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December 11, 2012

EMC Joins OpenStack



Today, our EMC logo went up on the [OpenStack Foundation's web site](#) as a corporate level sponsor.

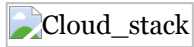
You'll see [many other logos up](#) there as well -- all good. I'm sure each participant sees OpenStack through their own lens.

With this post, hopefully I can share a bit of EMC's perspective and motivations.

Because -- as with most things -- the pattern should be familiar by now.

What's This All About?

If you're going to build a cloud, you're going to need a "cloud stack" -- an integrated suite of software capabilities that perform the necessary functions: provisioning, monitoring, etc. No cloud stack, no cloud.



From an industry perspective, VMware is arguably been first and best in delivering production-level "cloud stack" capabilities using a robust enterprise-class model. But markets demand choices, and cloud software is no exception.

Microsoft, in particular, has done an excellent job recently of enhancing their capabilities around Hyper-V and Azure. Their enhanced capabilities means that more customers are starting to use them in their environments.

And for quite some time, we've done a lot to integrate EMC's capabilities into Microsoft's cloud stack -- more to be done, but good progress to date.

But what about open source?

Much like Linux has matured into a serious enterprise operating environment, OpenStack is visibly on much the same trajectory. And the OpenStack Foundation is the key industry nexus point for the evolution of a growing number of different-flavored distributions and editions.

But there's something more going on here ...

More Customers Are Raising Their Hands

Over the last year, we've been informally talking with customers and partners about their interest in OpenStack. *The surprising thing is just how much serious interest has emerged in the last six months or so.* It's gone from a small handful of devotees to a much larger crowd of enterprise IT shops and IT service providers who now have the technology on their roadmap in one form or another.

To be sure, everyone has their eyes open around the current state of maturity in the various distributions. Nobody seems to think it's a shrink-wrap, bulletproof experience these days -- indeed, most people using the environment today are doing a fair bit of coding :)

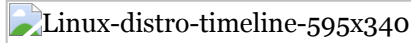
But you can see where it's going.

A Familiar Plot -- At Least To Me



I ran a small technology alliances team here at EMC back in the early 2000s -- just as Linux was starting to move from lab experiment to something you might want to put into production someday. Because it was open source, Linux didn't really fit into the traditional partnership model we had at the time.

Fortunately, I had a very bright co-worker who helped to pull together an overall game plan for EMC to participate in the evolution of Linux: drive the necessary technology integration, join and contribute to the right community projects, and narrow in on a subset of distros to focus on.



Later, that was complemented by extensive validation work in EMC's eLab.

We produced reference architectures that made it easier to stand stuff up and get results with less effort.

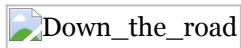
We built APIs and interfaces into key areas. We started to progressively port EMC's software portfolio so it ran natively and comfortably under the popular distros.

We educated our sales force, presales and customer service teams to understand this new environment, and how it was different.

Here's the point: once we had made the decision to fully embrace Linux, it was only a matter of a year or so, and we were mostly there: we could support our growing number of customers and partners who were starting to deploy Linux -- making it easier, making it better, and so on.

Perhaps -- in some small way -- EMC's visible commitment to Linux at the time gave credibility and confidence to those who were looking to move in that direction.

It's Happening Again -- As It Should



In some ways, EMC joining OpenStack signifies the start of a very similar journey, and with many similar elements. We join the key projects and communities and contribute. We invest in specific interfaces that are relevant to EMC's storage business (e.g. Cinder to begin with, but obviously more over time). We hone in on a handful of popular distros, and make sure they're qualified and supported, that our value-add works well in these environments, and so on.

All of this takes time -- but I never cease to be amazed by how quickly things happen once EMC makes a decision to do something. Like our [cohorts at VMware](#), we've made our decision -- and the rest will follow relatively quickly.

That is, if past experience is any guide :)

So, What Does This Mean?

Over time, we believe that OpenStack-based distributions will be considered by more IT organizations -- just like Linux before it. The per-customer specifics will vary widely based on all sorts of factors, but it's hard to argue the macro trend.

Some may look at all of this, and wonder why we're doing it. After all, *what does this mean to your storage business, your VMware business, etc. ?*

I think the answer is fairly straightforward.

EMC is in the business of making our customers and partner successful.

And if they're starting to look at OpenStack-based distros as one of their potential roads forward -- *well, we want to be there for them.*

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