

Building a Troubleshooting Assistant

Combing old and new automation skills to make jobs easier

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If it ain't broke you didn't try hard enough ;-)

A long time network engineer turned automation engineer. I'm passionate about modernizing infrastructure engineering and operations and telling stories about it.



You knew being the new engineer on the team would mean getting some "boring work" but this latest assignment is pretty bad. A network interface connected to a critical system has been flapping unexpectedly. You've been told to drop everything and just watch for that interface to flap. And whenever it goes down, you need to gather some details before it goes back up. Surely you can automate this?



So what do we really need to do

- Watch for operational state changes of a specific interface
 - An Ethernet interface on a Nexus 9000 switch
- When interface goes down (or up)
 - Log the date/time of the change
 - Gather outputs from the following commands
 - show interface ethernet #/#
 - show logging last 50
 - show ip arp vrf all
 - show mac address-table
 - show ip route vrf all
 - show system internal interface ethernet #/# ethernet #/# event-history
- Store the output of these commands for each event



A common manual approach to this task

- 1. Create a text file with commands to run
- 2. Log into the switch
- 3. Turn on terminal client output logging
- 4. Do one of the following
 - 1. Monitor the console for state changes
 - 2. Run "show interface" command over and over and over again
- 5. When the change happens, paste the commands into terminal
- 6. Eventually compile the data from the output log into separate records/files



How an Automation Engineer Can Tackle It

- Use programmability skills to monitor the state, capture command output, and save output
- The goal is to automate what you would manually do anyway
- Test and build your solution in a lab
 Or DevNet Sandbox if you don't have a Lab
- Result in a solution that can be used again and again



Questions to ask as we start

How can we know when the interface state changes?

Monitor the device log for changes

Where should we run the script?

Run it on the device itself

How do we gather the command output?

Included Cisco cli library

How/Where do we save the command output?

One file per event per command on the device bootflash

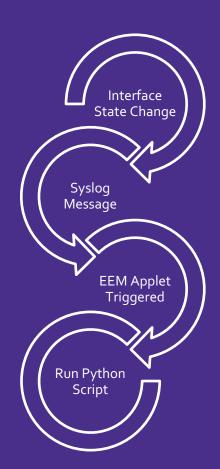
How can we know in real-time of a state change? Embedded Event Manager (EEM)

Preparing and Planning the Use Case



Overall Project Planning

- Interface state changes and generates syslog message
- EEM sees the syslog message and runs
 Python script
- Python script
 - Run command list and gather output
 - Create folder for output files
 - Write output from each command to file in folder



Considerations on Building an OnBox Python Script

- Version of Python to use
 - NX-OS 9.3(5)+ include Python 3
 - <u>Earlier versions</u> include Python 2.7
- The Cisco Python CLI API libraries only available when running on-switch
- Interactive Python Shell is a great way to test commands and scripts.
- Recommendation: Keep onbox scripts as simple as possible.

```
! NX-0S 10.1(x)
switch# python3
Python 3.7.3 (default, Nov 20 2019, 14:38:01)
[GCC 5.2.0] on linux
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license"
for more information.
>>> import cisco, cli
! NX-0S 9.2(3)
dist-sw01# python
Python 2.7.11 (default, Feb 26 2018, 03:34:16)
[GCC 4.6.3] on linux2
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license"
for more information.
>>> import cisco, cli
```

Considerations on Developing OnBox Scripts

- Split "development" and "execution" environments
- How to manage scripts for onbox execution?
- Clone repository to switch with Git
 - Requires git on the switch
 - Requires the switch have access to Git Server (DNS, routing, ACLs, etc)
 - Requires telling switch to "pull"
- Copy scripts to switch as "deployment step"
 - Requires a file transfer protocol
- Requires a "build" step that pushes updates

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- Requires a "build" step that pushes updates

```
# Copy the file to the switch
scp troubleshooting assistant.pv cisco@10.10.20.177:
User Access Verification
Password:
troubleshooting assistant.py 100% 770
                                            7.2KB/s
                                                      00:00
# Log into the switch, check for file
ssh cisco@10.10.20.177
User Access Verification
Password:
dist-sw01#
dist-sw01# dir bootflash:///troubleshooting assistant.py
770
       Jun 17 13:36:56 2021 troubleshooting assistant.py
```

Building the OnBox Python Script to Run Commands and Collect Output



Creating the Script Plan

As always, start with a plan and outline for the script

```
#! /usr/bin/env python
This is a script that will run "onbox" on a Nexus Switch
with the goal of running a series of show commands and
collecting the output into files stored into date/time
folders. One file per command.
Commands to run:
    show interface ethernet #/#
    show logging last 50
    show ip arp vrf all
    show mac address-table
    show ip route vrf all
    show system internal interface ethernet #/# ethernet
#/# event-history
Command Line Argument: Interface ID
if name__ == "__main__":
    print("Collecting show commands storing in bootflash.")
   # Collect interface ID as command line argument
   # Run commands and store output
   # Create new folder for output
   # Create a file for each command output
```

What interface to check?

