OpenFlow and SDN: Networking's Future?

Will the future of networking be defined by software? That seemed to be the consensus of those in attendance at the inaugural Open Networking Summit, according to Jim Duffy's article "OpenFlow and SDN: Networking's future?" on Network World.

The Open Networking Summit is a conference dedicated to software-defined networking (SDN) and OpenFlow, the open source API (application-programming interface) defined to enable multivendor switches and routers to be programmable.

Put together by host Stanford University and the Open Networking Foundation (ONF), an organization formed to standardize OpenFlow and SDN, the conference was attended by engineers from Web companies like Google, Facebook and Yahoo as well as service providers, systems vendors, startups and academia.

"This is no longer a research project," said Dan Pitt, vice chairman of the summit and executive director of the ONF. "It enables customers and users to do things they could not do before."

And that is, program a network as if it were a computer. OpenFlow allows a network to be configured or manipulated through software, which then opens it up to further innovation, conference participants said.

With OpenFlow/SDN, users can customize networks to local needs, eliminate unneeded features and create virtual, isolated networks, says Nick McKeown, professor of electrical engineering and computer science at Stanford.

It won't happen overnight though. OpenFlow and SDNs are just making it out of research labs and into production, so it could be years before the technology can manifest itself in any meaningful way in production environments.

Written for Evolving Solutions, an IT Consulting and Services company. This post is no longer on their blog.