

10.06.2024

# Data Centers and Networks

Piotr Jaczewski,  
Piotr Kowalczyk

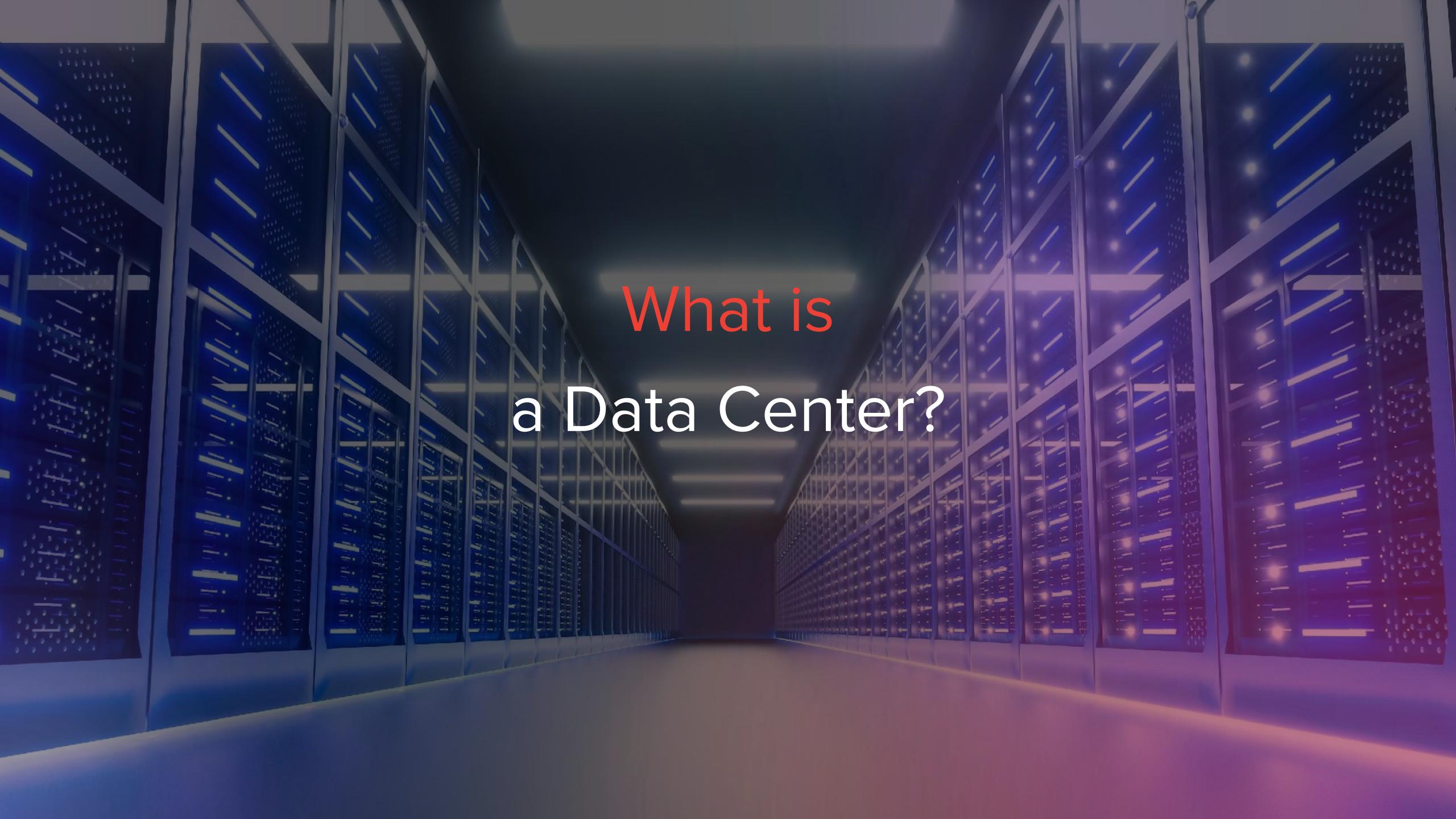
**RTB HOUSE**

RTBHOUSE =



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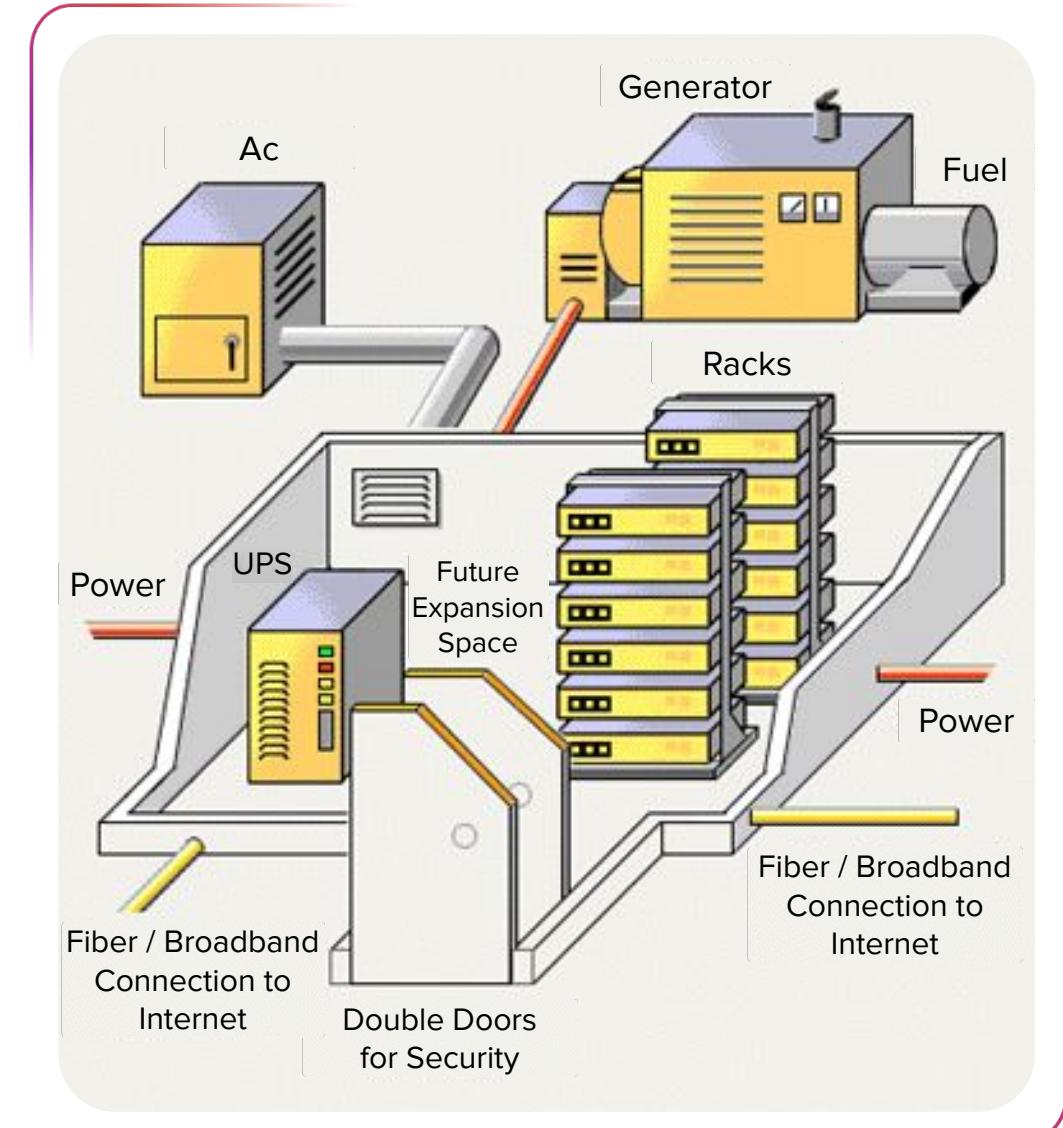




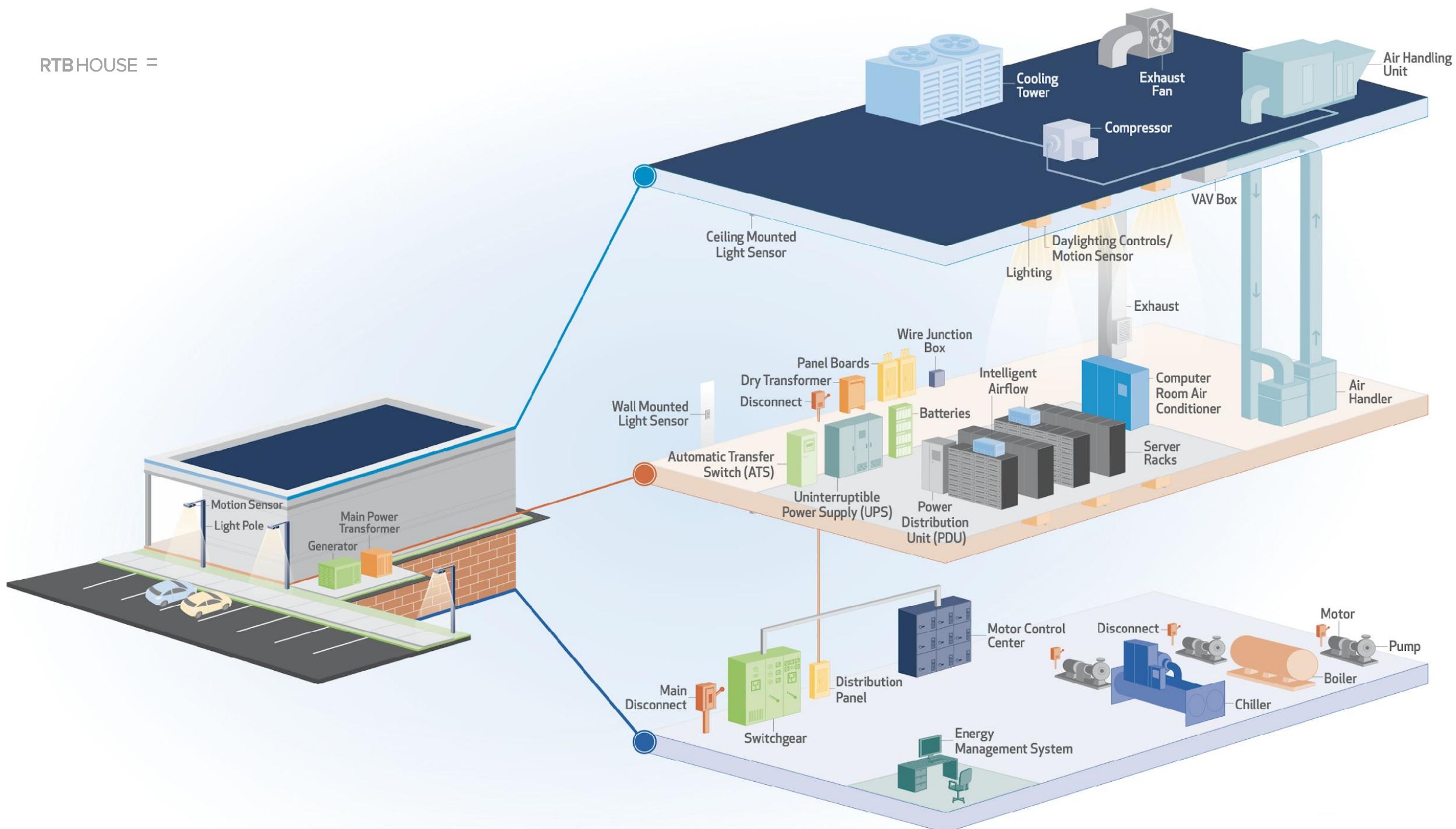
What is  
a Data Center?

# Every Data Center building blocks:

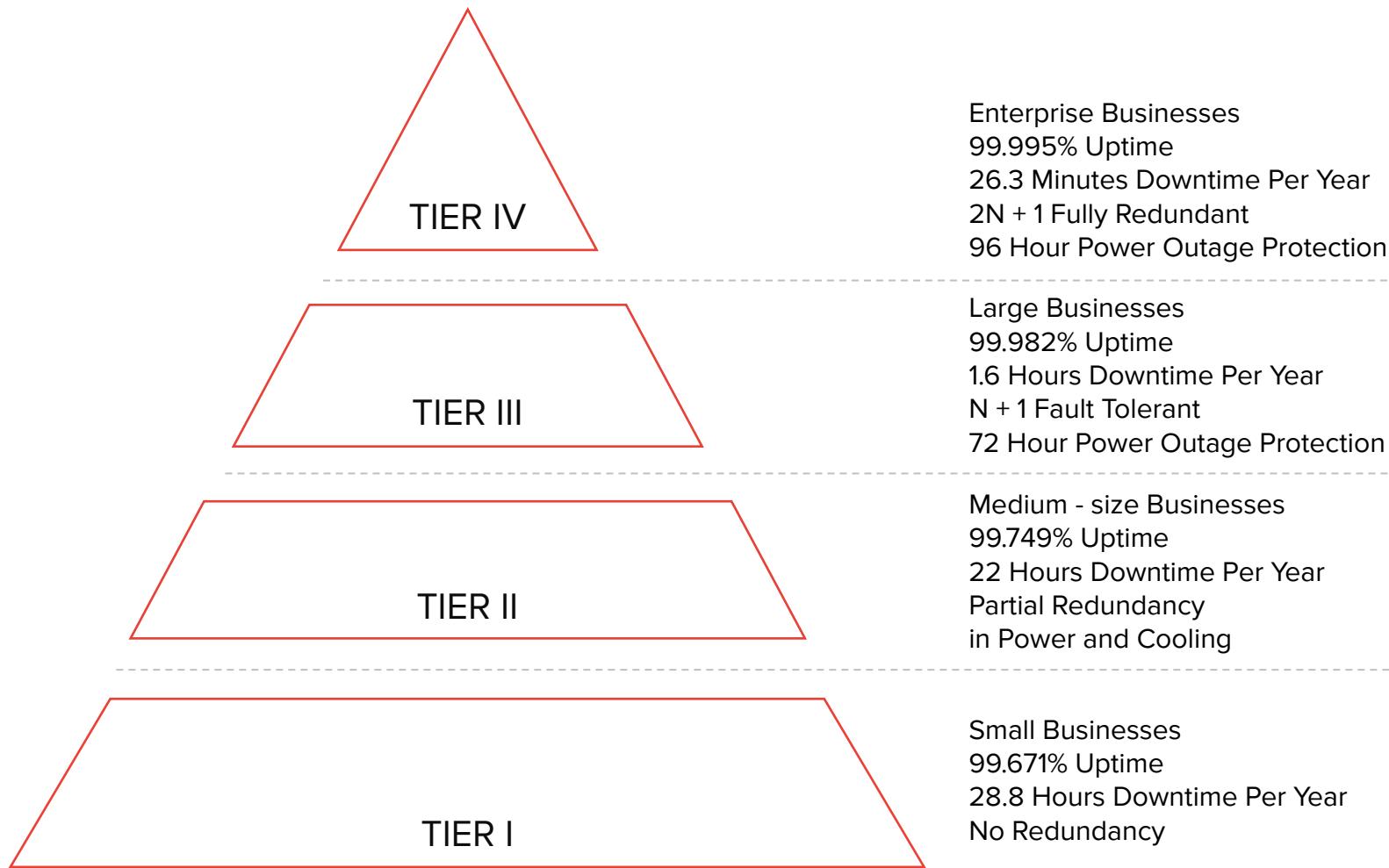
- Space & Location
- Electrical mains power
- Backup power & UPS
- Cooling
- Racks
- Servers
- Networking
- People



