Network Automation Journey

A systems engineer NetOps perspective

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Brussels

> show user

Walid Shaari

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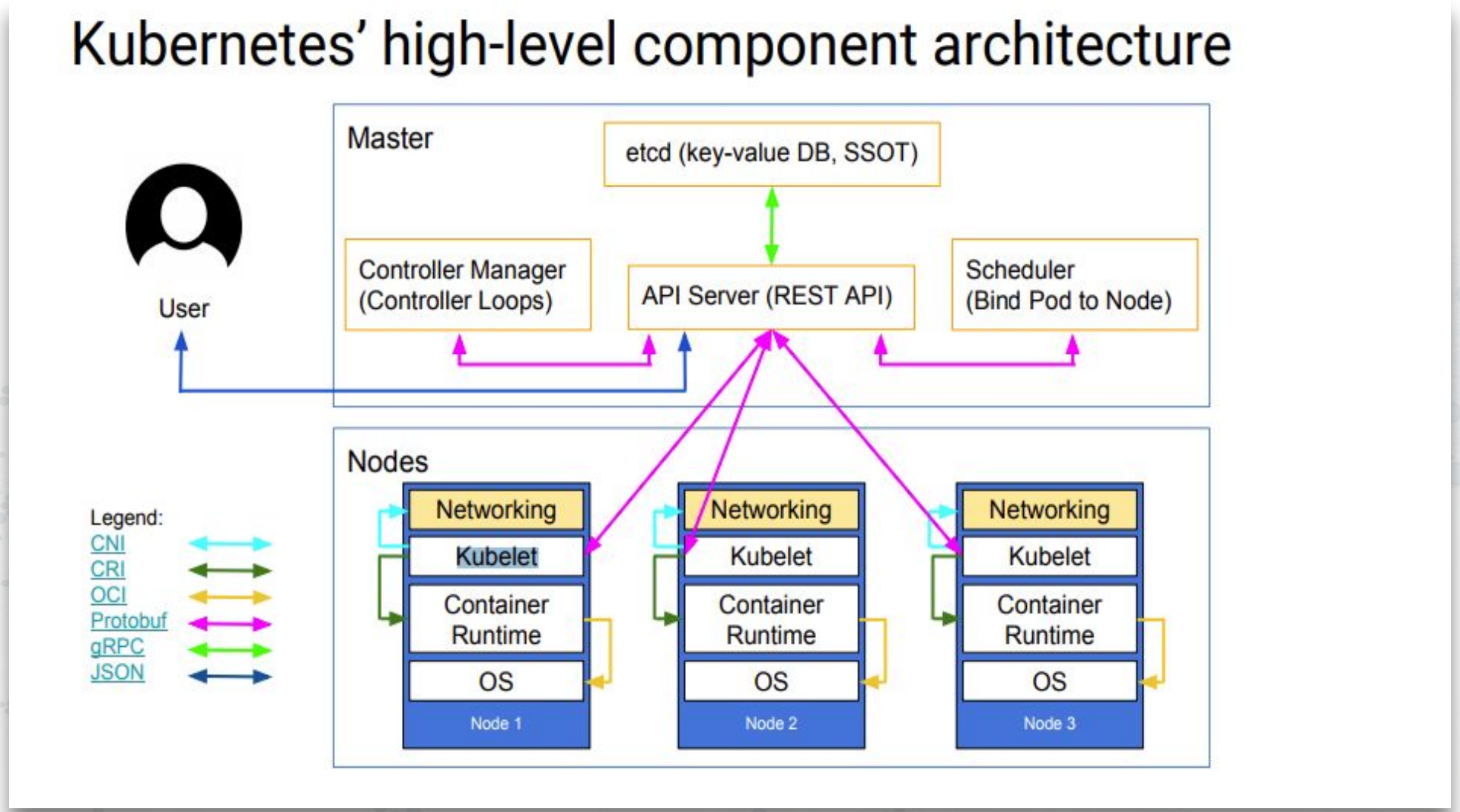
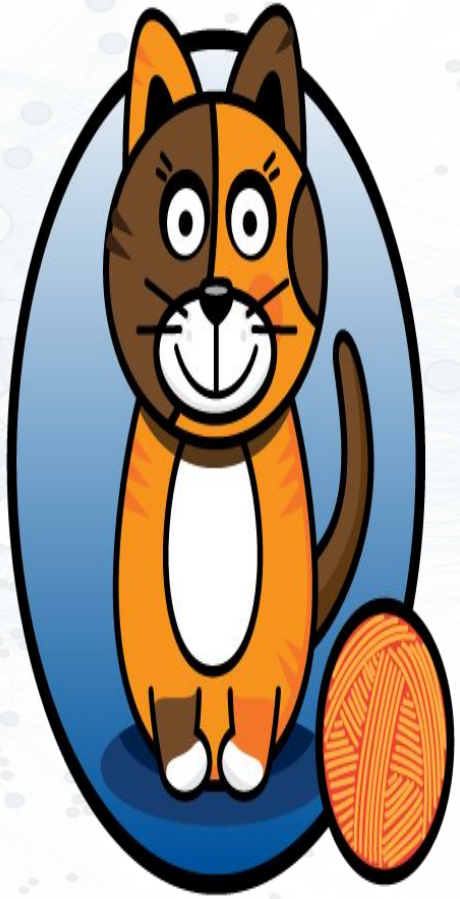
- System engineer supporting HPC Linux clusters
- Configuration management evaluation and deployment project in 2014
- Advocating open source, automation, containers and Kubernetes
- Husband and father of 3 lovely kids
- Last 3 months in short work assignment with Network management team