- We could hardcode the interface id into the script
 - But then the script wouldn't be as useful
- Back to our skills with Argparse

Note: f-string is available Python 3.6+. To support pre 9.3.5 NX-OS using .format() instead

```
if name == " main ":
   print("Collecting show commands and storing in
bootflash.")
   # Collect interface ID as command line argument
    import argparse
   # Use argparse to determine the interface id
    parser = argparse.ArgumentParser(description='Run show
commands to assist with troubleshooting')
   parser.add argument('--interface', required=True,
    type=str, help='Interface of interest. (example: 1/1')
   args = parser.parse_args()
    print("Interface Ethernet {interface id} will be
checked.".format(interface id = args.interface))
   # Run commands and store output
   # Create new folder for output
   # Create a file for each command output
```

Building logic to run the commands

- No actual command running yet
- Two dictionaries
- One for the commands to run
- One to save the output
- Create a simple function that will gather raw and json output
- Use a print debug to view the data collected

Note: Even commands that don't include the interface_id variable can have .format() run without error.

```
def run_command(command, interface):
    Run a given command, gather both raw and JSON output.
    Return as a tuple. (output raw, output json)
    output_raw = command.format(interface_id=interface)
    output_json = command.format(interface_id=interface)
    return (output raw, output json)
# Run commands and store output
# Dict of commands to run. Key will be used for file naming
commands = {
    "show_interface": "show interface ethernet
{interface id}"
# Output Dict
output = {}
# Loop over commands to run function and save output
for label, command in commands.items():
    output[label] = run command(command, args.interface)
# for debugging, print output
print(output)
```

Run the show commands with the CLI library

- Import the cli and clid functions
 - Note: Now if you were running the script "off-box", it will no longer work

Adding the remaining commands to run

Even commands that don't include the interface_id variable can have .format() run without error.

```
# Dict of commands to run. Key will be used for file naming
commands = {
    "show_interface": "show interface ethernet {interface_id}",

    "show_logging": "show logging last 50",

    "show_ip_arp": "show ip arp vrf all",

    "show_mac_address_table": "show mac address-table",

    "show_ip_route": "show ip route vrf all",

    "show_system_internal_interface":
    "show system internal interface ethernet {interface_id} ethernet {interface_id} event-history"
}
```

Preparing for the output reports – Folder Name

- Use the <u>datetime</u> module to get the current time
 - Use <u>strftime()</u> function to build a folder_name
- The <u>os</u> library in Python provides
 functions for working with the host OS
 even a switch
 - os.mkdir() will make a new directory
- Tell users where to find the data

```
from datetime import datetime
from os import mkdir
# Output Dict
output = {}
# Loop over commands to run function and save output
for label, command in commands.items():
    pass
   # output[label] = run command(command, args.interface)
# Create new folder for output
now = datetime.now()
report timestamp = now.strftime("%Y-%m-%d-%H-%M-%S")
folder name = \
"/bootflash/ts report {timestamp} intf{interface id}".format(
    timestamp=report_timestamp,
    interface id=args.interface.replace("/", " ")
print("Output will be stored in folder
{folder name}/".format(folder name=folder name))
mkdir(folder_name)
# Create a file for each command output
```

Logic for writing the result files

- The results of each command is a 2 item tuple
- Unpack them into individual variables
- Only write out the JSON results if they exist

Writing the output files

- Use open() and "w" to create a new writeable file object
- This code is slightly redundant, creating a function here would be a good enhancement

Running the Script

- No errors...
- But is there data?

```
# OUTPUT
Collecting show commands and storing in bootflash.
Interface Ethernet 1/11 will be checked.
Output will be stored in folder /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_system_internal_interface.txt
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_ip_arp.txt
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_ip_arp.json
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_interface.txt
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_interface.json
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_ip_route.txt
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_ip_route.json
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_mac_address_table.txt
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_mac_address_table.json
Writing file /bootflash/ts_report_2021-06-17-15-37-49_interface1_11/show_logging.txt
```