RTB HOUSE =



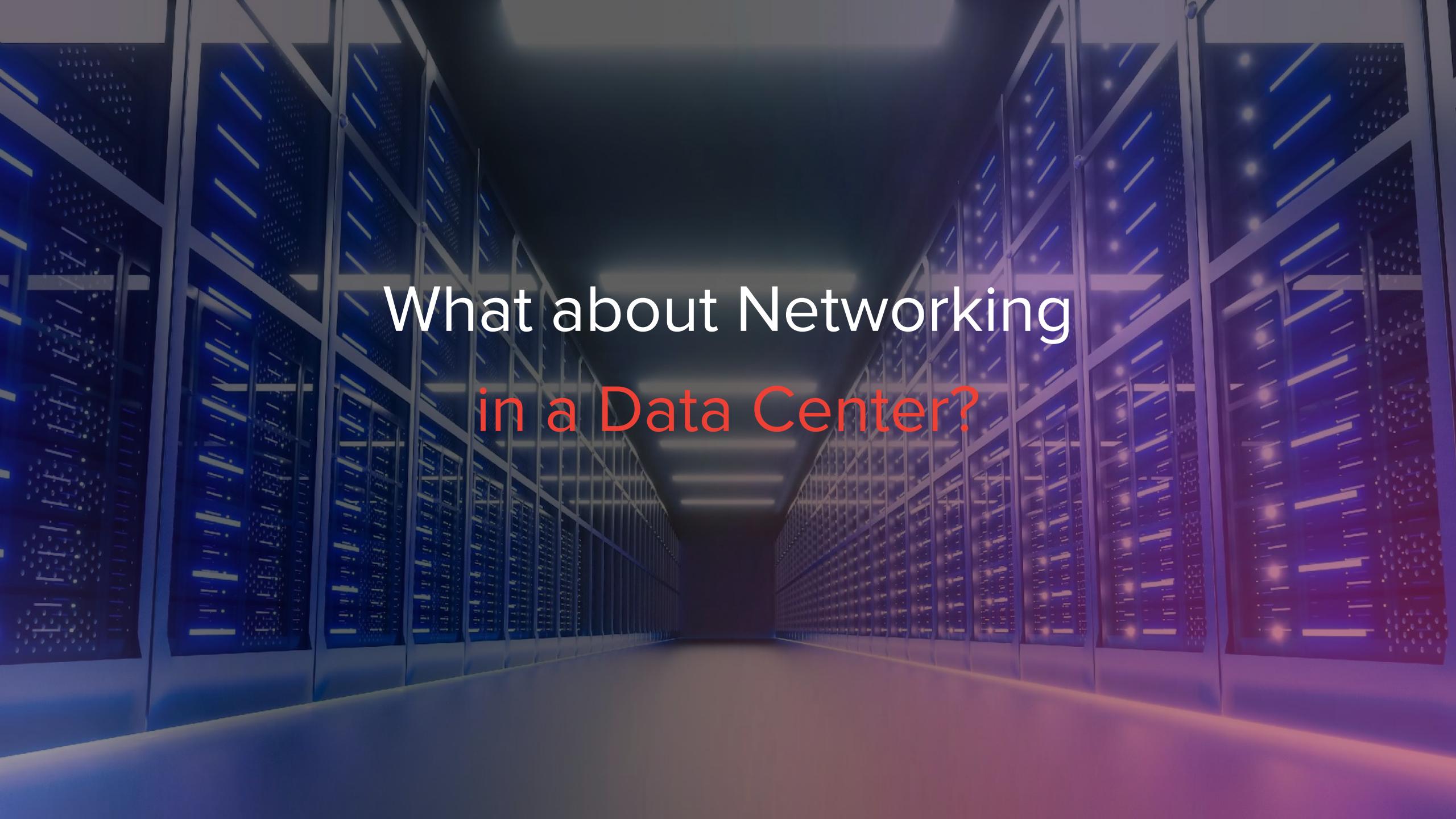
# Data Center Tiers



## High Availability SLA

- 90%** -> 36.5 days per year
- 99%** -> 3.65 days per year
- 99,9%** -> 8.76 hours per year
- 99,99%** -> 52.56 minutes
- 99,999%** -> 5.26 minutes

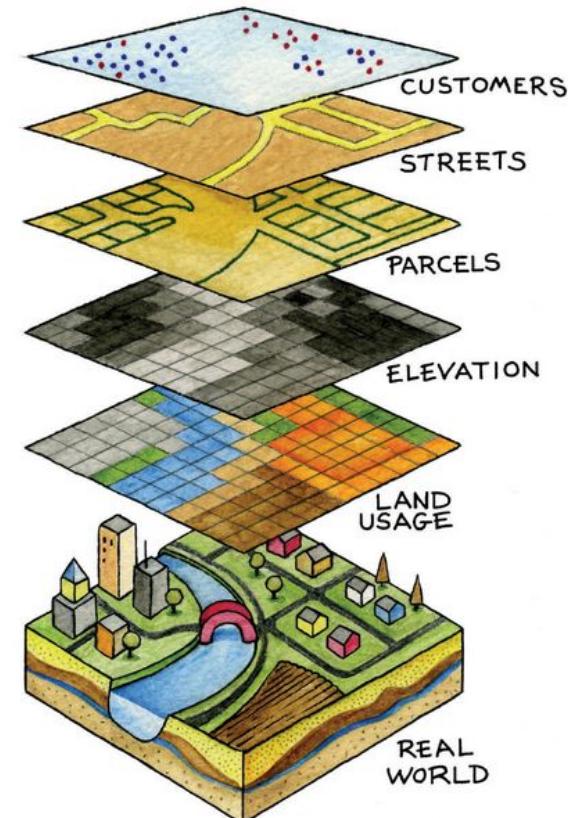
Crucial question:  
How many minutes of  
downtime per year  
**can you afford???**

A perspective view of a data center aisle. On both sides, there are rows of server racks. The racks are illuminated from within, with blue and purple lights visible through the perforated metal panels. The floor is a polished concrete. The overall atmosphere is cool and futuristic.

What about Networking  
in a Data Center?

DC networks  
can be perceived  
as layers of:

- Hardware
- Software



# Hardware layer - Cables

## Copper based - Direct Attach Copper (DACs)

Advantages:

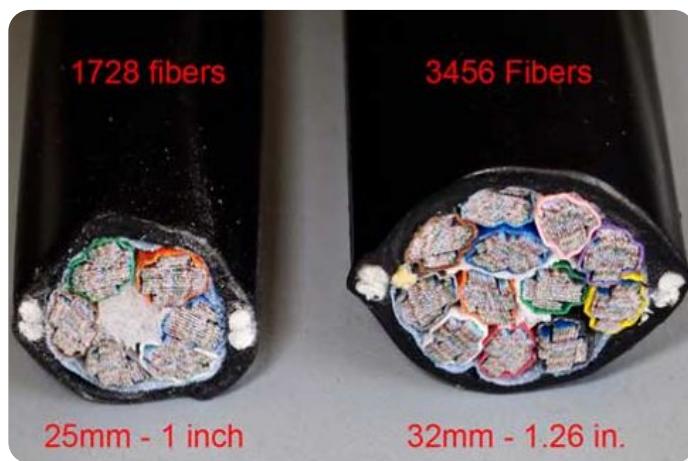
- fairly cheap

Disadvantages:

- length - maximum ~5 meters (100G)
- bend radius
- relatively easy to destroy
- heavy weight



# Hardware layer - Cables

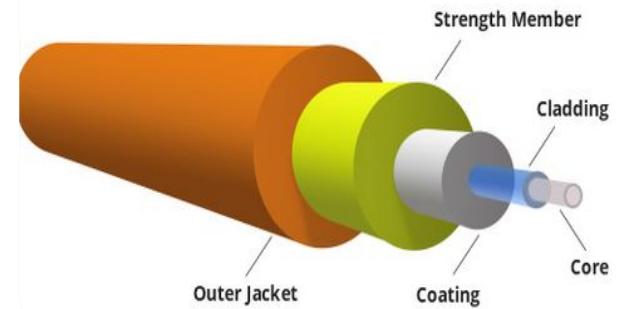
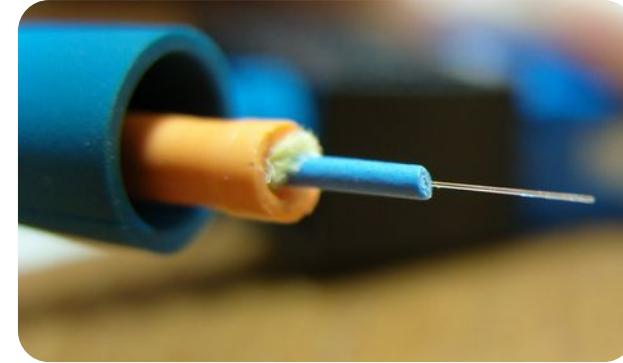


Silicon based - fiber optic

# Hardware layer - Cables

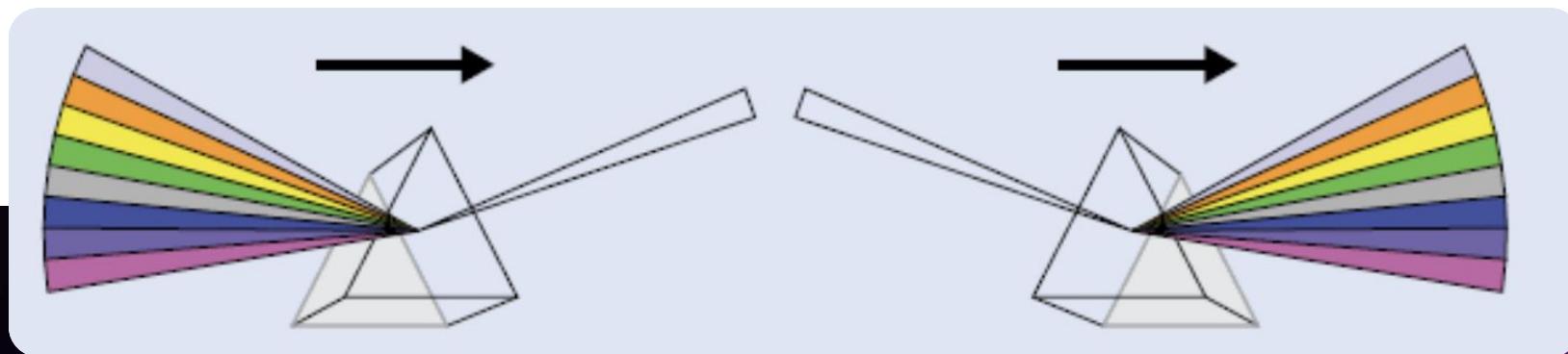
## Silicon based - fiber optic

- higher bandwidth
- lesser signal attenuation (80km without repeater; copper twisted pair and coaxial requires typically ~5km per repeater)
- immune to electromagnetic interference
- resistant to corrosion
- lightweight
- resistant to tapping



# DWDM = Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing

More lambdas over one fiber pair:

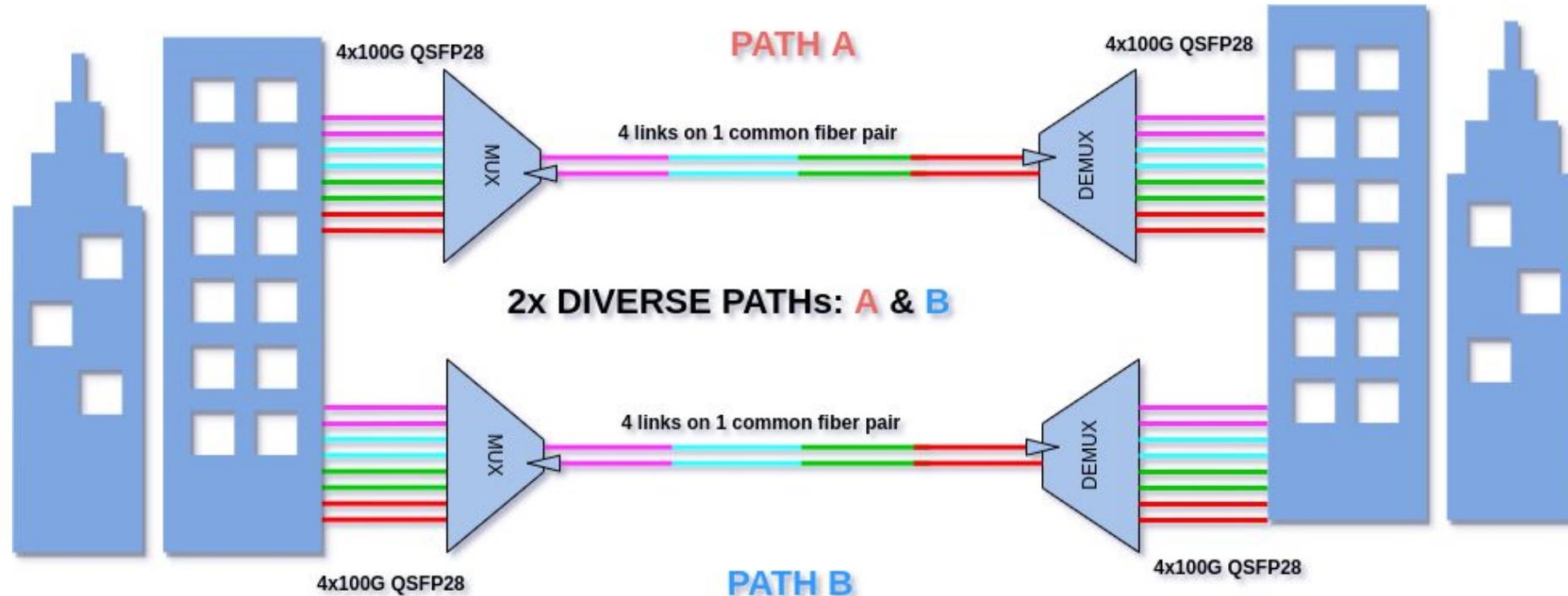


**At Ingress:** Multiple optical signals of differing wavelengths are combined to form a single optical signal

**At Egress:** A single optical signal is refracted to separate multiple optical signals of differing wavelengths

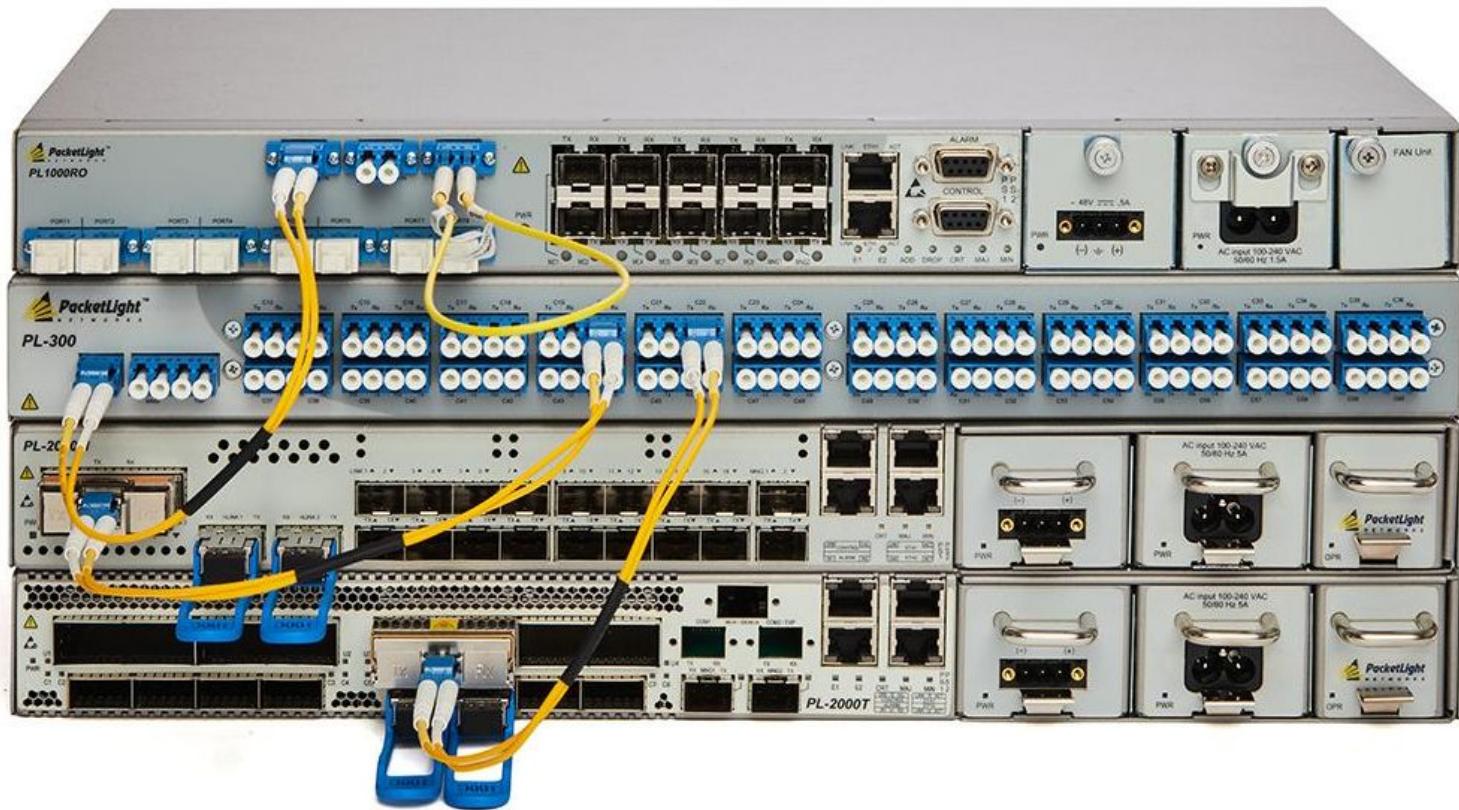
State-of-the-art DWDMs can transfer up to 192 **lambdas** (channels) over **one** fiber pair

# DWDM topology example



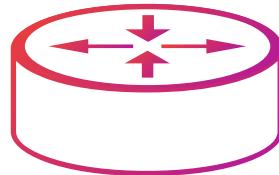
State of the art DWDMs can transfer up to 192 **lambda**s (channels) over **one** fiber pair

# DWDM equipment



A **RTB House** DWDM equipment can transfer up to 4 x 400Gbit/s [**1.6Terabit/s**] over long distances.

# Hardware - Network equipment basics



Router

VS



Switch

- Operates on Layer 3 (Network)
- Routes packet with help of IP addresses
- Can communicate to external networks

- Operates on Layer 2 (Data link)
- Sends frames to destination based on MAC address
- Can communicate within a single network only

# Hardware layer - Switches

- Typically 100Gbit/s based but now 400Gbit/s is becoming more popular
  - Many ports - as much as 128 x 100Gbit/s per switch



# Hardware layer - Routers

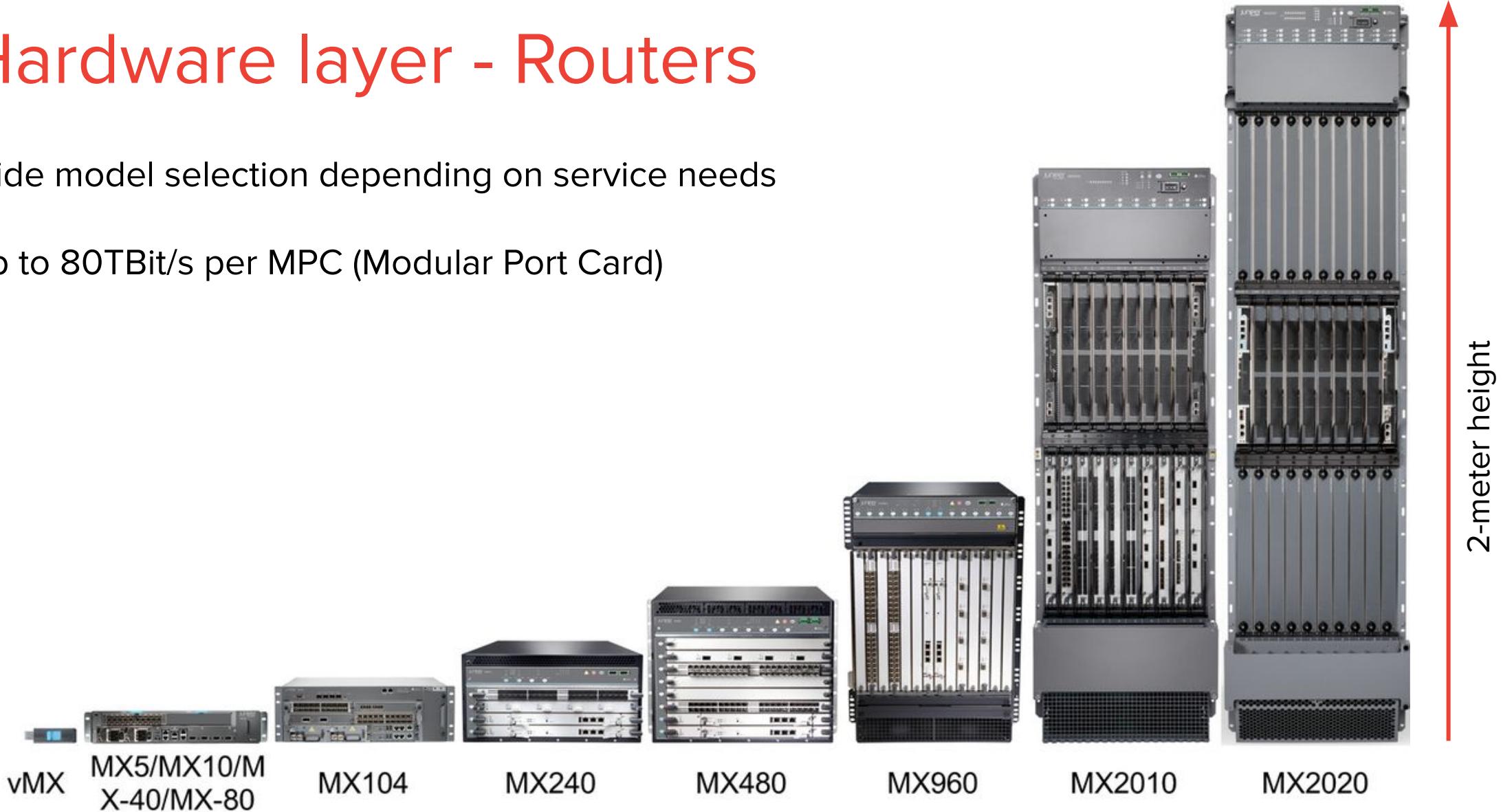
At RTB House we use Juniper MX960 routers



# Hardware layer - Routers

Wide model selection depending on service needs

Up to 80TBit/s per MPC (Modular Port Card)



# Hardware layer - Routers

Packet forwarding throughput:

It's about how many packets per second (**PPS**) you can forward without any service degradation.

When designing a Data Center network you must take for consideration a future growth, especially **please count desired packet rate x4**:

**2x for redundancy**

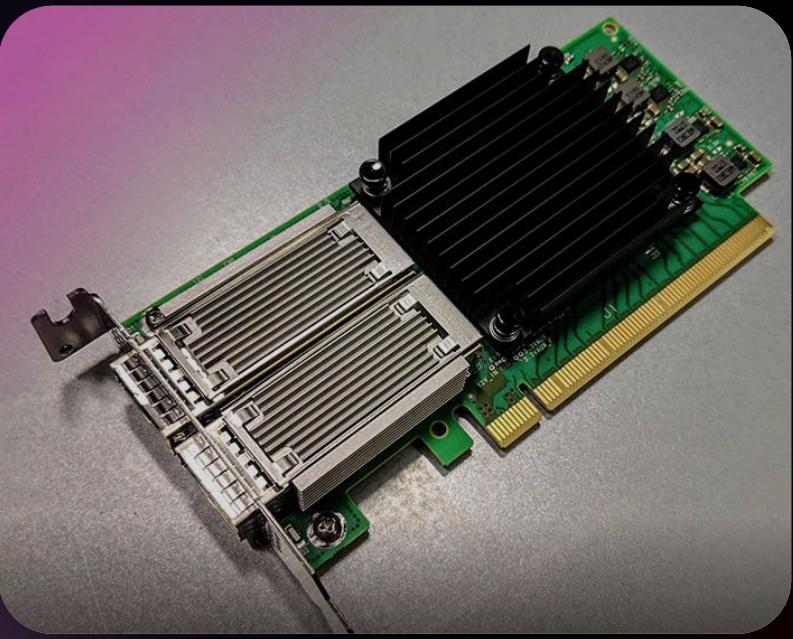
**2x for application  
usage growth over time**

# Correlation between BPS and PPS

There is a difference between BPS and PPS

Speed	bits / second	bytes / second	maximum PPS
10 Mbps	10,000,000	1,250,000	14,881
100 Mbps	100,000,000	12,500,000	148,810
1 Gbps	1,000,000,000	125,000,000	1,488,095
10 Gbps	10,000,000,000	1,250,000,000	14,880,952
100 Gbps	100,000,000,000	12,500,000,000	148,809,524

# Hardware layer - Network Interface Cards



# Hardware layer - Network Interface Cards

- Typically 2x10Gbit/s, 2x25Gbit/s, 2x100Gbit/s
- Modern high-end NICs (aka Smart NICs) have additional capabilities like CHECKSUM/TCP/VXLAN/SSL offloading but are 4x times more expensive.
- NIC offloading - helps host CPU to outsource some network functions to the NIC ASIC (Application Specific Integrated Circuit).

