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ONUG Aims to Seize Control of Interoperability Agenda

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Having lost faith in industry standards groups that are dominated by vendors, the Open Network User Group (ONUG) announced this week that it intends to set the IT network integration agenda from here on out.

Speaking at the ONUG Spring 2016 conference this week, Nick Lippis, Co-Chairman and Co-Founder of ONUG, revealed that IT leaders have been meeting now behind closed doors to identify areas where specifications that will drive network interoperability are sorely needed. They include four distinct initiatives involving Open SD-WAN Exchange (OSE), Open Interoperable Control Plane (OICP), Open Traffic Management Format (OTMF) and Open Network State Format (ONSF).

Vendors that have pledged to cooperate with ONUG on the development of specifications in these areas include Apstra, Cisco, Citrix, CloudGenix, FatPipe, Glue Networks, NetScout, NTT Innovation Institute, Inc., Nuage Networks, Silver Peak, VeloCloud, Veriflow, Verizon, Versa Networks, and Viptela.

Specifically, Lippis says, ONSF is designed to create a format that will normalize networking data in a way that makes it simpler to analyze network traffic using Big Data, while the other three specifications are intended to drive interoperability across different classes of network overlays. By the spring 2017 ONUG conference, Lippis says, ONUG expects to have those specifications hammered out with actual testing occurring by the time the fall ONUG conference of 2017 rolls around.

Arguably, the lack of interoperability has been one of the primary reasons that making the shift to software-defined networks (SDNs) has been relatively slow. There is no shortage of product offerings, but concerns about being locked into one architecture or another are always in the backs of the minds of most IT leaders. However, each of the four areas that ONUG is focused on is led by someone with a background in managing IT versus working for a particular vendor.

The degree to which ONUG can bring a fractured networking community to heel remains to be seen. But the one thing that is for certain is that in terms of embracing software-defined programming models that allow IT organizations to manage IT infrastructure at scale, the networking vendor community as a whole is woefully lagging behind advances already made by their server and storage counterparts.