Verifying the File Contents

```
dist-sw01# dir bootflash:ts report 2021-06-17-15-41-10 interface1 11
       2285
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show interface.json
       1811
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show interface.txt
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show ip arp.json
        947
        868
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show ip arp.txt
       9710
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show ip route.json
       3635
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show_ip_route.txt
       3991
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show logging.txt
       2796
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show mac address table ison
       1536
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show mac address table.txt
      40204
               Jun 17 15:41:10 2021 show system internal interface.txt
dist-sw01# show file bootflash:ts report 2021-06-17-15-41-10 interface1 11/show ip route.txt
IP Route Table for VRF "default"
'*' denotes best ucast next-hop
'**' denotes best mcast next-hop
'[x/v]' denotes [preference/metric]
'%<string>' in via output denotes VRF <string>
172.16.101.0/24, ubest/mbest: 1/0, attached
    *via 172.16.101.2, Vlan101, [0/0], 2w1d, direct
172.16.101.1/32, ubest/mbest: 1/0, attached
    *via 172.16.101.1, Vlan101, [0/0], 2w1d, hsrp
172.16.101.2/32. ubest/mbest: 1/0. attached
dist-sw01# show file bootflash:ts report 2021-06-17-15-41-10 interface1 11/show ip route.json
{"TABLE vrf": {"ROW vrf": [{"vrf-name-out": "default", "TABLE addrf": {"ROW addrf": {"addrf": "ipv4", "TABLE prefix":
{"ROW_prefix": [{"ipprefix": "172.16.101.0/24", "ucast-nhops": "1", "mcast-nhops": "0", "attached": "true", "TABLE_path":
{"ROW_path": {"ipnexthop": "172.16.101.2", "ifname": "Vlan101", "uptime": "P15DT16H28M27S", "pref": "0", "metric": "0",
"clientname": "direct". "ubest": "true"}}}. {"ipprefix":"
```

Using EEM to Monitor and React to Syslog



Embedded Event Manager: Old School Automation

- <u>EEM</u> monitors events on the device and takes configured actions
 - Event Examples: Syslog Message Command Ran, Hardware Changes
 - Action Possibilities Execute CLI, Generate Log, Generate SNMP, Call Home Action
- Available on IOS, IOS XE, IOS XR, NX-OS
 - System specific differences do exist



EEM Action Definition

What Syslog Patterns to Monitor?

- Need string match for Interface going down, and up
- Cause the event using CLI (or unplug cable if able)
- Balance the exactness of message for match

```
dist-sw01(config-if)# int eth1/11
dist-sw01(config-if)# shut

2021 Jun 17 17:35:39 dist-sw01 %ETHPORT-5-IF_DOWN_CFG_CHANGE: Interface Ethernet1/11 is down(Config change)
2021 Jun 17 17:35:39 dist-sw01 %ETHPORT-5-IF_DOWN_ADMIN_DOWN: Interface Ethernet1/11 is down (Administratively down)

dist-sw01(config-if)# no shut

2021 Jun 17 17:35:56 dist-sw01 %ETHPORT-5-IF_ADMIN_UP: Interface Ethernet1/11 is admin up .
2021 Jun 17 17:35:57 dist-sw01 %ETHPORT-5-SPEED: Interface Ethernet1/11, operational speed changed to auto
2021 Jun 17 17:35:57 dist-sw01 %ETHPORT-5-IF_DUPLEX: Interface Ethernet1/11, operational duplex mode changed to unknown
2021 Jun 17 17:35:57 dist-sw01 %ETHPORT-5-IF_DUPLEX: Interface Ethernet1/11 is up in mode access
```

Configuring EEM to Monitor Syslog

- The documentation provides examples you can build from
 - Monitor Syslog
 - Generate Syslog
 (great way to test EEM)
 - CLI Events and Actions

```
! This file contains EEM configurations for this use case
! EEM Verification Examples:
   These EEM applets will monitor for the Syslog Events for the interface
   up/down and generate a Syslog Message. These are meant to verify that
   EEM is working, seperate from the Python Script.
! Monitor for "down"
event manager applet TS Bot Eth1 11 DOWN
  event syslog pattern "Interface Ethernet1/11 is down"
  action 1 cli python bootflash:troubleshooting assistant.py --interface 1/11
! Monitor for "up"
event manager applet TS Bot Eth1 11 UP
  event syslog pattern "Interface Ethernet1/11 is up"
  action 1 cli python bootflash:troubleshooting assistant.py --interface 1/11
```

