the purchase price of your enterprise IT technology is consumed by sales, marketing, and delivery.

Why? Every product that we buy moves through a long and expensive pipeline:

**Manufacturer > Vendor > Distributor > Reseller > Customer**

Twenty or thirty years ago, this pipeline was normal because global shipping, warehousing, and support were enormous challenges.

It was difficult for vendors to reach customers directly, and managing a global sales force was to be avoided at all costs. Using local agents in different markets, a.k.a resellers, was preferred.

Customers had problems getting information, training, and updates. Resellers made this possible.

Technology in general and the Internet in particular have changed this dynamic. Customers can easily communicate with vendors and get access to technical information. Hardware distribution has been transformed by robots, inventory management, and better logistics.

## Sales First

Because sales is such a large part of the technology acquisition process, we have built enterprise IT around the sales cycle. With so much money available for sales and marketing, vendors have strong

incentives to continue spending on additional sales resources.

This creates a sales-first culture. All that matters to most vendor staffers is the deal. The solution and technology are just a means to an end.

How do customers react to a sales-first culture? They reduce headcount to cut costs, but then rely on vendor-provided support and service contracts. Vendors are rewarded for a sales culture with every purchase.

I think the move to whitebox is partly a reaction to the sales-first culture. Customers can avoid the sales costs and get the same technology. They can also avoid wasted time spent on sales negotiations, meetings, and presentations.

Customers are finding that the negatives of increasing headcount and training costs with a whitebox solution are outweighed by the benefits of having smart people in-house and an IT organization aligned to business goals instead of to the vendor or reseller.

## **Why Technology First?**

Apple sells iPhones at an astonishing profit margin. Apple doesn't have network of 'middle men' taking a cut. The product is built to be reliable and easy to use, thus reducing the need for technical support. Apple is the best of a group of companies that are applying a new business model to technology.

One key thing: An iPhone is built from commodity components and has a software-centric architecture. Sound familiar? (Hint, it's software defined.)

The future is not only about superior silicon, more ports, faster speeds, or more features. It's about reducing the middle men in the transaction, getting customers as close to the source as possible, and producing

products that are simple enough to use without expensive technical support.

The 'Technology' I'm talking about is taking our existing technologies and making them suitable for human use.

Today I'm looking at Meraki, VeloCloud, Apstra, Nutanix, and Plexxi as examples of enterprise IT vendors that remove complexity. These companies focus on enabling customers to use technology simply.

## Closing Thoughts

We built the sales-first culture because it was necessary in the early days of enterprise IT when CPU/memory were scarce and costly, storage volumes were small, and customers were few. This is no longer the case.

We can use the Internet to communicate directly with our vendors at low cost with low friction. Manufacturing technology has become almost comically cheap, which enables commodity components that have enough performance and capacity for all but the most demanding uses.

Do we really need a 1980s supply chain and sales culture in the 2020s?



## Thanks, Internet

All kinds of amusing things wash up in our social feeds. Here's one that caught my eye.



Source: @iamdeveloper

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# The Network Break



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Where Too Much Networking Would *NEVER* Be Enough

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

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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 **Greg Ferro and Drew Conry-Murray**

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### Test Driving DNA Center

Katherine McNamara has [posted an extensive blog](#) that walks through Cisco's newly announced DNA Center and SD-Access, which allows you to create a campus fabric and is supposed to help streamline and automate tasks such as onboarding users and managing connectivity.

Note that Katherine is a Cisco employee (as she states up front in this post), but if you're curious about all the hoopla around DNA that came out of CLUS 2017, she provides a detailed overview of these components.

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## CLUS 2017- The Elephant in My Room

Meanwhile, Lee Badman (a.k.a @WiredNot) [takes Cisco to task](#) for its poor record when it comes to software quality. This isn't just arm-chair sniping: Lee is a longtime Cisco customer and Cisco Champion. He wants to believe in the promises Cisco is making, but that has to start with better software.

*"Many of the promises being made are predicated on an assumed foundation of good code under all of the new magic. As the long-time customer, I see no evidence that Cisco's own intolerance for crappy code is getting any closer to mine."*



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## Product News

Find out about interesting new products, or get essential information about things you might already be using.