# Data Center Networking Models

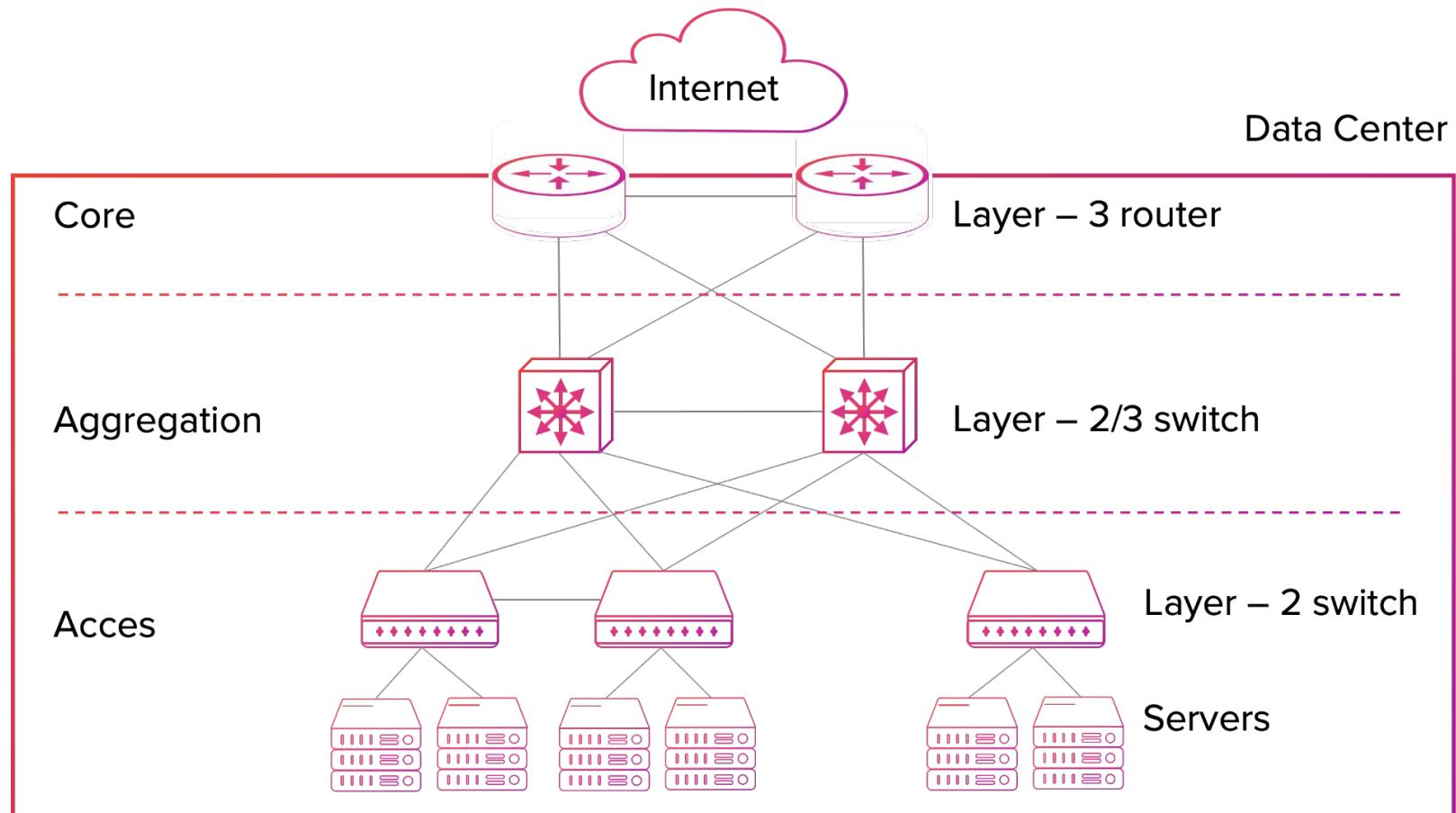
- Traditional “Layer 2” based (Ethernet based only) - past model.
- Hybrid (Ethernet VPN/VXLAN based) - current model.
- Modern “pure Layer 3” based (routing-on-the-host) - likely to be a standard in the future.

# Traditional (old) Layer 2 Topology

According to the current requirements has many drawbacks:

- Cannot scale to thousands of hosts - dependent on ARP (Address Resolution Protocol) for MAC address discovery - a lot of broadcast messages
- Not loop proof - depends on long recovering STP (Spanning Tree Protocol)
- No load balancing at the network level - no ECMP
- Reduced Endpoint Mobility - difficult to transfer VMs to new physical servers

# Traditional (old) Layer 2 Topology



# Traditional (old) Layer 2 Topology

Challenges regarding Ethernet MAC addresses:

If a networked Layer 2 device could contain a list of all known MAC addresses, then the network node could function in much the same way as a router, forwarding frames instead of packets hop-by-hop through the network from source LAN to destination LAN.

However, the MAC address is much larger than the IPv4 address currently used on the Internet backbone (48 bits compared to the 32 bits of IPv4).

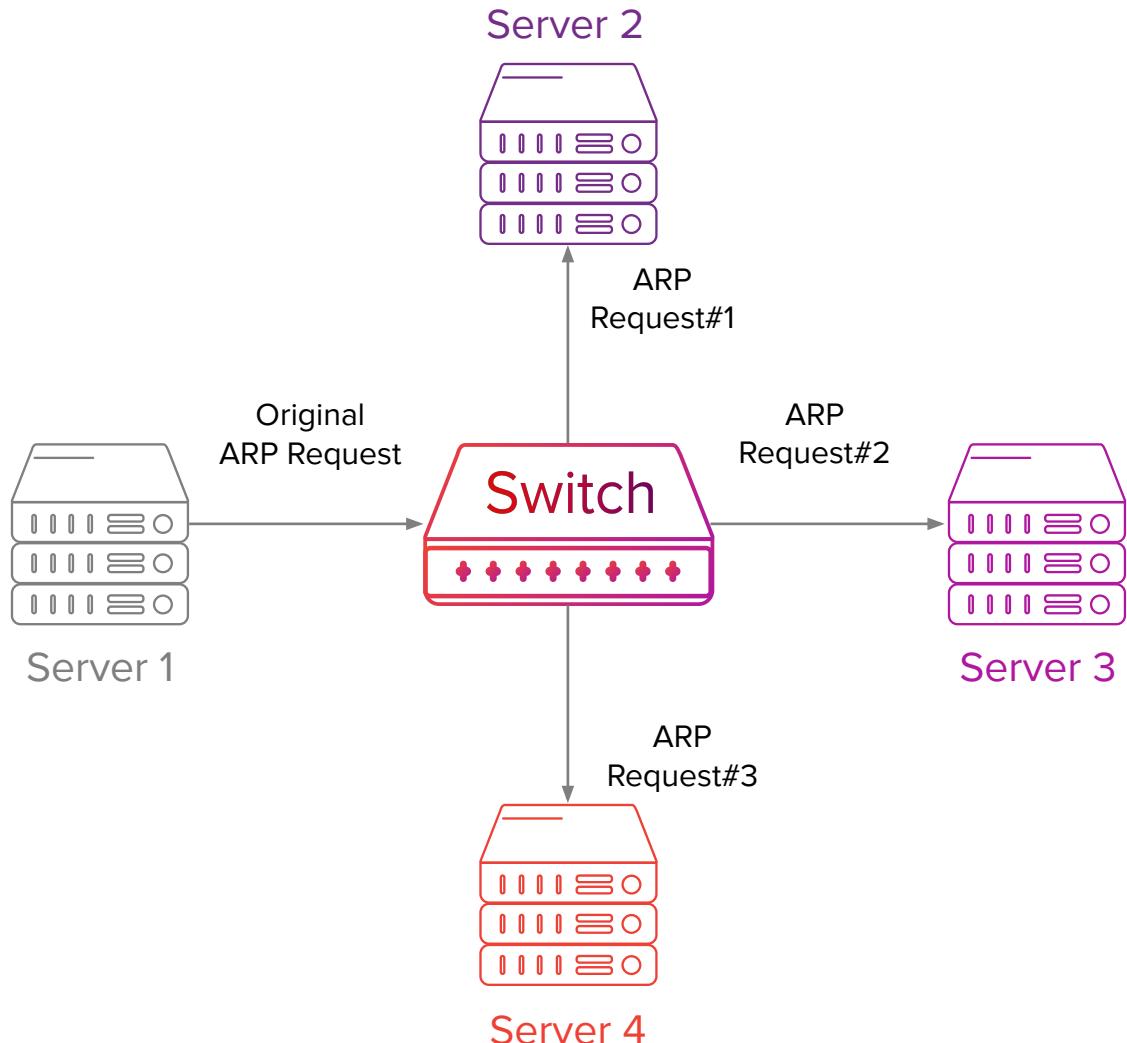
The MAC address has no “network organization” like the IPv4 or IPv6 address, so a Layer 2 network node would have to potentially store every conceivable MAC address in memory for next-hop table lookups. Instead of tables of about 125,000 entries, every Layer 2 network node would be required to store billions of entries.

# ARP requests - flood of frames

Too many ARP request are a big issue with 1000s hosts in a single network. End hosts are frequently asking for neighbor MACs which leads to multiple unnecessary communication flows that saturate every switch port in big broadcast domain.

**When the network has 1000s of ports, each ARP request is broadcasted (copied) to each one of 1000s ports.**

Remember: In theory, ARP would have to run an address resolution for each outgoing IP packet before transmitting. However, this would significantly increase the required bandwidth. For this reason, address mappings are stored in a table, the so-called ARP cache, as the protocol discovers them. But the cache has to be purged eventually, what results in more ARP requests.





# Issues and Bottlenecks in L2 networks (STP)

Layer 2 networking is also founded on the premise of a single path between any two points; that is the foundation of the STP (Spanning Tree Protocol).

Through the years, the industry has come up with mechanisms such as bonding and MLAG to improve upon this. However, they are all still striving with the single path principle.

# Issues and Bottlenecks in L2 networks (redundancy)

Two protocols to improve bandwidth and redundancy in L2 networks:

## LACP

(Link Aggregation Control Protocol) –  
host is connected with two links forming  
1 logical link to a switch.

## MLAG

(Multichassis Link Aggregation) –  
host is connected with two links to 2 switches  
acting as a one logical switch.

### Standalone



### LAG

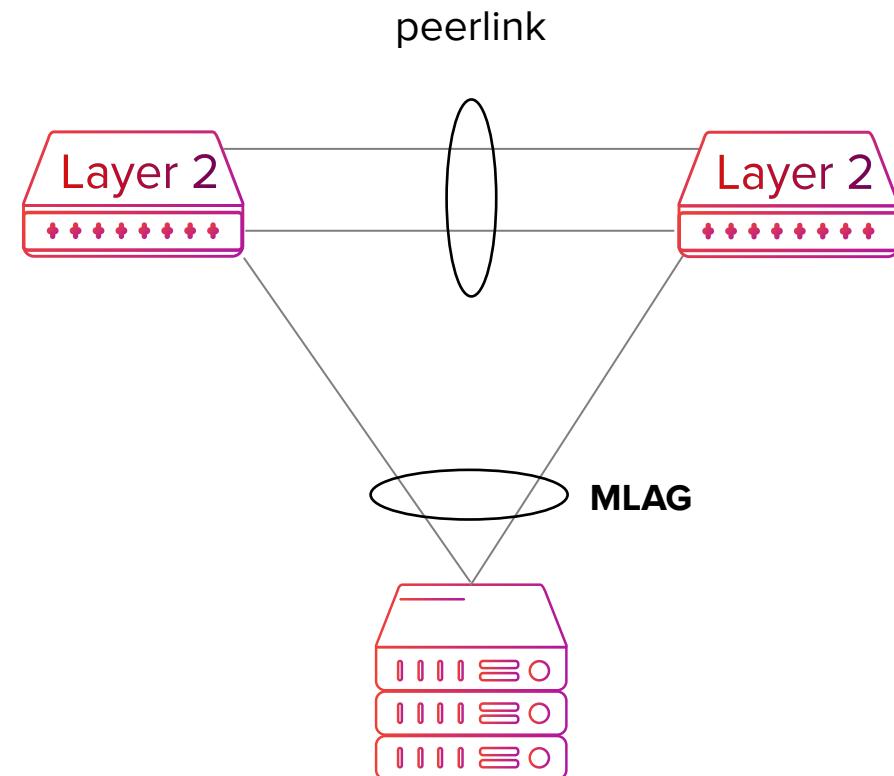


STP blocks second link

**LAG** = **L**ink**A**ggregation

BUNDLE LINKS SO THEY BEHAVE  
LIKE ONE SINGLE LINK

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FULL REDUNDANCY: TWO SWITCHES & TWO LINKS

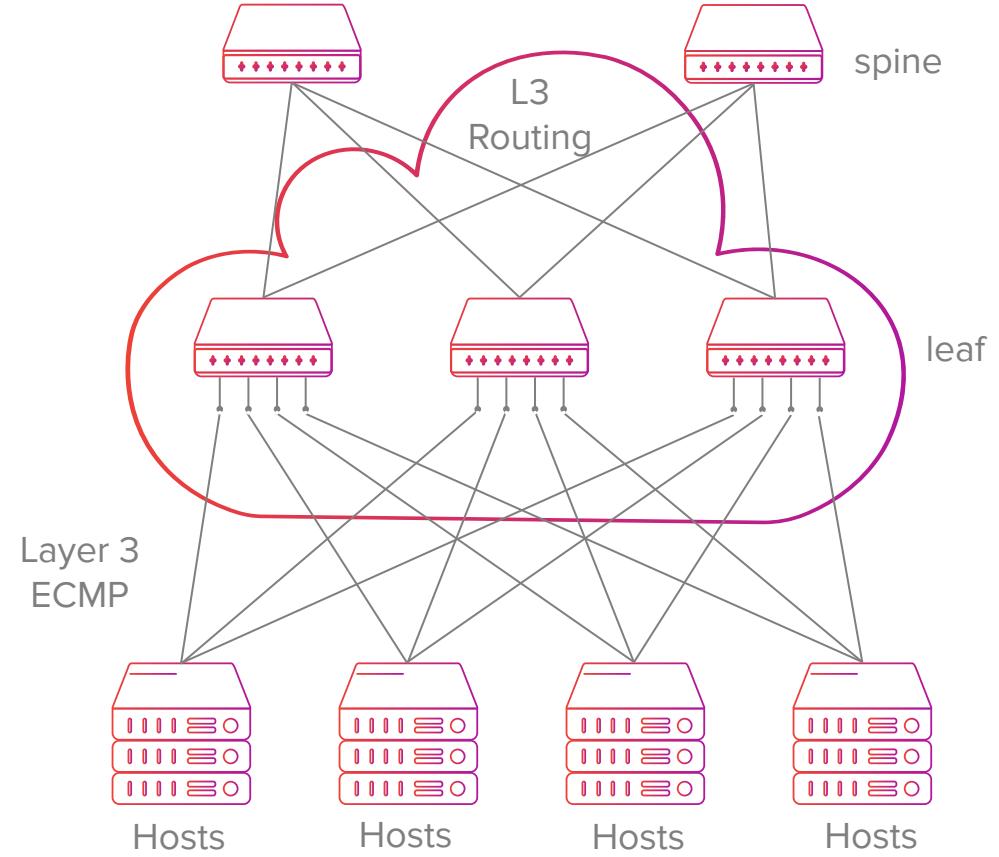
# Server Racks: Host connection to multiple leaf switches

Host to switch the old L2-way :

- Limits redundancy - MLAG can only connect to 2 switches
- Proprietary solution/vendor lock-in

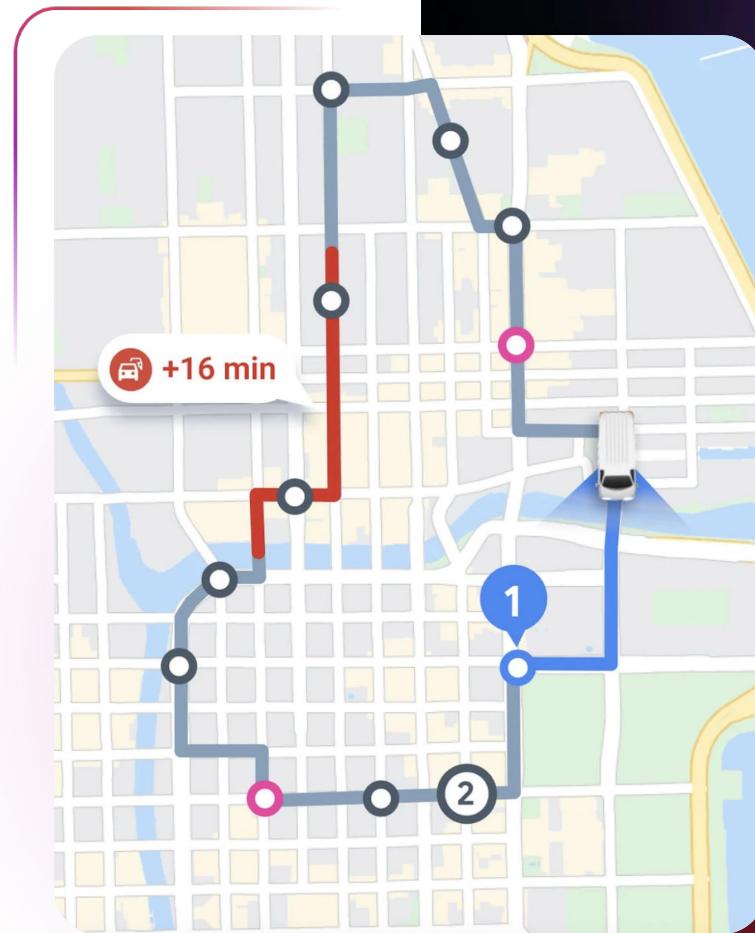
Host to switch the new L3-way

- Routing on the host
- Vast redundancy (3 leafs and more)
- Upgrade leaf switches easily (use routing protocols metrics to redirect traffic)
- Eliminates STP loops/MLAG troubleshooting



# What is routing?

Routing is the process of selecting a path for traffic in a network across multiple distinct networks.