Testing EEM Action running Python Script

- 14 second difference from event to folder. Time to run the commands
- Timeout error Python command takes longer to "finish" than EEM expects

```
dist-sw01(config-if)# int eth1/11
dist-sw01(config-if)# shut
dist-sw01# show event manager events action-log
eem event time: 06/17/2021, 18:12:45 event type:cli event id:14 slot:active(1) vdc:1 severity:minor applets:TS Bot Eth1 11 DOWN
eem param info: syslog msg = "%ETHPORT-5-IF DOWN ADMIN DOWN: Interface Ethernet1/11 is down (Administratively down)"
Execution timed out for cmd(s):
          python bootflash:troubleshooting_assistant.py --interface 1/11
dist-sw01# dir bootflash: | grep ts report
       4096
               Jun 17 18:12:59 2021 ts report 2021-06-17-18-12-59 interface1 11/
dist-sw01# dir bootflash:ts_report_2021-06-17-18-12-59 interface1 11
       2277
               Jun 17 18:12:59 2021 show interface.json
       1803
               Jun 17 18:12:59 2021 show interface.txt
        946
               Jun 17 18:12:59 2021 show ip arp.json
       1536
               Jun 17 18:12:59 2021 show mac address table.txt
               Jun 17 18:12:59 2021 show system internal_interface.txt
     123514
```

Pulling Reports off the Switch



Downloading all Report Files

- Having the report files on the switch isn't that useful to diagnose
- Use scp to download all report directories in one go

```
scp -r "cisco@10.10.20.177:ts report *" ./
show logging.txt
                                                               100% 5116
                                                                             47.6KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
                                                               100% 1536
                                                                            15.4KB/s
show_mac_address_table.txt
                                                                                        00:00
show mac address table.ison
                                                               100% 2796
                                                                             27.9KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show system internal interface.txt
                                                               100% 121KB 136.5KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
                                                               100% 868
                                                                                        00:00
show ip arp.txt
                                                                             9.1KB/s
                                                               100% 9602
                                                                            93.1KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show ip route.json
show_ip_route.txt
                                                               100% 3681
                                                                             36.4KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show interface.txt
                                                               100% 1803
                                                                            18.8KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show ip arp. json
                                                               100% 946
                                                                            9.7KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
                                                               100% 2277
                                                                            21.8KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show interface ison
show logging.txt
                                                               100% 5255
                                                                            47.8KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
                                                               100% 1536
                                                                            16.5KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show_mac_address_table.txt
show mac address table.ison
                                                               100% 2796
                                                                             28.7KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show system internal interface.txt
                                                               100% 142KB 136.0KB/s
                                                                                        00:01
show ip arp.txt
                                                               100% 868
                                                                             9.3KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show ip route.json
                                                               100% 9617
                                                                             92.1KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
                                                               100% 3681
                                                                             36.5KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show_ip_route.txt
                                                               100% 1803
show interface.txt
                                                                            18.1KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
show ip arp. json
                                                               100% 937
                                                                             9.2KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
                                                               100% 2277
show interface ison
                                                                             21.1KB/s
                                                                                        00:00
```

Downloading all Report Files

- Having the report files on the switch isn't that useful to diagnose
- Use scp to download all report directories in one go

```
ls -l ts report *
ts report 2021-06-17-18-12-59 interface1 11:
total 172
-rw-r--r 1 hpreston hpreston
                                2277 Jun 17 18:42 show_interface.json
-rw-r--r-- 1 hpreston hpreston
                                1803 Jun 17 18:42 show interface.txt
-rw-r--r-- 1 hpreston hpreston
                               946 Jun 17 18:42 show_ip_arp.json
-rw-r--r 1 hpreston hpreston
                               868 Jun 17 18:42 show ip arp.txt
-rw-r--r 1 hpreston hpreston
                                9602 Jun 17 18:42 show ip route.json
-rw-r--r-- 1 hpreston hpreston
                                3681 Jun 17 18:42 show ip route.txt
-rw-r--r-- 1 hpreston hpreston
                                5116 Jun 17 18:42 show logging.txt
                               2796 Jun 17 18:42 show_mac_address_table.json
-rw-r--r-- 1 hpreston hpreston
-rw-r--r 1 hpreston hpreston
                                1536 Jun 17 18:42 show mac address table.txt
-rw-r--r-- 1 hpreston hpreston 123514 Jun 17 18:42 show system internal interface.txt
ts report 2021-06-17-18-16-27 interface1 11:
total 240
-rw-r--r 1 hpreston hpreston
                                2277 Jun 17 18:42 show interface json
-rw-r--r 1 hpreston hpreston
                                1803 Jun 17 18:42 show_interface.txt
-rw-r--r 1 hpreston hpreston
                                 937 Jun 17 18:42 show ip arp. ison
-rw-r--r-- 1 hpreston hpreston
                                 868 Jun 17 18:42 show ip arp.txt
-rw-r--r-- 1 hpreston hpreston
                                9617 Jun 17 18:42 show ip route.json
-rw-r--r 1 hpreston hpreston
                                3681 Jun 17 18:42 show ip route.txt
```

