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AT&T on track to virtualize 5% of network functions by end of 2015, Donovan says

March 2, 2015 | By Sean Buckley

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AT&T (NYSE: T) continues to make progress with its efforts to virtualize network functions, announcing during this week's Mobile World Congress show in Barcelona, Spain that it plans to virtualize 5 percent of network functions on its AT&T Integrated Cloud (AIC) by the end of this year.

At this point, AT&T has 29 nodes that are targeted to migrate to the company's AIC vision, with a plan to add at least 40 more nodes this year.

"Out of 150 network functions that we want to virtualize and control with our target architecture, our plan is to transform 5 percent by the end of 2015," wrote John Donovan, senior EVP of technology and operations for AT&T in a blog post. "Once we have a proven methodology for that process, we plan to transform more of those network functions over the next few years to drive to 75 percent by 2020."

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One service that's going to benefit from AT&T's virtualization drive is voice. As part of its Virtualized Universal Service Platform, Donovan said AT&T is "virtualizing our enterprise and consumer VoIP architecture, including Voice over LTE (VoLTE), so it all runs on one network."

In addition to voice, AT&T is making progress with Network on Demand, its first SDN-enabled network service. The service provider recently announced that it is expanding the availability of its Switched Ethernet Service via Network on Demand to five new markets, with a focus on serving businesses in fiber-ready buildings.
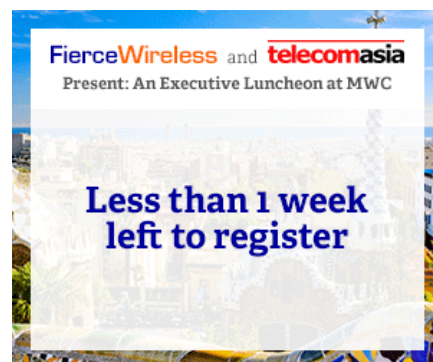
AIC and network on demand are part of a broader vision AT&T has set for its next-gen network that uses a mix of SDN and network functions virtualization (NFV). By 2020, the service provider has set a goal to virtualize and control over 75 percent of its network using this new software-defined architecture.

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Evidence of the progress has been seen in its data centers where AT&T moved 400 of its IT-related apps into the cloud as of the end of last year.

"At the end of 2014, we had moved 400 of our IT apps--about 40 percent of our strategic IT apps--into the cloud," wrote Donovan. "We're migrating an app per day now. We have 400,000 processor cores running these cloud IT apps, and they're operating 50 percent more efficiently than on dedicated hardware."

AT&T's goal is to switch over the rest of its strategic applications by the middle of 2017.

For more:
- see this blog post

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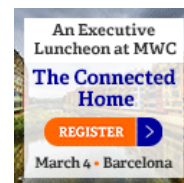
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