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### Aruba Picks A Fight In The Campus Core With Its New 8400 Switch

Earlier this month at HPE Discover, Aruba [announced](#) a brand new core and aggregation switch, the 8400. The company is positioning the 8400 as a competitor to the venerable Catalyst 6500, among others.

By adding a core/aggregation switch to its portfolio, Aruba asserts its willingness to compete for network business from the branch all the way through to the campus core.

[LINK](#)

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### OpenDaylight Carbon And What SDN Has Become

A few years back, I remember greeting the news of the [OpenDaylight project](#) (ODL) with enthusiasm. Here was an open-source project

backed by an interesting amalgam of vendors and customers that was going to result in an SDN controller anyone could use.

At last, the industry would have a rallying point for software defined networking. Here, in ODL, the hard work of hammering out what we could really do with SDN would get done. With all of those big brains, developers, and large-scale end users involved in the project, we'd figure this SDN thing out. ODL would be that point of commonality that would make SDN real.

[LINK](#)

## Recent Podcasts

The last five podcasts published on Packet Pushers

### PacketPushers.net - The Last Five

[PQ Show 120: Intent-Based Networking With Apstra \(Sponsored\)](#)

[Datanauts 091: Found On The Internet Series 2](#)

[Network Break 142: Cisco Explores Disaggregation; Nutanix Pursues Hybrid Cloud](#)

[Show 346: Ixia CloudLens And Cloud Visibility \(Sponsored\)](#)

[Datanauts 090: AWS Networking Deep Dive](#)



## Link Propagation Newsletter

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

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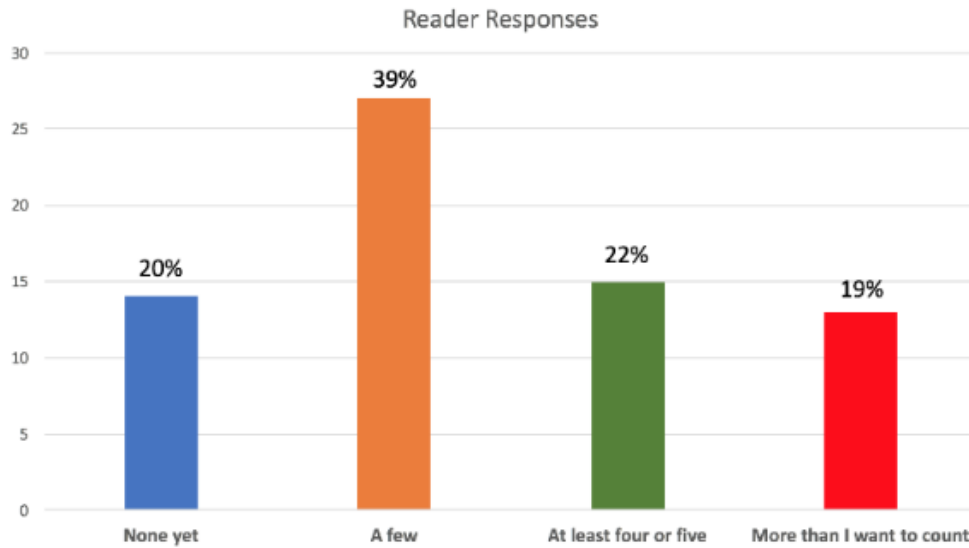
## Quick Survey: Sales Irritations

Which of the following vendor sales practices most annoys you?

- [A. Aggressive sales tactics](#)
- [B. Complex licensing schemes](#)
- [C. Exorbitant support/service contracts](#)
- [D. Exaggerated claims about features/capabilities](#)
- [E. Other](#)

## Last Issue's Survey Results

# How many of your IT certs are now outdated?



Source: Packet Pushers Human Infrastructure Survey June 21, 2017. 69 respondents

## Did We Miss Something?

Got an link or an article to share? Email it to [humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net](mailto:humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net)

### 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](mailto:drew.conrymurray@packetpushers.net).

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