Viewing the Data Files

```
"TABLE mac address": {
      "ROW mac address": [
                                                        o summer2021-devasc-prep-troubleshooting-assistant > ts_report_2021-06-17-18-12-59_interface1_1
       "disp mac addr": "0000.0c07.ac0a".
                                                             Showing output for single interface: Eth1/1
          "disp type": "static",
                                                             lacp]
         "101".
                                                               FSM:<Ethernet1/1> Transition at 131304 usecs after Tue Jun 1 23:12:14 2021
                                                                Previous state: [LACP ST PORT IS DOWN OR LACP IS DISABLED]
             ··· disp age": "-".
                                                          5
                                                                Triggered event: [LACP EV LACP ENABLED AND PORT UP]
  9
         ...."disp_is_secure": "F",
                                                                Next state: [LACP ST DETACHED LAG NOT DETERMINED]
      "F",
 10
      "disp port": "vPC Peer-Link(R)"
 11
                                                          8
      ....},
 12
                                                          9
                                                             lacpl
 13
                                                               FSM:<Ethernet1/1> Transition at 133006 usecs after Tue Jun 1 23:12:15 2021
                                                         10
 14
      ...."disp_mac_addr": "0000.0c07.ac0a",
                                                         11
                                                                Previous state: [LACP_ST_DETACHED_LAG_NOT_DETERMINED]
      "disp type": "static",
 15
                                                                Triggered event: [LACP_EV_PERIODIC_TRANSMIT_TIMER_EXPIRED]
                                                         12
      ...."102",
 16
                                                         13
                                                                Next state: [FSM ST NO CHANGE]
                                                         14
      ... "disp_age": "-",
 17
                                                         15
             "F",
 18
                                                         16
                                                             lacp]
 19
      "disp is ntfy": "F",
                                                         17
                                                               FSM:<Ethernet1/1> Transition at 136146 usecs after Tue Jun 1 23:12:16 2021
      "vPC Peer-Link(R)"
 20
                                                         18
                                                                Previous state: [LACP ST DETACHED LAG NOT DETERMINED]
 21
                                                         19
                                                                Triggered event: [LACP EV PERIODIC TRANSMIT TIMER EXPIRED]
 22
                                                         20
                                                                Next state: [FSM ST NO CHANGE]
 23
      ...."disp_mac_addr": "0000.0c07.ac0a",
                                                         21
 24
      "disp type": "static",
                                                         22
 25
      ...."103".
                                                         23
                                                             lacp]
                                                         24
                                                               FSM:<Ethernet1/1> Transition at 139970 usecs after Tue Jun 1 23:12:17 2021
 26
      ...."-"."disp age": "-".
                                                         25
                                                                Previous state: [LACP ST DETACHED LAG NOT DETERMINED]
         "F",
 27
                                                         26
                                                                Triggered event: [LACP EV PERIODIC TRANSMIT TIMER EXPIRED]
      "disp is ntfy": "F",
 28
                                                         27
                                                                Next state: [FSM ST NO CHANGE]
      "disp_port": "vPC Peer-Link(R)"
 29
                                                         28
 30
                                                         29
                                                         30
                                                             lacp]
```

Closing



Considerations on this Use Case

- EEM + Python is not the only way this could have been done
 - There is nearly always more than one way to accomplish a task
- Important to balance reusable code vs hard coded elements
 - Interface ID is an argument to script
 - Interface ID is hard coded into EEM
 - Command list is hard coded into script
- Consider the impact of running a script like this. Overwhelming the management plane is possible.

- Deploying the EEM configuration could have been automated
 - Ansible, pyATS, NETCONF/RESTCONF
- When to automate depends on the overall value in scale/consistency
- This use case could be done with other platforms with adjustments to EEM configuration and Python code
 - Building a platform agnostic solution is likely possible

Webinar Resources

- Code for this use case on GitHub and Code Exchange
 - Cisco NSO Reservable Sandbox
- DevNet Associate Prep Program
 - More detailed walkthrough of this use case available along with other example use cases
- DevNet Associate Exam Topics List

- Cisco NX-OS EEM Guide
- Cisco NX-OS Python API Guide