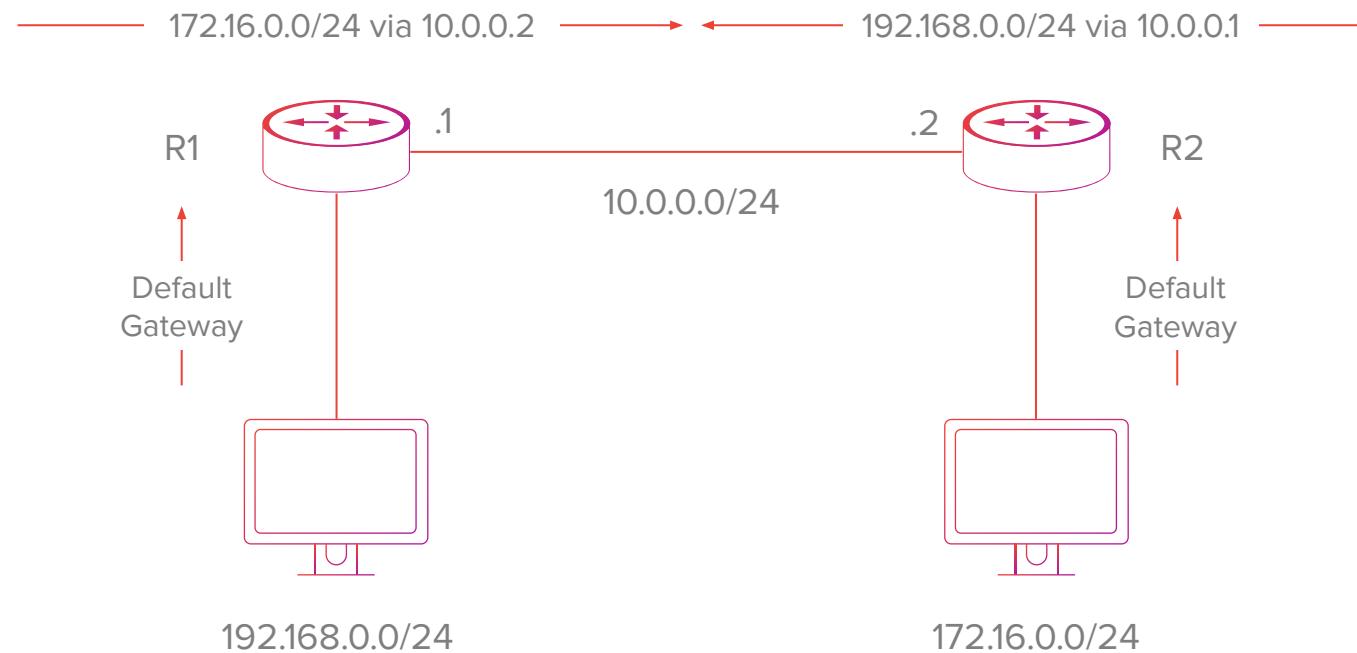


# What types of routing do we have?

- Static
- Dynamic
  - Link state based protocols:
    - OSPF - Open Shortest Path First
    - IS-IS - Intermediate System to Intermediate System
  - Distance-vector based protocols:
    - RIP v1/v2
    - EIGRP - Cisco proprietary
    - BGP - Border Gateway Protocol

# Static routing

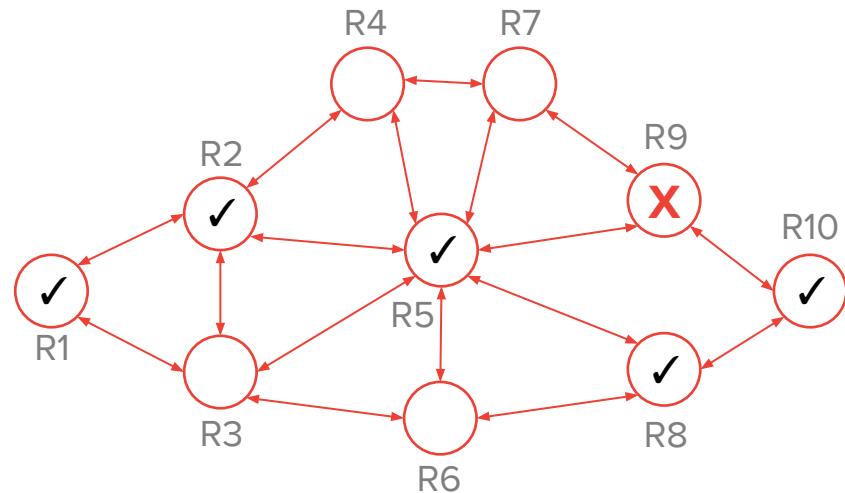
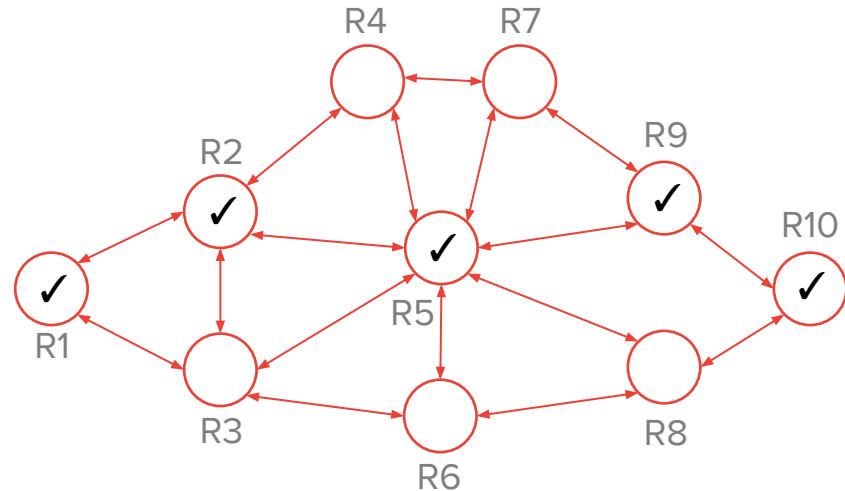
On all routers in networks we must add  
a manual path to other networks:



# Dynamic routing

Information about routes/prefixes are exchanged dynamically between nodes and circuits.

We do not have to change manually paths when for example one of the nodes is broken.



# Network design at RTB House

In all Data Centers we have the following networking assets:

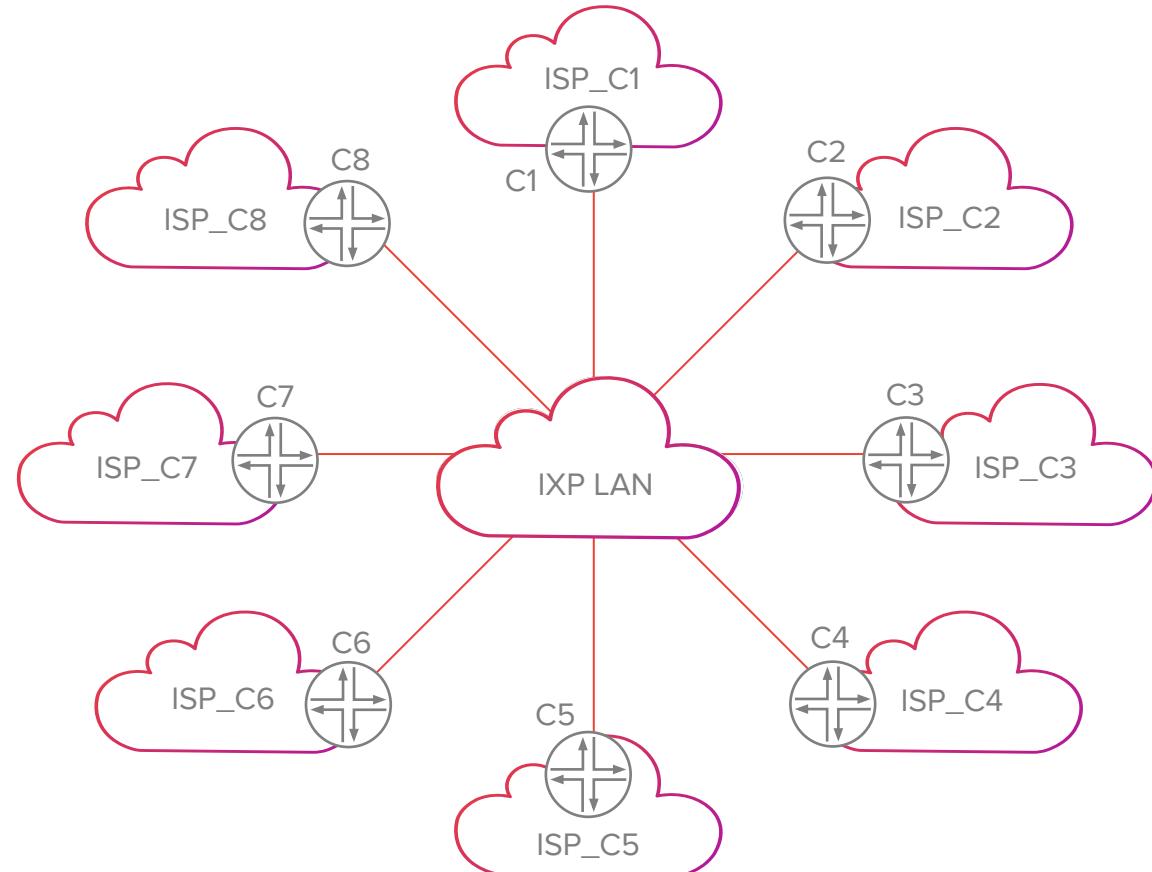
## Physical:

- 2 routers
- 4 x 100Gbit/s connections to ISP (Internet Service Provider)
- 2 x 100Gbit/s to IXP (Internet Exchange Point)
- 2 x 100Gbit/s to Google network

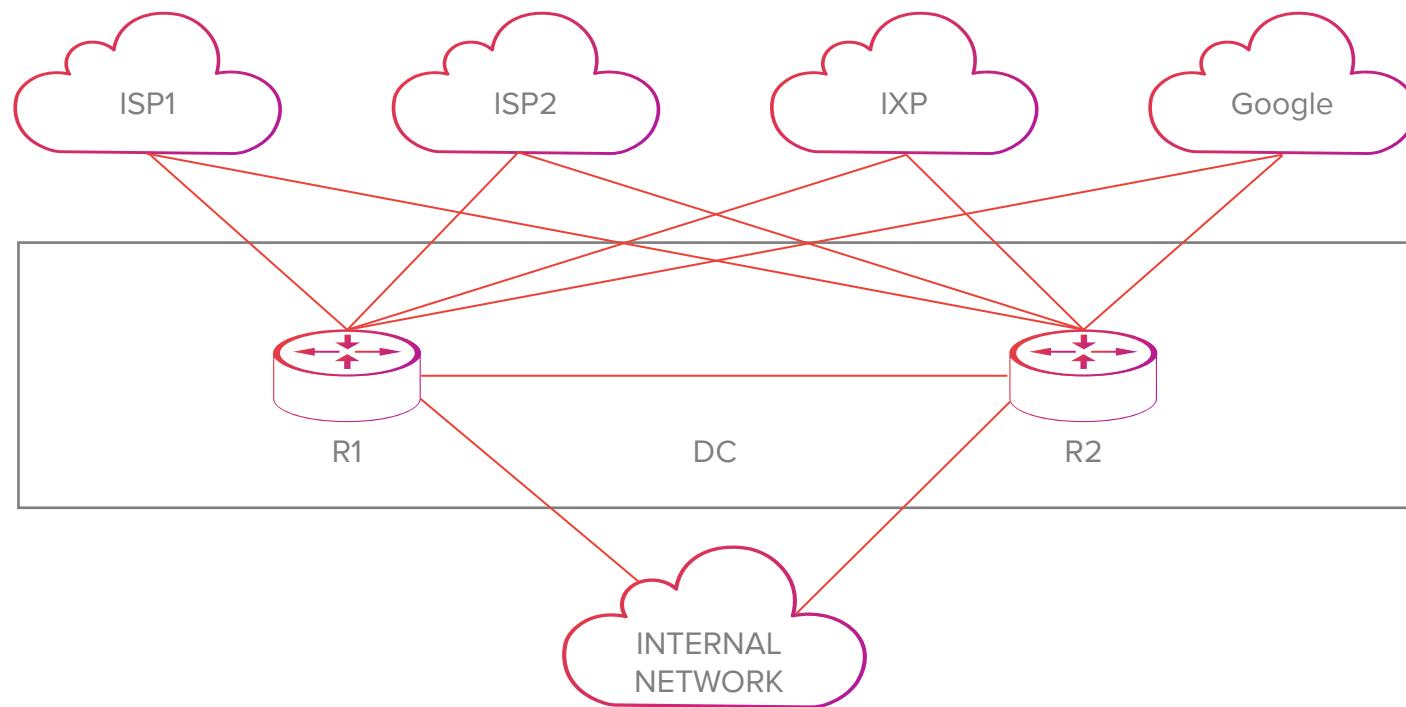
## Logical:

- Own AS  
(Autonomous Number – unique for organization)  
number per DC – required by BGP
- Own IPv4 and IPv6 prefixes

# Internet eXchange Point



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# What **routing protocols** are used in RTB House network?

