Platform9 on KVM in General Availability; Launch of VMware Beta Program

It is an exciting day for the team at Platform9 as they announce the general availability (GA) of their product for KVM hosts, and much more. The concept of private cloud on existing infrastructure was what really raised my interest in Platform9 when I had the opportunity to cover their launch in August of 2014.

Platform9 at Tech Field Day

I would be remiss if I didn't also mention that Platform9 co-founders Sirish Raghuram and Madhura Maskasky were presenters at the recent Tech Field Day, Virtualization Field Day 4 in Austin. There was a networking event during the week that I attended with my team from Turbonomic, and had some time to chat with Sirish and Madhura about the company and how things are going.

Driven by Simplicity, Powered by Demand

As part of the core tenets of their business, Platform9 is built to deliver self-service on-demand infrastructure management with simplicity similar to that offered by Amazon Web Services.

This simple flow shown below gives you the view of just how simple it can be to get Platform9 enabled for your own infrastructure:

Simplicity is a key selling point. Anyone who has attempted to use vCloud, vCAC, OpenStack, and other private cloud platforms will be acutely aware of the investment in time and testing to get that infrastructure up and running. Being able to deploy Platform9 as quickly and seamlessly as possible is a leading indicator of how well this will be adopted in my opinion.

At VMworld in 2014, Platform9 ran a contest called "Test Drive" where attendees could use a lab environment running KVM with existing VMs already in place. The goal was to see how quickly and simply that the admin could deploy and enable Platform9 to manage the KVM infrastructure and discover the workloads. The top 3 competitors completed the task in around 3 minutes. This is a nod to the engineering team at Platform9 for sure!

Labeling of servers within the interface was talked about in the original beta, and this has proven to be a popular feature. Tagging of workloads allows for effective organization and management. This is something that has been long sought after by VMware administrators and linux virtualization admins alike.

KVM, Platform9, and General Thoughts on the Industry

In a conversation I had with Sirish prior to the launch, we discussed a lot of what Platform9 is doing, as well as some general discussions around the industry at large and things that the Platform9 team have discovered through the course of the earlier beta work leading to today's GA launch.

Among the things we discussed, we discovered that many customers today are running multiple products in order to move towards the goal of agility and diversity.

> Platform9 has seen good feedback that it makes sense to keep management in a single system. This has been validated by every customer during the beta release and in early discussions.

Sirish also highlighted that many of their customers have significant experience with dev/test processes. They are used to AWS and quickly onboarding users. It's natural that the primary user is a development user, and customers who and are moving to QA are now coming into the platform.

We also discussed Docker, and the growth of KVM:

> People are taking KVM more seriously. It isn't just the edge organizations who are running linux already. We think that Docker is going to also get better and customers who want to run these side-by-side will want a consistent workflow, and a single management interface.

The adoption of OpenStack and Docker will naturally grow as we ease the pain of bringing these products to the data center. This is why I have been very pleased with the work done already by Platform9, and I envision that they have a strong future ahead based on their principles.

I agreed with something Sirish brought up that Docker itself may seem disruptive, but it is in fact an incremental advance in virtualization. The move of virtualization further up the stack is what is driving people towards PaaS offerings and containers, but we are still going to be seeing traditional virtualization as a major part of the data center for a long time to come.

Of the linux derivatives driving OpenStack, top contenders seem to be CentOS, Ubuntu and RHEL (Red Hat Enterprise Linux). This validates much of what I've seen in speaking with customers, and early adopters of OpenStack.

VMware and Platform9 – Beta Program Launch

As discussed in the early roadmap, Platform9 is being build to also leverage existing infrastructure for customers running VMware vSphere as their platform of choice. While there is momentum gaining on KVM as a virtualization platform for all types and sizes of organizations, we can't ignore the amount of VMware deployments around the globe that are ideal candidates for Platform9.

As of today, the official launch of the VMware beta program is underway with 20 customers participating in that technical preview. During my chat with Sirish we talked about some of their current customers, some of whom are running VMware vSphere alongside KVM to evaluate the best of breed solution for particular workloads. This an option I am seeing many organizations go with rather than the immediate rip-and-replace of one hypervisor platform for the other.

Companies in a situation with multiple hypervisor platforms are ideal candidates for Platform9 as they can deploy quickly and manage their entire disparate infrastructure pool using a single interface. This simplicity will help enable them to get back to the point of managing workloads, rather than infrastructure.

The customers for the VMware program come from all over the globe, and are sampled from multiple industry verticals. This also highlights the diversity on the customer side that are already working with, and who are investigating private cloud options. Many customers were also

consumers of public cloud services like AWS, but have decided to bring that capability in-house in order to maximize their investment in their existing data centers, while maintaining the agility once found only in the public cloud.

Here is a video of Madhura Maskasky at Tech Field Day previewing the Platform9 integration with VMware. As you can imagine, this was exciting for the delegates to see, and I envision that excitement will extend to customers everywhere when they see the advantage of leveraging Platform9 in conjunction with their current vSphere infrastructure.

Why Platform9?

This is the classic question that anyone should ask. Just like with any infrastructure tool that you will choose to manage your data center, it is important to understand the "why?" of that choice.

Agility within your infrastructure is an enabler for better business processes. As a proponent of the people, process, technology approach, I am a firm believer that what Platform9 is doing will be a great benefit to many organizations big and small. Introducing the features of a private cloud with a fully managed product will elevate the IT operations to be able to concentrate on better development and IT consumption practices. All of this is being done to create more agility to drive business to be better at what it does best: satisfying its customers.

As shown in their press release, the pricing model is also very simple:

> Pricing and Availability Platform9 Managed OpenStack is now generally available with three tiers: Lite is a free tier for those testing or learning about OpenStack, and is limited in scale Business tier with unlimited scale is priced at $49 per CPU per month (annual subscription required) Enterprise tier for advanced features and premium support Customers can sign up for the Lite tier or start their free Business/Enterprise trial via http://www.platform9.com.

I encourage you to take the time to read more about Platform9 at their website, and you can also follow them on Twitter (@Platform9sys). Congratulations to the team on this announcement, and I look forward to seeing the results as they move towards the GA launch of their VMware offering once the beta program is completed.