Future Group Deploys Service Oriented Network Architecture (SONA) to Boost Productivity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Future Group • Retail
BUSINESS CHALLENGE • Enable an efficient and effective integrated retail management solution
NETWORK SOLUTION • Implementation of Cisco Service Oriented Network Architecture (SONA)
BUSINESS RESULTS • Future Group can now use the strength of their network to connect with consumers, collaborating more effectively with employees, maintaining security, and reduce operating costs.

Customer Background

Future Group is one of India's leading business houses with multiple businesses spanning across the consumption space. While retail forms the core business activity of Future Group, group subsidiaries are present in consumer finance, capital, insurance, leisure and entertainment, brand development, retail real estate development, retail media and logistics.

Their mission is to share the vision and belief that their customers and stakeholders shall be served only by creating and executing future scenarios in the consumption space leading to economic development. They also aim to be trendsetters in evolving delivery formats, creating retail realty, making consumption affordable for all customer segments – for classes and for masses. www.futuregroup.in

Challenges

With aggressive growth projections for the next 3 – 5 years the IT team had to adopt a strategy that would allow them to rapidly scale the network from 100 outlets to 3000 outlets. Reliability, security and availability were very important considerations as the business would rely heavily on its IT infrastructure.

Future group relied on an integrated network composed of multiple proprietary solutions- they had a distributed data center operation that allowed limited scalability and support for Strategic Business Unit. The complex architecture did not allow for virtualization, hence leading to low resource utilization and increased power consumption. In addition, performance and SLA management was a challenge. The lack of an efficient and effective integrated retail management solution resulted in an overly complex technical environment that impeded employee productivity.

Network Solution

The Service Oriented Network Architecture (SONA) is Cisco's architectural approach to designing advanced network capabilities into the infrastructure. The importance of having good network architecture helps ensure that business strategy and IT investments are aligned. As the backbone for IT communications, the network element of enterprise architecture is increasingly critical. SONA provided Future Group with guidance, best practices, and blueprints for connecting their network services and applications to enable business solutions.

The foundation of SONA is built on two core layers – First is the Network Systems layer which consists of foundational network designs and related essential services that create basic building blocks for the network infrastructure. In essence, this layer provides a sound technical blueprint for designing network modules or building blocks that can deliver flexibility, security, resilience, scalability, and performance.

Second is the Integrated Network Services layer, which is the most important layer build in the framework. This layer establishes guidelines to enable, accelerate, and optimize applications deployment. Integrated Network Services can also be categorized into two general service types – transparent services and exposed services. Transparent services can be used to accelerate or optimize the manner in which applications run across the network, and are characteristic of transport type services. Transparent

services operate in a manner that is transparent to application-level functions and systems. Some examples of transparent services include:

- Dynamic Routing
- Switching and VLANs
- Server Load Balancing
- MPLS and MPLS VPNs
- Firewalls
- Intrusion Detection System (IDS) and Intrusion Prevention System (IPS)
- Wide Area Application Services (WAAS) such as Payload Compression

Exposed services on the other hand are designed to interact with application-level systems by providing accessible interfaces in the form of APIs and published protocols. In fact it is the exposed services that allow the enterprise network architects and software systems developers to tap into the information, state, and visibility of the network for services and data not readily available from other systems. These services can return information or trigger the performance of actions within the network, and can be accessed through external systems and software through public interfaces.

Business Results

Because SONA is an open framework for network-based services, it allowed Future Group to achieve the following business results –

- A Service Oriented Data Center
- Consolidation, virtualization and business continuity
- Optimal performance and low power consumption
- Ability to turn on services instantly, and operate those services at line rate without compromising network performance or availability (service on demand)
- Scale to include all SBUs and meet future growth projections
- Scale to manage hyper growth
- Was able to roll out a highly efficient and effective service delivery
- Enable mobility and uniformity of experience
- Security and Compliance
- Be more responsiveness, flexibility and resilience
- Better Time-to-Service
- And contribute to their green initiative

Choosing Cisco

> “After implementing Cisco’s service oriented network architecture, Future Group was able to easily integrate access to information for every user, including employees, customers, and suppliers. Security, management, rich connectivity, video, media, mobility, voice, and identity services. As a result, we could provide users with access to the information and people that they need, at any time and with any device. This also enabled us to execute new retail strategies and implement new applications far more rapidly, easily, and cost-effectively than ever before.”
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> — **Ushir Bhatt**