Incentives


Kubernetes' high-level component architecture
Master
etcd (key-value DB, SSOT)
Controller Manager
(Controller Loops)
API Server (REST API)
Scheduler
(Bind Pod to Node)
User
Nodes
Networking
Kubelet
Container
Runtime
OS
Node 1
Node 2
Node 3
Legend:
CNI
CRI
OCI
Protobuf
gRPC
JSON

- Open source and standards
- Pure Layer 3 network implementation
- Lightweight IP to IP encapsulation
- Policy based secure networking
- Scalable and simple
- Scale out SDN controller
- Openstack , Docker, Kubernetes, Mesos and CNI



PROJECT CALICO

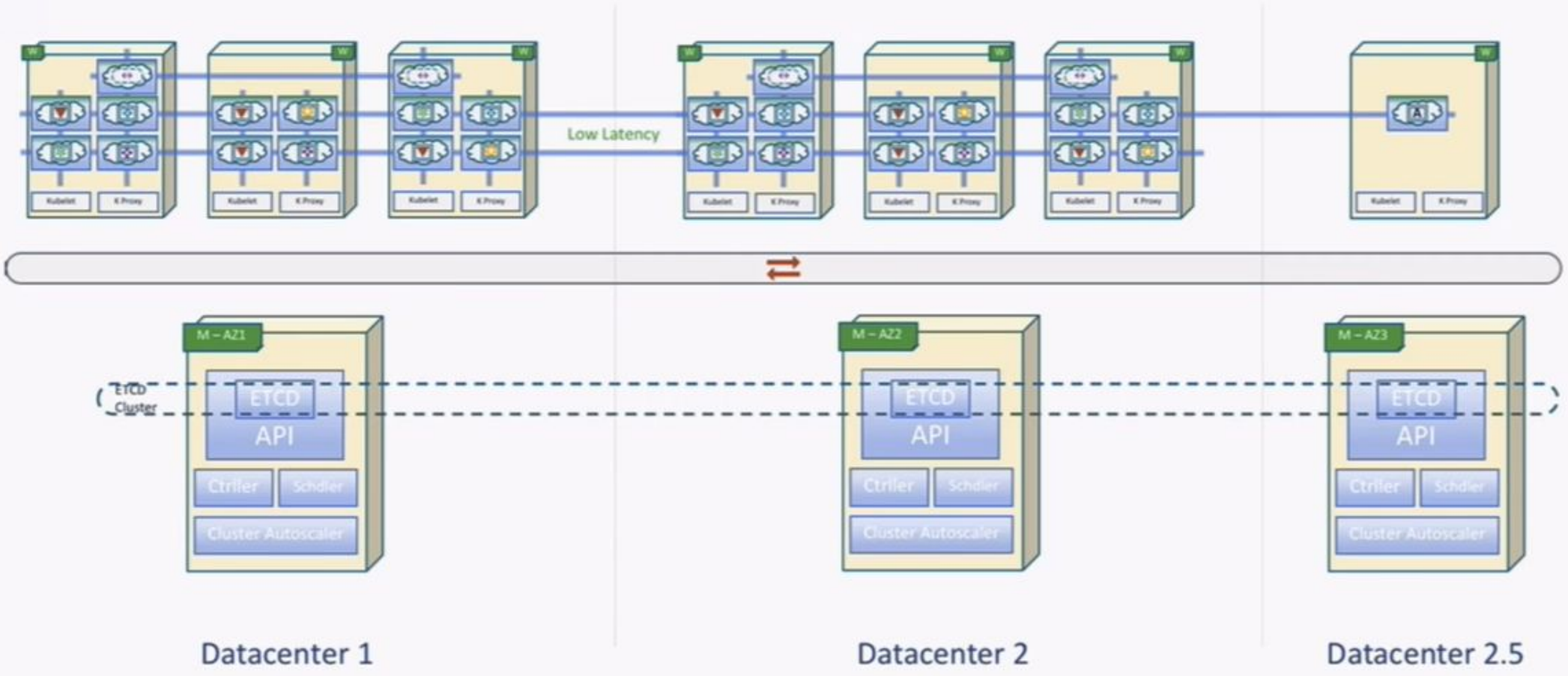
Networking setups in 2018

"In 2018, we will see more demands placed on the **continuous delivery** of changes to networking setups due to pressure from containerisation, distributed systems, and security needs. Thus, networking must become as flexible and automation-friendly as the software that runs over it, and become less of a bottleneck."

Nigel Kersten, Chief Technical Strategist at Puppet

https://www.itproportal.com/features/what-do-organisations-need-to-prepare-for-in-2018/

Multi-Datacenter Setup



How to build an event driven, dynamically reconfigurable microservices platform by Sven Beauprez:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=388&v=1D8hyLWMtfM


People
Process
Technology

Enterprise Network management trends

CLI

Cut & Paste
NPA Notepad Automation

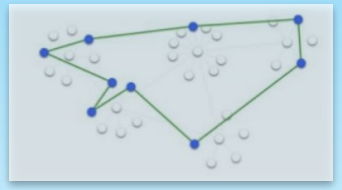
Frameworks & Controllers

- Excel
- Python jinja2
- Templating engines
- Ansible,
- Puppet
- Chef

Event Driven Automation

- Sensor triggered events
- napalm_logs
- Salt
- IFTTT
  - StackStorm
    Ansible AWX

