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AT&T's Donovan: Network on Demand leads to 95% improvement in 'provisioning cycle times'

August 12, 2015 | By Mike Dano

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John Donovan, senior EVP of AT&T's (NYSE: T) technology and operations, said the carrier's move to software-defined networking (SDN) is already beginning to pay off. Specifically, he said the operator's new SDN-powered Network on Demand feature, which allows businesses to increase and decrease the amount of bandwidth they need in real time, has led to a "95 percent improvement in provisioning cycle times."

"It's getting rave reviews," Donovan said of AT&T's Network on Demand service. He said that due to SDN, AT&T's Network on Demand service features high automation capabilities and takes just minutes to complete.

Further, Donovan explained that the Network on Demand service took AT&T only six months to roll out, which he said highlighted the speed with which SDN allows operators to move.

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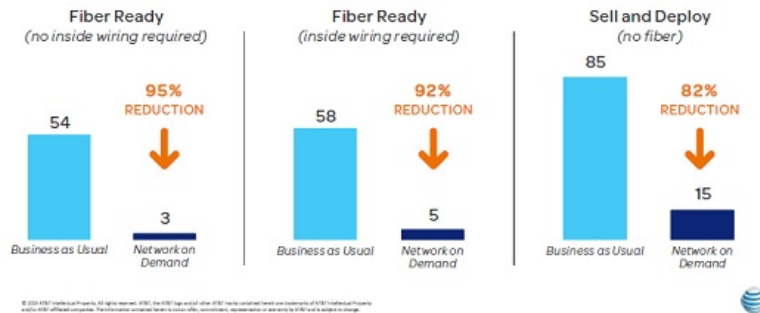## THE LIBRARY: WHITEPAPER

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Discover trends affecting global mobile

AT&T Network on Demand

Driving up to 95% improvement in provisioning cycle time (days)

Fiber Ready *(no inside wiring required)*	Fiber Ready *(inside wiring required)*	Sell and Deploy *(no fiber)*
54 → 3 — 95% REDUCTION	58 → 5 — 92% REDUCTION	85 → 15 — 82% REDUCTION

AT&T offered details on its Network on Demand feature in its presentation.

Leveraging SDN, AT&T's Network on Demand was initially deployed in February as part of the carrier's User Defined Network Cloud (UDNC) strategy. In April, AT&T announced that its switched Ethernet service with Network on Demand capability had expanded to more than 100 U.S. cities. Although Ethernet is its initial focus with the SDN-enabled bandwidth on demand service, AT&T plans to expand the offering to other services such as Internet VPN and VoIP in various markets.

In his presentation during AT&T's analyst day, Donovan reiterated AT&T's plans to virtualize 5 percent of its network by the end of this year on its way to virtualizing 75 percent of its network by 2020.

"What we're doing is ambitious in scale and scope and it's aggressive in its time frame and investment," he said. "But it's necessary and central to AT&T's transformation."

As part of its analyst day, AT&T said it plans to expand its high-speed Internet service to reach more than 60 million customer locations by the end of 2018. The company also said it plans to expand its all-fiber broadband footprint. When the expansion is complete, AT&T said its all-fiber broadband footprint will reach more than 14 million residential and business customer locations.

AT&T added that its current GigaPower deployments have "exceeded penetration expectations with costs per customer location passed running much lower than original expectations."

Interestingly, during his presentation Donovan also pointed to AT&T's growing support for open-source software. He said about 5 percent of the carrier's software is currently open source, but he said that number will grow to as much as 50 percent "in the coming years." He said open-source software allows AT&T to purchase cheaper, more flexible hardware. He added that open-source software is "inherently more secure."

"We need to become a software company," Donovan proclaimed, noting that SDN technology carries three key benefits: it's faster, it's cheaper, and it can shift a legacy environment to a modern architecture.

For more:
- see this AT&T release
- see this AT&T webcast

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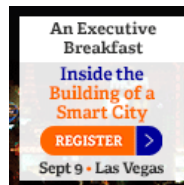September 11-15, 2015 — Amsterdam, Netherlands

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SDN's and NFV's major benefits seem to generally fit into three broad categories: capex, opex, new services. The capex benefits have been promoted, it seems, most often in public discourse. Maybe that's because significant capex changes can move the financial valuation (stock value) of companies more readily than the other two broad categories. So it is intriguing that some of the earliest, quantifiable, publicly stated benefits of SDN/NFV are related to opex (provisioning efficiency: time and accuracy). But another corollary benefit of the improvements AT&T is citing will also be "time to revenue". A quantifiable metric on that (i.e. $XM revenue realized Y months earlier) could also be a really powerful endorsement for SDN and NFV benefits.

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