## IS-IS

connection only between routers in  
Data Center (faster convergence)

## BGP

connection to ISPs (an industry standard)  
and Load Balancers (ECMP)

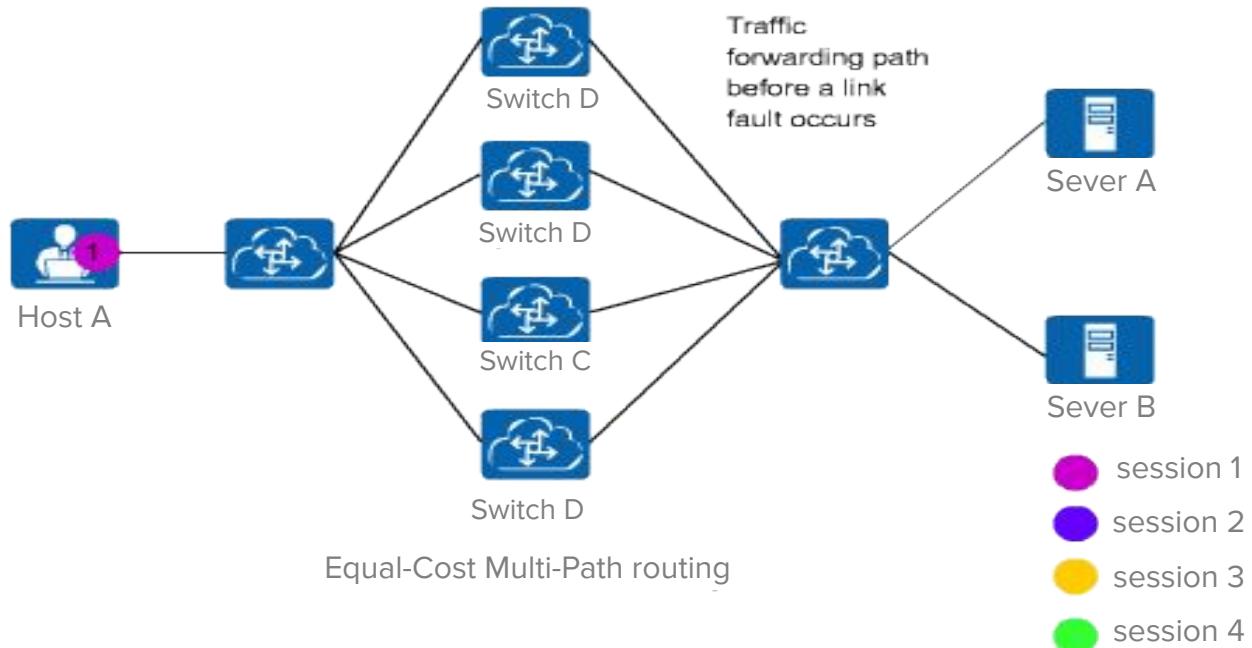
# Why BGP?

Flexibility - designed to easily add new functionalities

Is the de facto standard in connection with other large networks like ISP, IXP, etc.

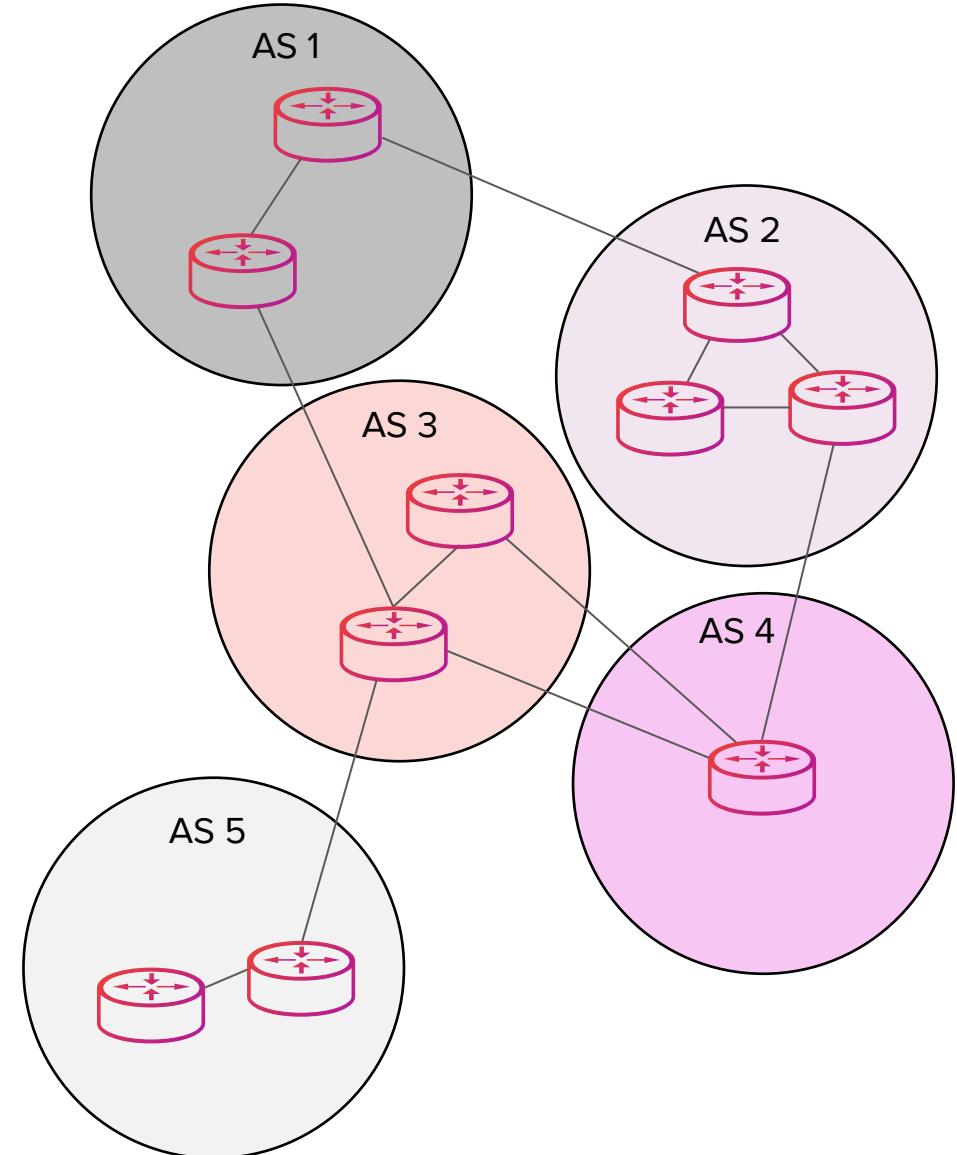
Load balancing - due to the use of the ECMP routing strategy.

# Equal Cost Multi Path Routing



# BGP characteristics

- BGP is a distance - vector protocol
- Each network which uses BGP protocol must have its individual AS number (assigned by IANA)
- Routes are calculated based on the length of the path to the destination prefix



# Example - Facebook network outage

Some facts about network at Facebook:

Dedicated in-house built  
global networks in many  
countries in the world

Proprietary systems to  
control traffic between  
Data Centers

Uses BGP protocol to  
communicate with all  
Data Centers

Dedicated DNS servers  
which were advertised  
via BGP

# Example - Facebook network outage

## The course of outage:

During routine maintenance they ceased to advertise DNS prefixes (due to human error) to global routing table.

Users couldn't resolve names - facebook.com was inaccessible

They couldn't rollback this change because internal FB systems were using the same DNS servers ;)

They had to send engineers on site to the DCs to have them debug the issue and restart the systems.

<https://blog.cloudflare.com/october-2021-facebook-outage/>

<https://engineering.fb.com/2021/10/05/networking-traffic/outage-details/>

# Modern Network Topology Architecture in Data Center

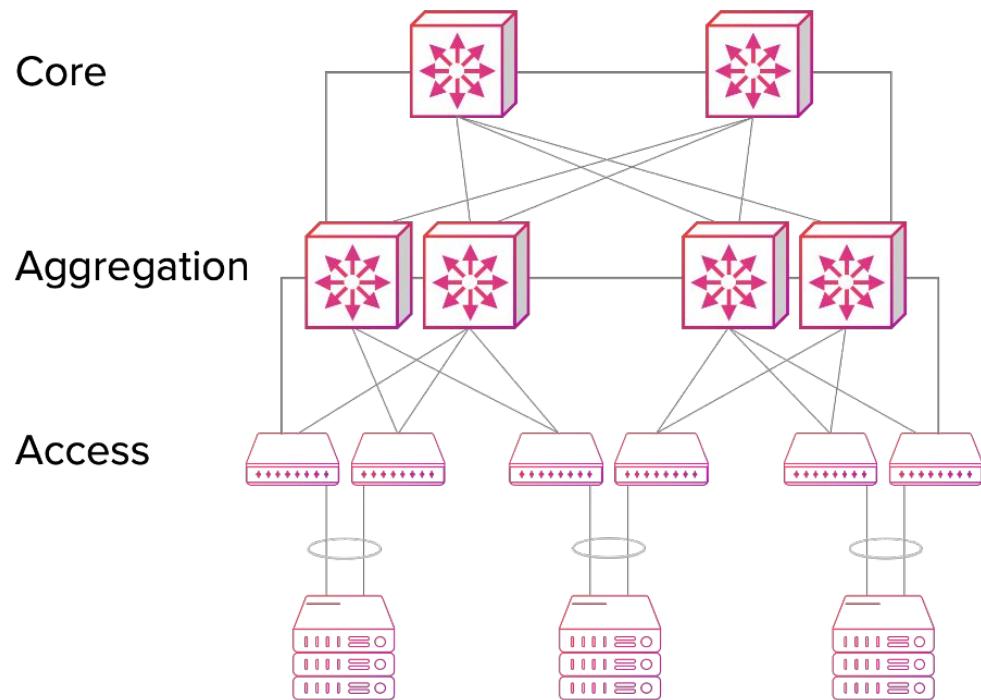
## Spine Layer

backbone of the network similar to the core layer in traditional three-tier design. Each Layer 3 port is connected to the underlying Layer 2 leaf switch.

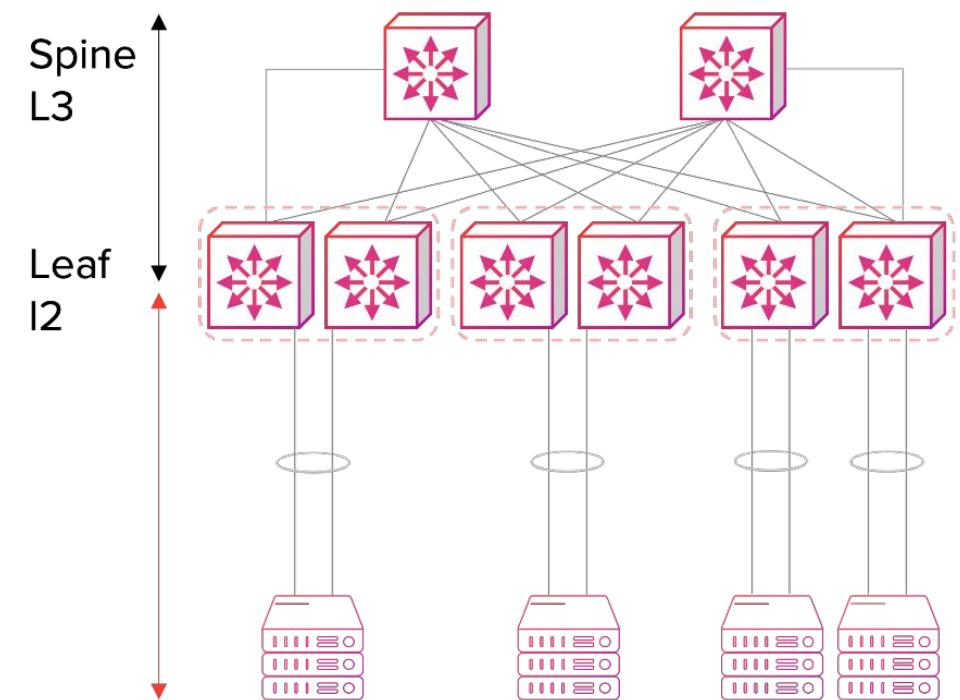
## Leaf Layer

connects to end devices like servers. It is similar to the access layer in traditional network topology design.

## Traditional 3-Tier Architecture



## 2-Tier Spine-Leaf Architecture



# Spine-Leaf Topology - benefits

## Improved Redundancy

As opposed to traditional three-tier architecture where access layer switches connect to only two uplink distribution switches, every leaf switch connects to every spine switch. And instead of Spanning Tree Protocol (STP), we implement pure layer 3 routing mainly based on BGP or OSPF.

## Increased Bandwidth

By implementing ECMP, we have the ability to use multiple active links instead of one what increases bandwidth. With STP, only one link is active and the other links are blocked.

## Improved Scalability

In the event of oversubscription, we can add a spine switch and connect it to every leaf switch. If the port density is a concern, we can add a leaf switch and connect it to every spine switch.

# Spine-Leaf Topology - benefits

## Lower Costs

fixed-configuration switches unlike modular switches, have a fixed number of ports and are usually not expandable. Many spine-leaf networks use fixed-configuration switches.

## Low Latency and Congestion Avoidance

With having only a maximum of two hops between any source and destination nodes, we can make a more direct traffic path, which improves performance and reduces bottlenecks. The only exception is when the destination is on the same leaf switch.

# Spine-Leaf Topology - limitations

## Amount of Cables

We need to run more cables since each leaf must be connected to every spine device.