Intent Based Networking

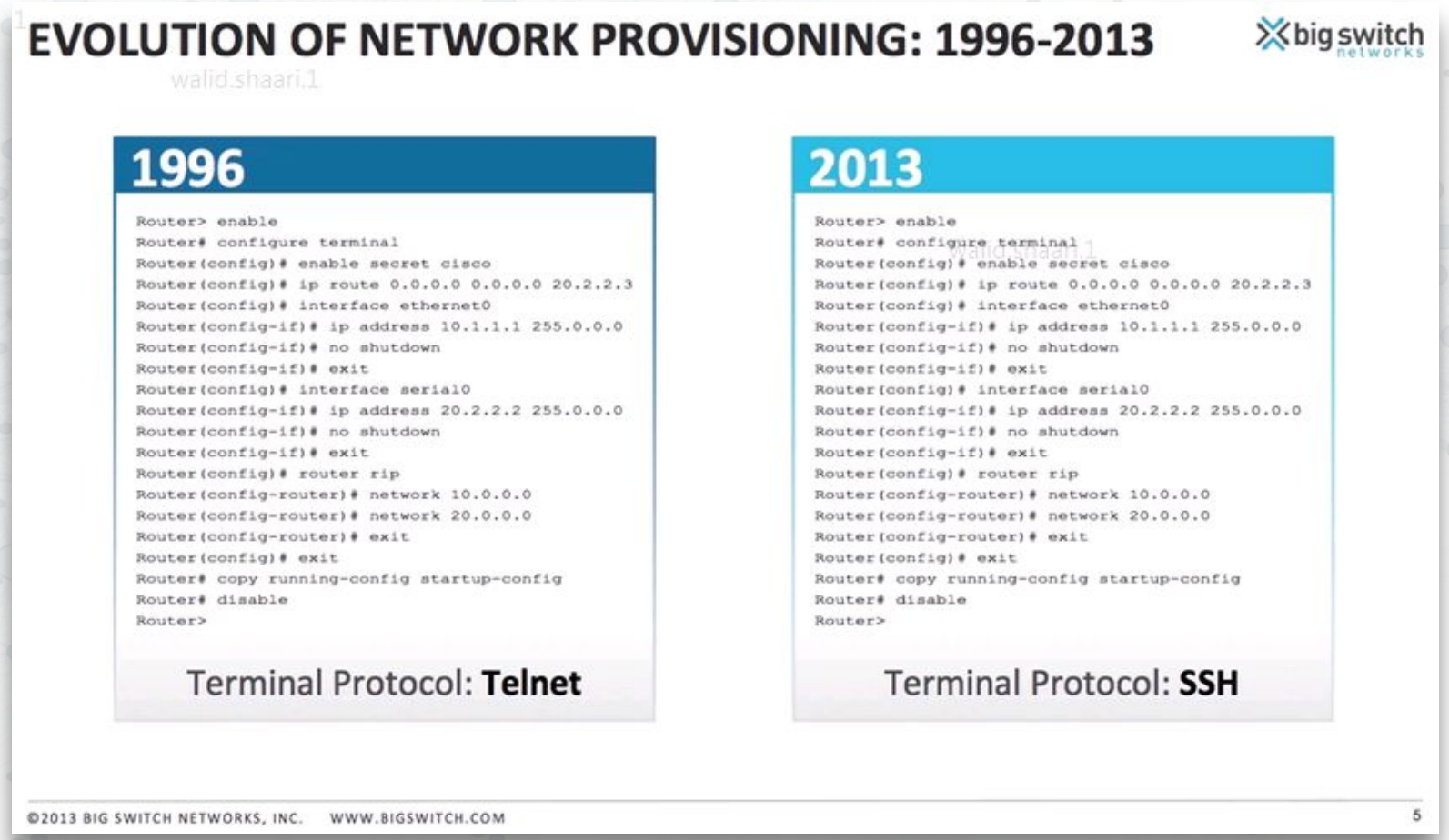


Declarative

Network Intent Composition
Aspen
Boulder

Enterprise Network management

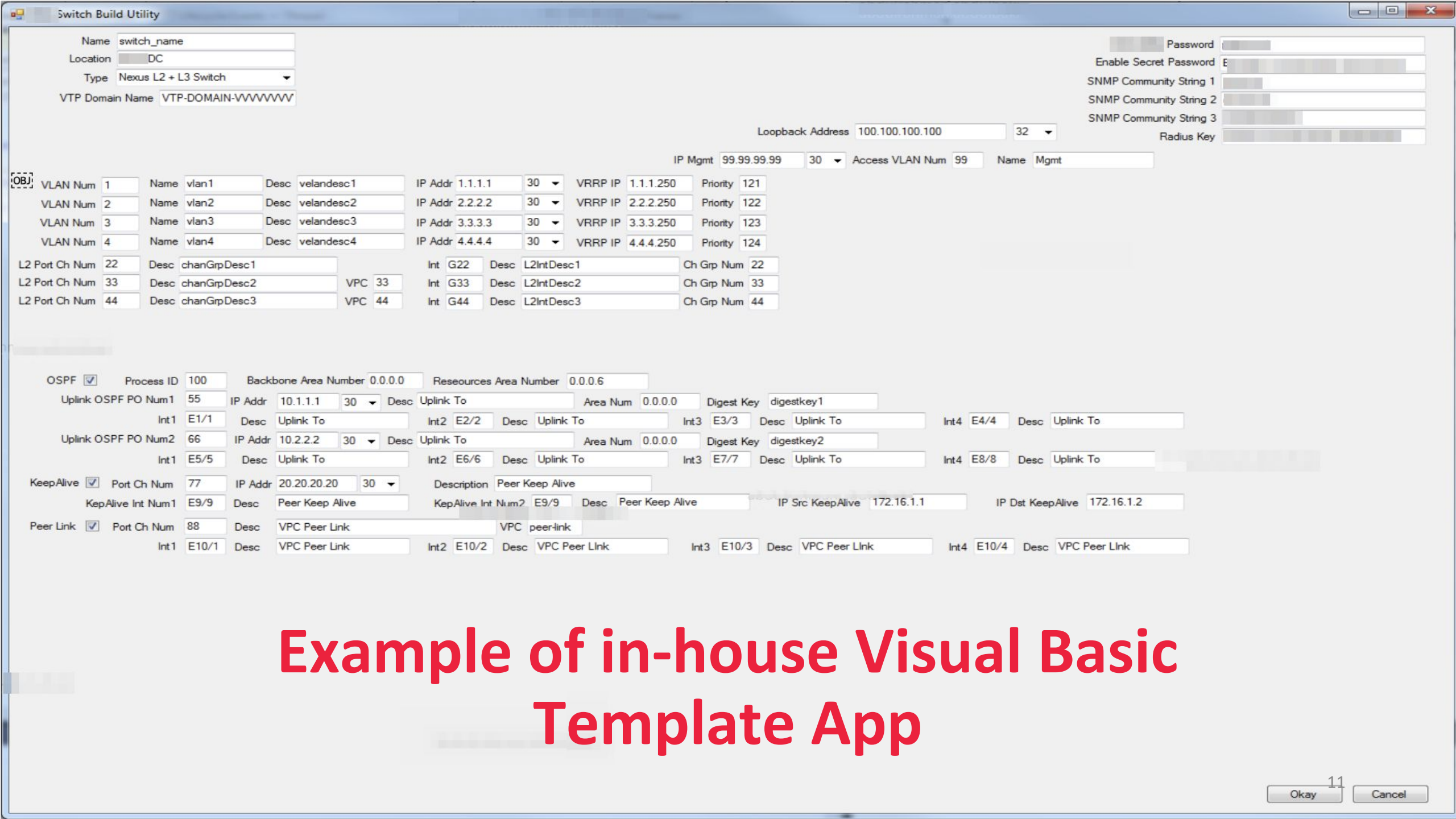
- Manual
- Cut & Paste
- Serial
- Inconsistent
- Error prone



https://www.slideshare.net/opennetsummit/ons2013-guido-appenzellerbig-switch-networks

Why we are not automating?

- Just a fad: All these are is vendor driven buzzwords, exaggerated, will fade away
- Not relevant to our setup,
  - Mixed diverse vendor and legacy platform environment, no solution can handle this, it will be cost prohibitive.
  - Do not need a bazooka to handle a mosquito. We are small
  - Busy, shortage of resources
  - None of my acquaintances in the industry is doing it.
- It is hard, steep learning curve. we need to learn a lot of new things
- Vendor advanced training e.g. CCIE teaches us differently
- This will affect our job security, automate us out of the job
- Automation pushes mistakes faster, can bring everything down
- Do not know where to start?



Example of in-house Visual Basic Template App

Kickstart: Brainstorm

- What is NetOps, NetDevOps?
- What problems we are trying to solve?
- How much visibility into operations we have?
- What are your responsibilities?
- Tasks/processes you are responsible for ?
- how much time you can set aside to look into automation?
- What current automations already in place? (processes or tools)
- Why would you like to have automations processes/tools?
- What automations you are aware of, or would like to have? processes/tools
- sharing medium, how should we enhance activity communications? (knowledge, process, updates, documentation, in-job training)
- How should we start?

