

IPv6 : Opportunity for the Channel

By Aritra Sarkhel, ChannelWorld India on Nov 16, 2012

The transition to IPv6 isn't news. But that it represents an untapped business opportunity for solution providers is.



Way back in 1973, Bob Kahn and Vint Cerf created the IPv4 platform. Over the next few years it became known as a path-breaking platform for its ability to cater to a sea of users.

A lot has happened since then.

The exponential increase in the number of the Internet's users has led to the exhaustion of 32-bit IPv4 addressees. This has necessitated the introduction of a new platform: IPv6.

None of this is news. But here's what is: The transition represents a revenue-spinning opportunity for channel partners. But only if they can figure out in what form the opportunity comes in and where to find it.



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—BENOY C.S.,
DIRECTOR, ICT PRACTICE, FROST &
SULLIVAN, SOUTH ASIA & MIDDLE EAST

The V6 Engine

Theoretically speaking, the 128-bit IPv6 platform can support a gargantuan 340 duodecillion IP addresses. An increasingly tech-savvy economy like India, with an Internet-user population of 121 million and growing at about 40 percent a year, is going to want a lot of those addresses. At the same time, there's an explosion in the number of people accessing the Internet using mobile phones.

"IPv6 adoption in India has become a priority because of the explosion of devices in the market which are constantly connected to the Internet. Devices at home or at offices are all connected to the Internet. Even automobiles are connected. Enterprises in India are looking towards upgrading their network equipment so that they are ready for future platforms," says Benoy C.S., director, ICT practice, Frost & Sullivan, South Asia & Middle East.

Soumyadeep Roy Chowdhury, research associate, Netscribes, agrees that mobility is going to drive IPv6 adoption. "The enterprise mobility trend is gradually catching up with a number of industries in India. IPv6 provides superior security enhancements and makes associated business operations less cost intensive," he says.

The Channel Play

On the ground, however, it isn't like IPv6 is at the top of a CIO's to-do list. But that's where the channel can make a difference, says Chowdhury. "Channel partners can play a crucial role in IPv6 adoption in India. They can engage customers, increase awareness, and help in the readiness assessment to implement necessary measures."

To be clear, educating enterprises isn't for charity; there's money to be made in the process. "Channel partners are major beneficiaries in this upgrade and migration, and can play a role with consultancy services," says Benoy from Frost & Sullivan.

That's exactly what Hyderabad-based Shell Networks did. "When you look at the opportunity of your client wanting to migrate to IPv6 from previous platforms, you need to understand the infrastructure of the client. So, what we are doing now is IPv4 to IPv6 migration analysis of the customer's network," says director A.L. Srinath.

Ananthram V. Varayur, director, Webcom Information Technology also thinks that there's plenty of consulting potential around IPv6. "Consulting as a business opportunity is vital for our current customers and new accounts. A lot of consultancy offers are coming up for IPv6."

ROADBLOCKS TO IPV6 ADOPTION-AND IPV6 REVENUE

“ Most IPv6-compatible products are not completely bug-free and there's a lot of apprehension in terms of transitioning to these newer products as more research still needs to be done as far the security layer is concerned.”



SUNIL MEHTA, SVP & Area Systems Director-Central Asia, JWT

“ There is a scarcity of IPv-trained professionals in India. Also, the level of awareness among enterprise senior management is low, making it difficult to convince them of the need to adopt IPv6.”

SOUMYADEEP ROY CHOWDHURY, Research Associate, Netscribes

 “ Although consultancy services for such a migration are a strategic opportunity, as a channel partner I'm not confident how much revenue I can make from consultancy because enterprise customers want consultancy for free along with product upgrades.”

ANANTHRAM V. VARAYUR, Director, Webcom Technology

The biggest challenge is compatibility issues between IPv4 and IPv6. People still aren't serious about end-to-end implementations of IPv6 right now. There is no hurry or urgency.

SUMEET PRAKASH, CEO, Emarsen Computers

What partners do is no rocket science, but it is, nevertheless, significant. They run a detailed study of a customer's network infrastructure and inform them of what's needed to make a transition to a 128-bit based IPv6 platform. "We plan to help customers with their queries related to IPv6's importance for the enterprise and how they should ideally make this transition," says Varayur.

In Bangalore, Peak XV Networks took the consulting gig one step further when it deployed IPv6-ready infrastructure for a retail company in the Middle-East. “We analyzed their network infrastructure and found that most of their equipment was only IPv4 compatible. To prepare them for the future, we helped them with an IPv6 transition across 30 locations in the Middle-East, and ensured that their entire network is IPv6 ready,” says Deepak Hoskere, MD, Peak XV Networks.

Similarly, Noida-based Emarsion Computers profited when it helped an MNC, working in the white goods space, migrate its existing network infrastructure to IPv6 across its branches worldwide. Sumeet Prakash, CEO, Emarsion Computers, points out that there are two opportunities in the IPv6 realm: network expansion and compliance.

The Government Push



“A lot of services will be engaged to ensure a robust and efficient transition, which gives integrators a massive opportunity to rake in profits”

—SURESH MISHRA,
CEO, WIZERTECH INFORMATICS

One vertical that’s investing in getting ready for IPv6 is the Indian government. All government websites—including state government and PSUs—are mandated to be IPv6 compliant by December 2012. An IPv6 task force was created few years ago to ensure the completion of this project.

“The task force is open to SI’s on a voluntary basis. It is not funded by the government. I am making an appeal to tier-2 and tier-3 channel partners to come forward and join the task force. This is a massive opportunity for them,” says R.M. Agarwal, deputy director general, Networks & Technologies, Department of Telecom, GoI.

Kolkata-based Wizertech Informatics facilitated an IPv6 transition for a PSU. “We did an audit for them and provided infrastructure reports and costs relating to the upgrade,” says Suresh Mishra CEO, Wizertech Informatics, who says that the margin for Wizertech’s enterprise clients is about 25 percent.

Shell Networks is also in the process of assessing the networking infrastructure of a state government department in South India. “We have already given a scope document and a bid to the client. We are focusing on this opportunity because it’s mandatory for state governments to be IPv6-ready,” says Srinath from Shell Networks.

The government has also approved the creation of a Centre for Innovation for IPv6, which will be functional in a couple of years. This will invite more system integrators’ and private entrepreneurs to join forces and assist the GoI in this migration. “We shall invite more such companies. This is going to be a PPP model (Public Private Partnership),” says Agarwal.

Migration to IPv6 is inevitable. It’s now up top channel partners to turn it into a profitable venture. “A lot of services will be engaged to ensure a robust and efficient transition, which gives integrators a massive opportunity to rake in profits,” says Wizertech.