

Bethany Mayer on HP's New NFV Business Unit

by Dr. Jim Metzler

Bethany Mayer, was recently named to be the SVP and General Manager of a new business unit (BU) at HP that focuses on NFV. She will report to Martin Fink, EVP and CTO for HP, in his HP Cloud leadership role. Bethany, had been the SVP and General Manager of the HP Networking business unit. I caught up with my longtime friend shortly after she was interviewed for an article in CRN Networking News¹ and I promised her that I would not repeat the questions she was asked for that article.

As mentioned below, the HP NFV BU has been described as an HP wide initiative. Because of that I asked Bethany which components of HP she would draw on most heavily in the next 12 to 18 months. She said that her BU would draw heavily from HP's Cloud BU with a particular focus on creating OpenStack environments for carriers. The CRN article identified a number of infrastructure functions that HP has virtualized and which will be part of HP's NFV solutions. This includes HSS (Home Subscriber Service) and HLR (Home Location Register). In our discussion Bethany highlighted the fact that HP also has a virtual service router and she stated that carriers have been showing a lot of interest in it. When I asked her about additional L4 – L7 functionality such as optimization and security which I think of as being a key part of NFV, she said that HP will likely focus on providing security functionality themselves and partner with companies such as Citrix, Infoblox and Tail-f for additional functionality. Bethany added that HP will ensure the interoperability of the varying components that comprise their NFV solutions.

I was a bit surprised when Bethany stated that HP was also partnering with NEC because at least with regards to selling SDN solutions, HP and NEC are competitors. She really got my attention when she said that HP and NEC have federated their SDN controllers. That interests me in part because I think federation is key to the success of SDN and in part because of the potential synergies between SDN and NFV that this alliance might be able to leverage. Those potential synergies were highlighted in the recently announced Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the ONF and the ETSI NFV ISG. (European Telecommunications Standards Institute, Network Function Virtualization, Special Interest Group). As part of the announcing the MOU², the ONF and ETSI said that "Together the organizations will explore the application of SDN configuration and control protocols as the base for the network infrastructure supporting NFV, and conversely the possibilities that NFV opens for virtualizing the forwarding plane functions." Also as part of the announcement, the ONF released a document entitled the *OpenFlow-enabled*

¹ http://www.crn.com/slide-shows/networking/300072528/executive-interview-hp-networking-head-talks-new-nfv-unit-cisco-intercloud-strategy.htm?cid=nl_net#

² <http://www.rethink-wireless.com/2014/03/19/etsi-nfv-group-closer-operator-sdn.htm>

*SDN and NFV Solution Brief*³. The solution brief showcases how operators are combining NFV and SDN to achieve the common goals of both approaches to achieve greater agility of the networks. I will definitely come back to the topic of the synergies between SDN and NFV in a future blog.

HP recently announced an OpenNFV program⁴. According to HP “This companywide effort leverages the breadth and depth of HP’s innovation portfolio to launch an open standards-based NFV Reference Architecture, HP OpenNFV Labs, and a partner ecosystem of best-in-class NFV applications and services. HP also brings more than 30 years of telco-specific experience, along with more than 5,000 telco professionals to this new offering, ensuring that carriers have a tried and tested partner supporting them on their NFV journey.”

As noted, a key component of HP’s OpenNFV program is HP’s NFV Reference Architecture. This architecture, which was described in a recent white paper⁵, covers physical servers, storage and networking, virtualization, SDN controllers, resource management and orchestration, analytics, service provider applications, and a complete operations support system (OSS). I asked Bethany how closely the HP architecture aligned with the NFV architectural framework that ETSI published in October 2013. She said that it is very close and that a goal of HP is to create an interoperable, heterogeneous platform in part by developing open APIs and in part by building labs where partners can test how their products work as part of an HP NFV solution.

One of the reasons that I like what the ETSI NFV ISG is doing is because they are currently driving nine POCs (Proof of Concepts) which involve some of the largest service providers in the world, including Telefonica, NTT, AT&T, BT, Deutsche Telekom and China Mobile. HP is part of one of these POCs and that POC has a focus on service chaining. Bethany added that in addition to that POC, which they are doing in conjunction with NTT, they are also doing POCs with several other service providers including Verizon and BT.

When the conversation ended, I was quite convinced that HP has a strong commitment to the service provider space in general and to NFV in particular. I also think they have a good start relative to having a successful NFV BU. The success of that BU will depend a bit on entrepreneurial spirit and a lot of ruthless execution of their strategy. As many of you already know, Bethany’s start-up background and her success in HPN embodies both

³ <https://www.opennetworking.org/images/stories/downloads/sdn-resources/solution-briefs/sb-sdn-nvf-solution.pdf>

⁴ http://www8.hp.com/us/en/hp-news/press-release.html?id=1575513#.U2EDi_lUeg

⁵ http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/newsroom/press_kits/2014/MWC/White_Paper_NFV.pdf