Context

Team:

handful network engineers supported by handful infrastructure & cabling

Network:

Campus several building and Data Centers

Medium scale less than 200 switches

heterogeneous platforms and models:

existing tooling in place

- CMDB
- IPAM
- NMS : SNMP based

setup: Traditional Three tier architecture “Core-Distribution-Access” with extended layer 2

Frequent operational activities:

- Changes
- Troubleshooting
- New applications

constraints

Possible Business Drives

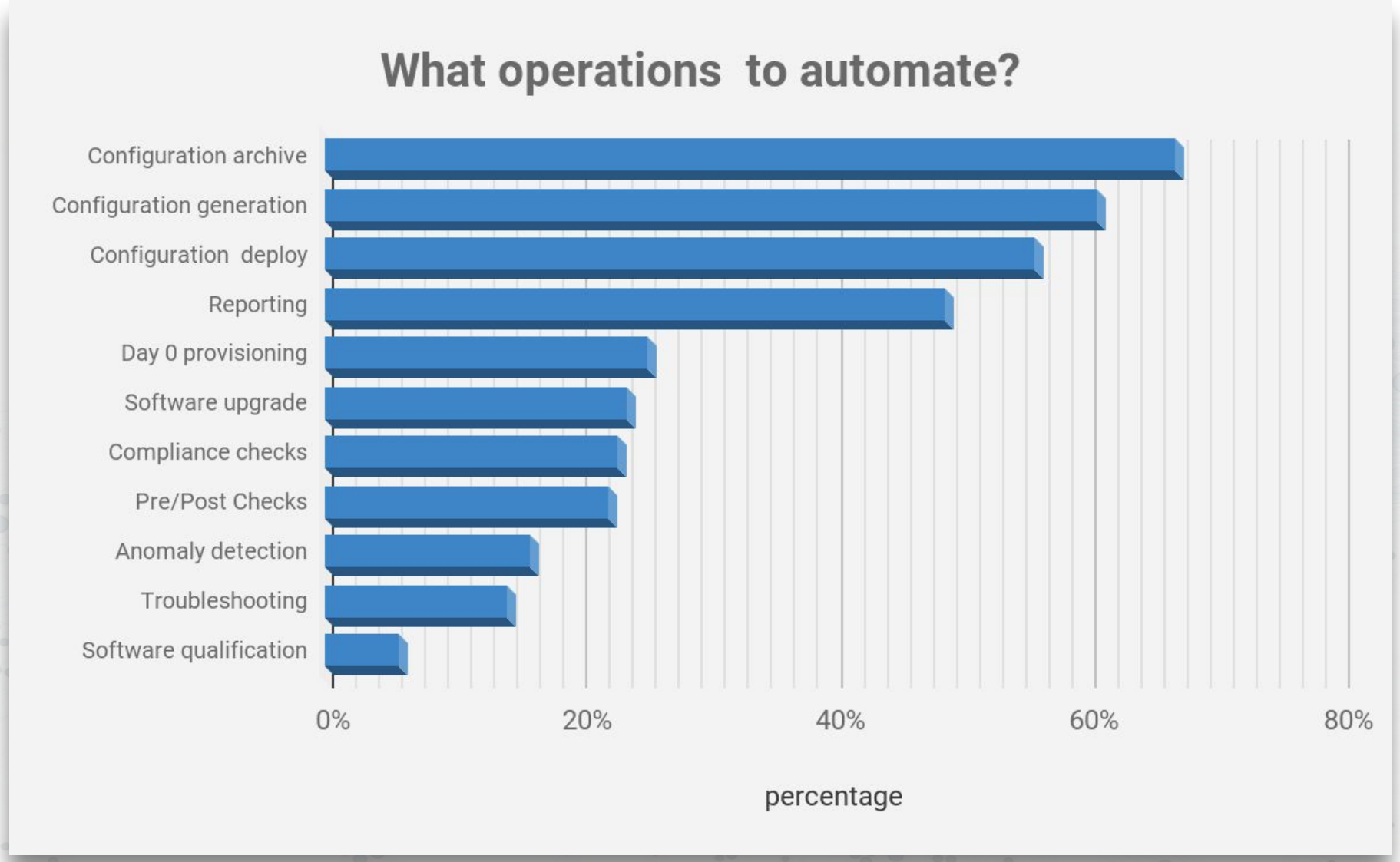
Pressing Needs:

- **Scale**: increasing environment size, scale and diversity
- **Optimization**: more to do with less engineers
- Failure management: solve new problems, guarantee level of performance and **consistency**.