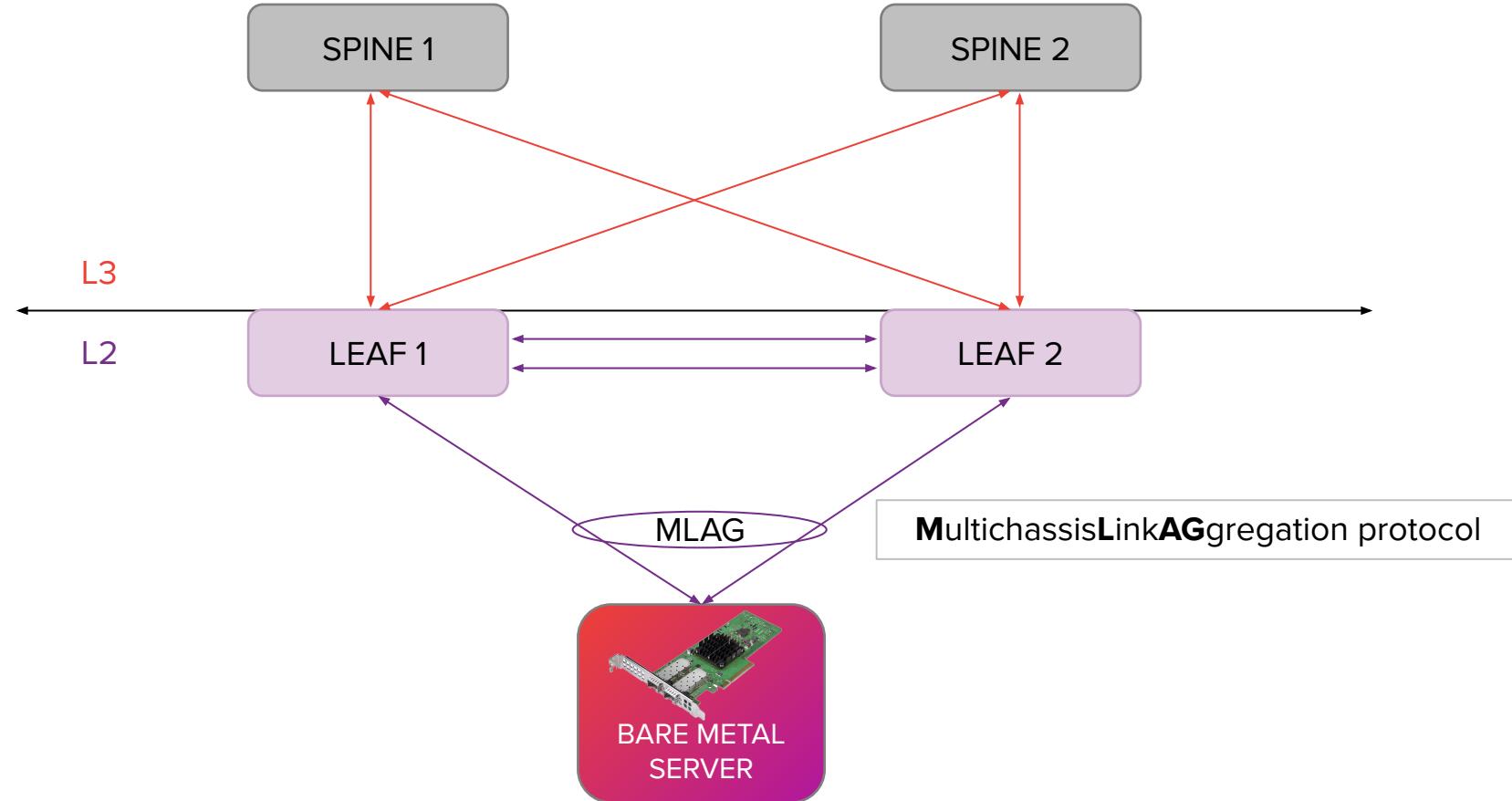
## Limited Hosts

The number of hosts that we can support is limited. Spine port counts can restrict the number of leaf switch connections.

## Oversubscription

practice of committing more network bandwidth to devices connected to that network than what is physically available. Typical Oversubscription ratio in DC networks is 2.4:1 (e.g. 48x10G / 200G uplink)

# Full Redundancy



# Overlay and Underlay routing in Data Center Networks

## Underlay

network is the **physical** network responsible for the delivery of packets like DWDM, L2, L3, or Internet, etc.

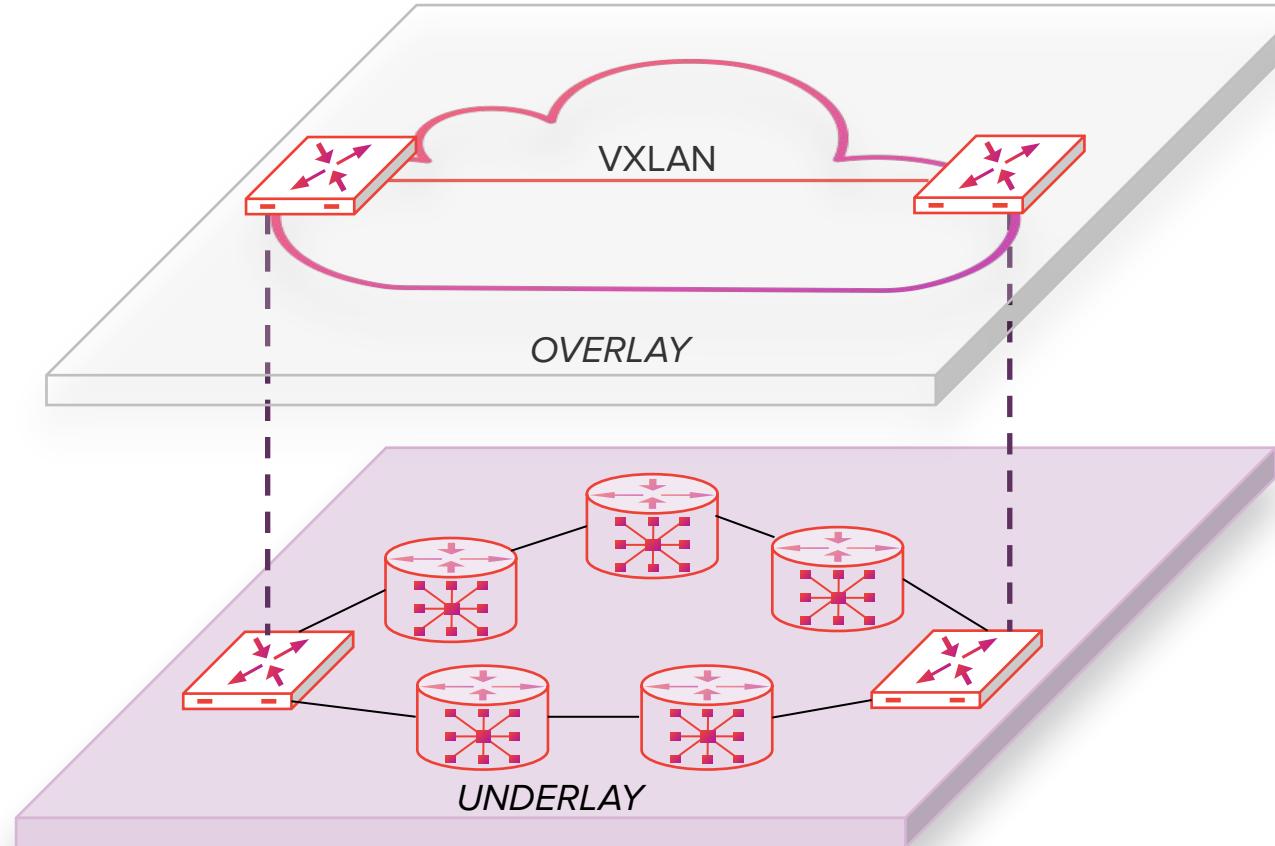
## Overlay

is a **logical** network that uses **network virtualization** to build connectivity on top of physical infrastructure using **tunneling** encapsulations such as VXLAN, IPsec.

New paradigm:

You can have multiple overlay networks built on top of one underlay!

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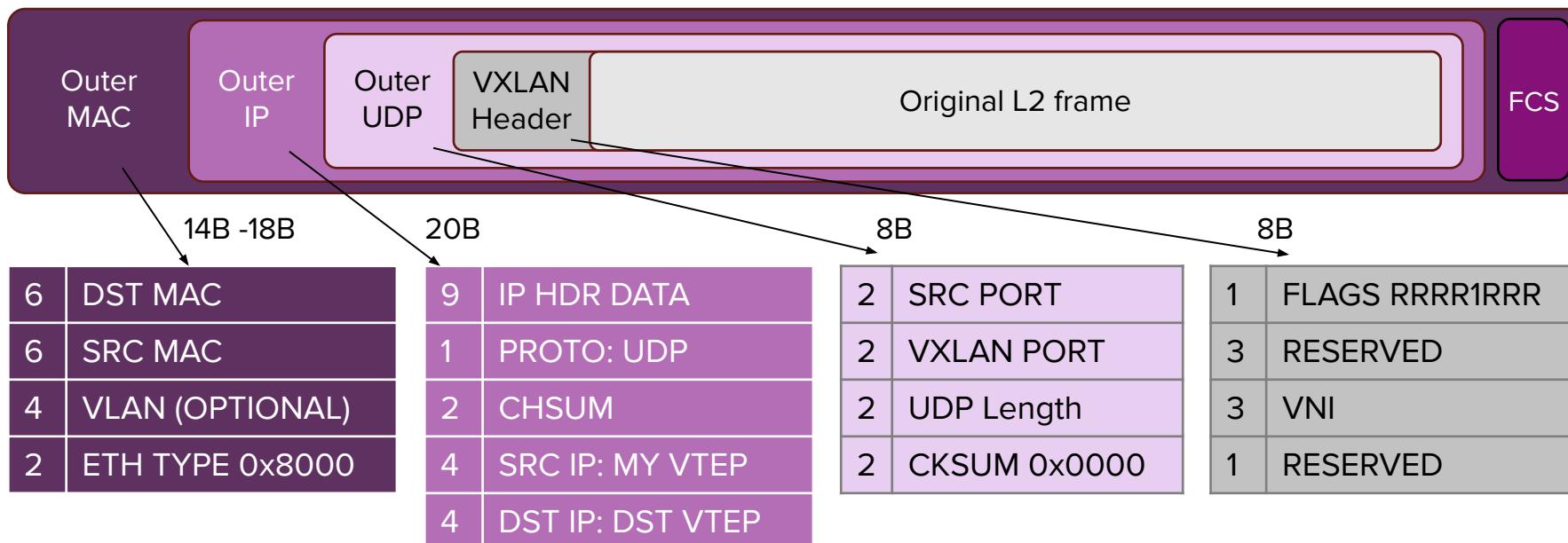
# VXLAN

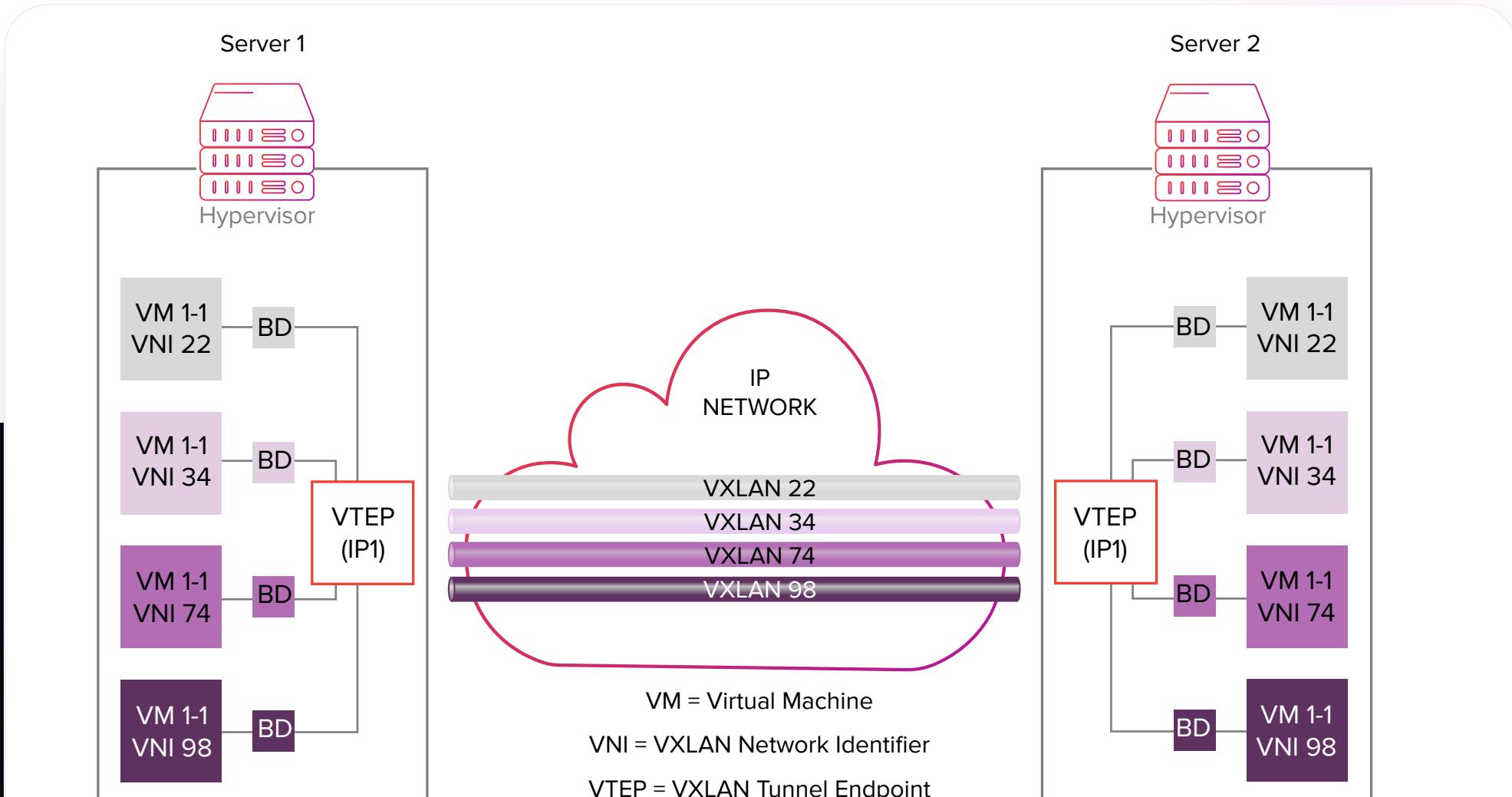
Virtual Extensible Local Area Network is a protocol for running a Layer 2 network and stretching it **over a Layer 3 network**, which can be referred to as a VXLAN segment or tunnel by utilizing **MAC-in-UDP** encapsulation.

There can be created up to 16 million VXLANs on single physical (underlay) network due to  $2^{24}$  VNI (VXLAN Network Identifier) header length.

**All of that leads to increased scalability.**

# VXLAN header encapsulated within UDP header





## VXLAN - benefits

Network Segmentation/Multitenancy - the overlay networks are completely isolated.

VXLAN can utilize Layer 3 routing - equal-cost multipath (ECMP).

Major improvement over the VLAN Layer 2 - not affected by STP, 16 million VNIs vs 4096 VLAN IDs.

# Network Disaggregation

There are technologies that allow networking software and hardware vendor decoupling.

The benefits of network disaggregation:

1

Hardware and software independence.

2

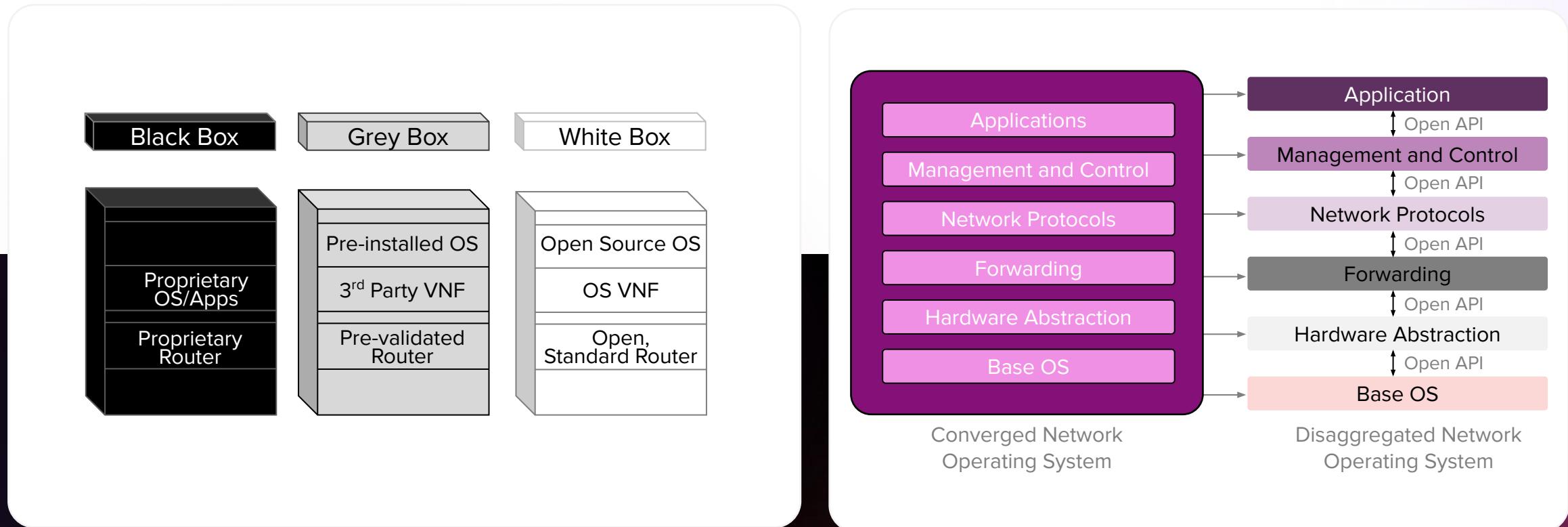
Increased scalability.

3

Open source.

4

Agility with a flexible management framework.



# SONiC Network Operating System

At RTB House we use the SoNiC® operating system  
for disaggregation purposes:

<https://sonic-net.github.io/SONiC/>

## Features:

1

All configuration is done via  
**JSON, REST, CLI**

2

Or via declarative management  
tools

3

Unified, friendly syntax

4

**One JSON to rule all  
networking configuration! ;)**

# SONiC Software for Open Networking in the Cloud



Jenkins



ANSIBLE

configuration and management tools



kubernetes



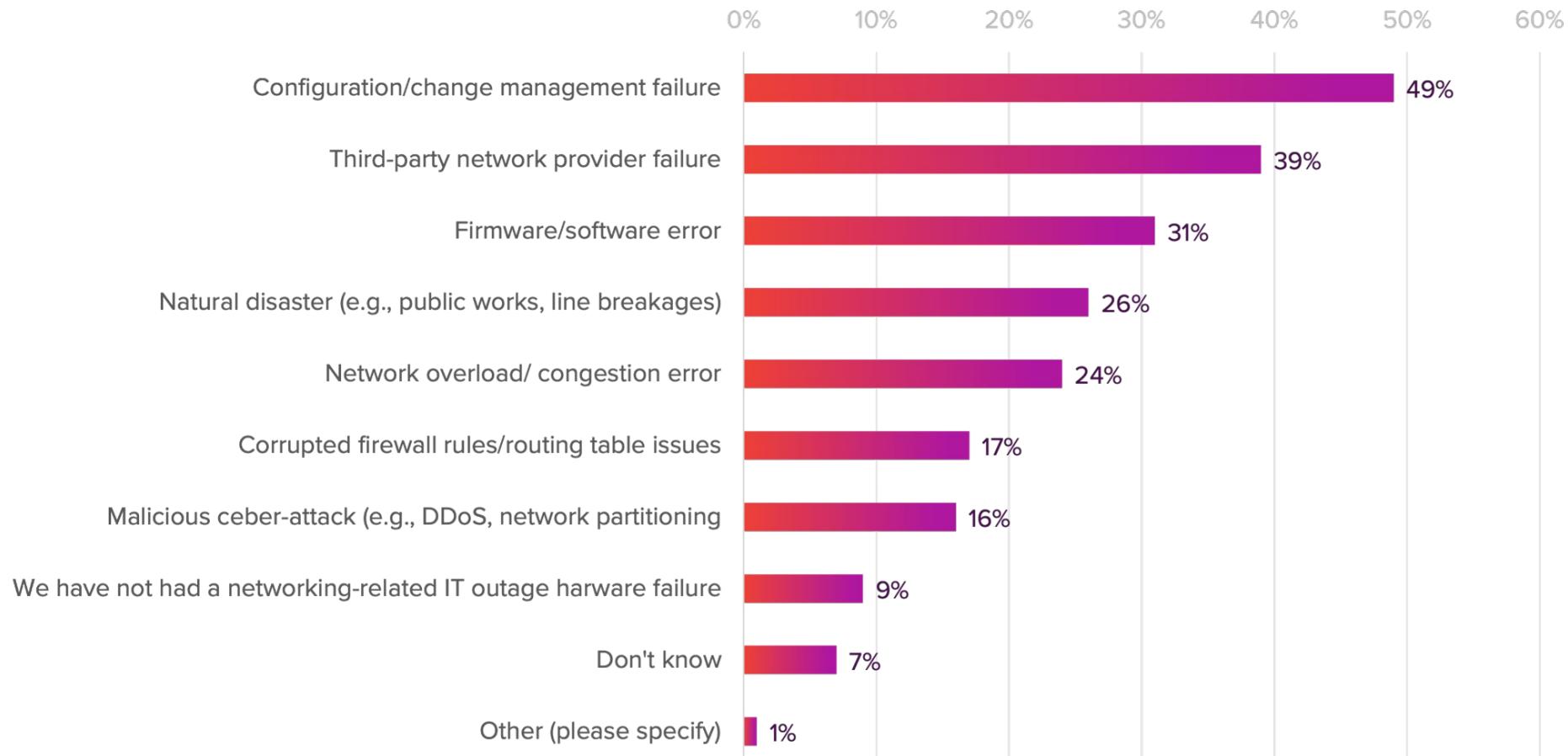
Docker SWARM



Linux

Switch Abstraction Interface (SAI)





From the following list, which are the most common root causes for the networking-related IT outages at your organization's data centers over the past three years ( Choose no more than three)

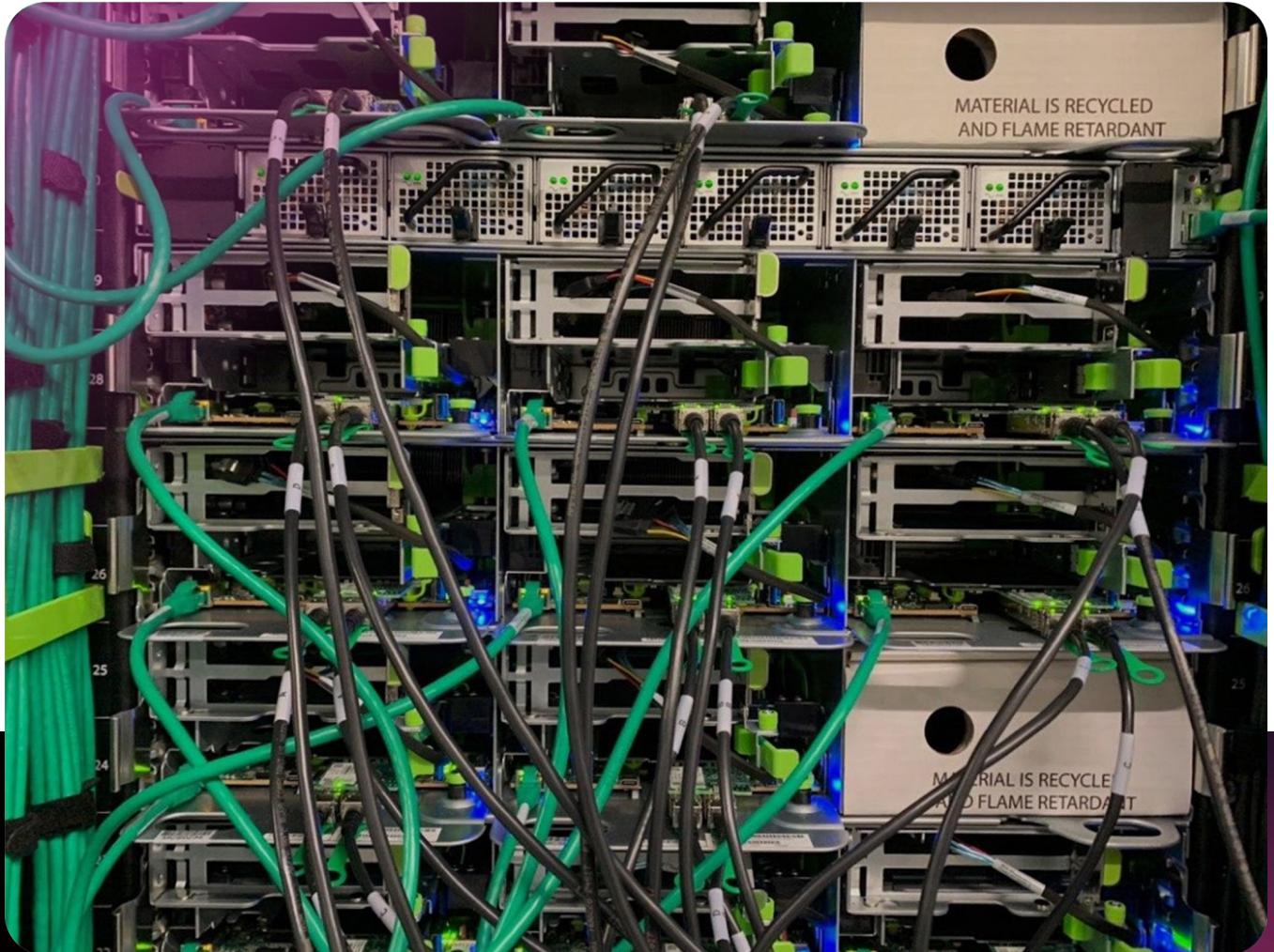
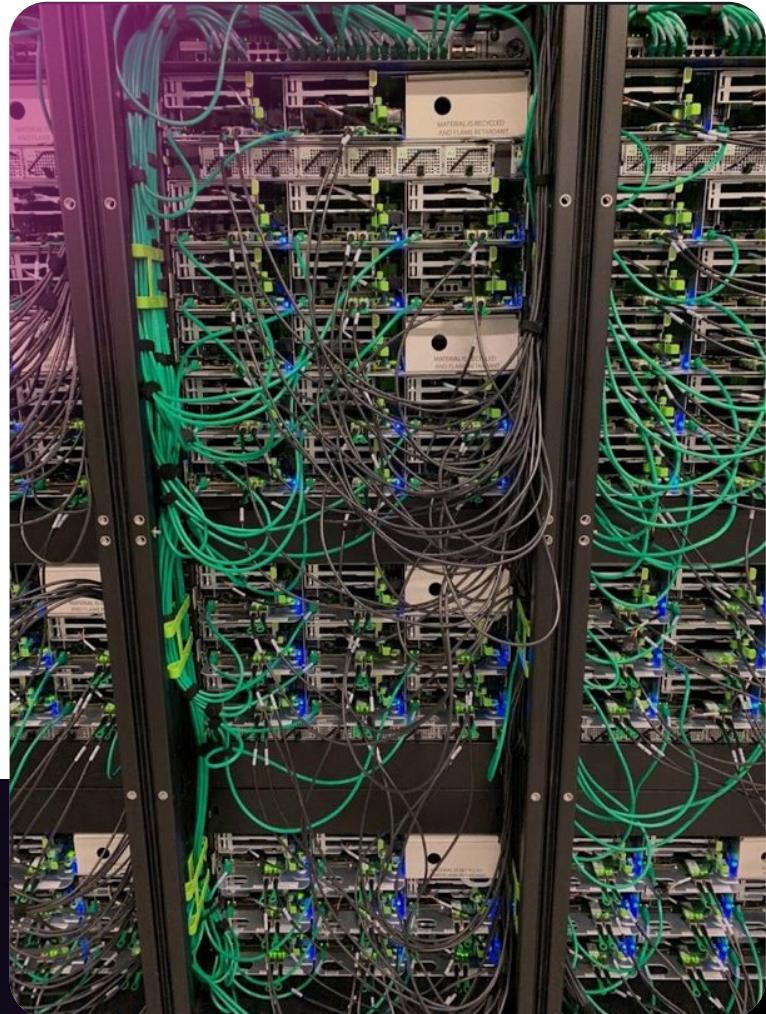
Source: Uptime Institute Data Center Resiliency survey – January 2021 ( n=153)

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And now some  
photos from  
the **RTB** House  
Data Center



RTB HOUSE =



RTBHOUSE =



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi\\_niFopp8o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi_niFopp8o)



# Thank you.

Piotr Jaczewski,  
Piotr Kowalczyk