Opportunities:

- 4IR: fourth Industrial revolution
  - IoT
  - Big Data
  - Digital transformations and cloud initiatives
  - Artificial intelligence and machine learning
  - Services “e.g. microservices” demand growing infrastructure and hence network scale

What to Automate?



https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdiBNMK0ZUmgBSNEaOWa-YHGQ4AlZo7EhB52_dXzvMqic3eHA/viewanalytics

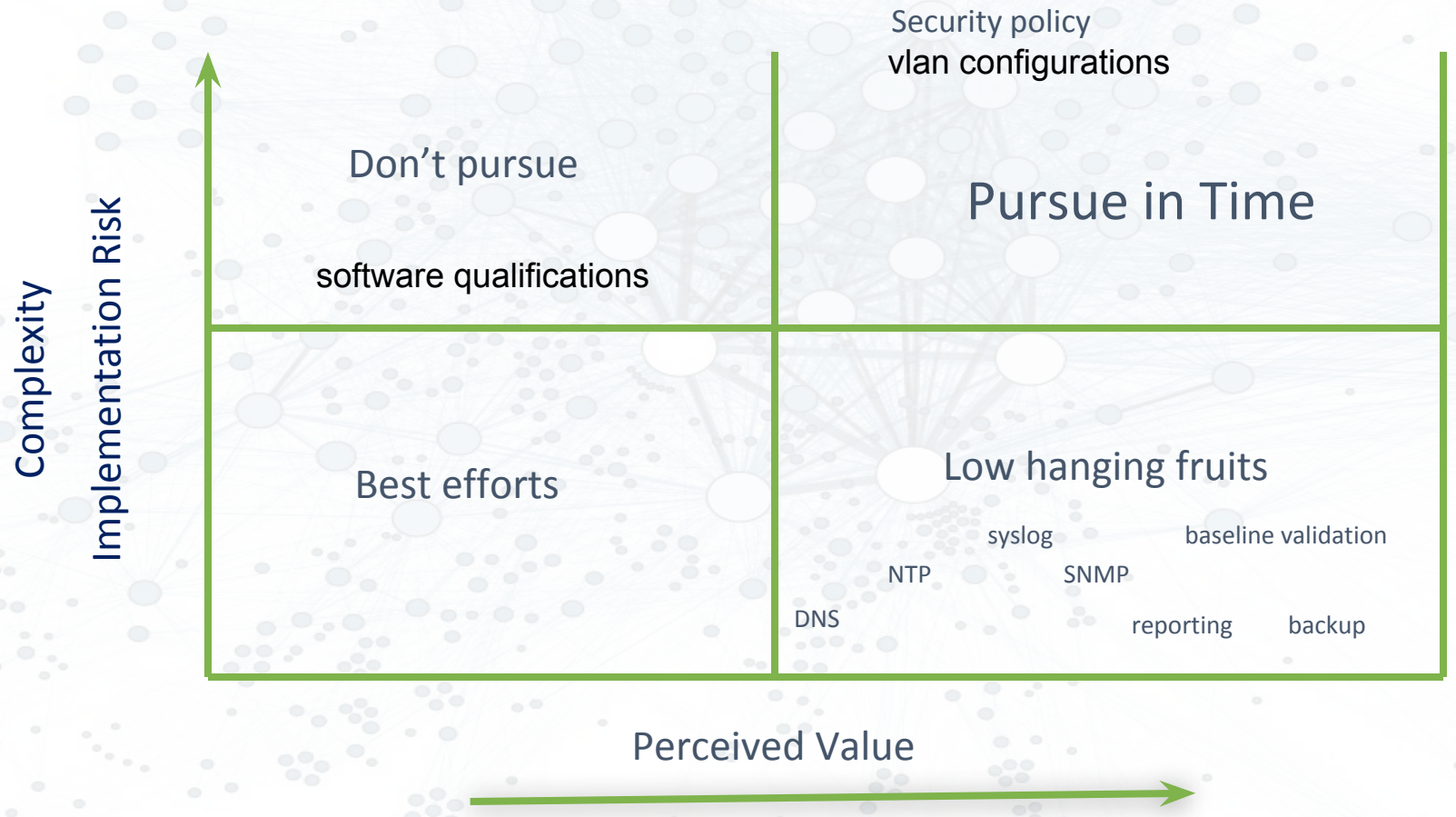
Top traditional network issues

Spanning Tree misconfigurations

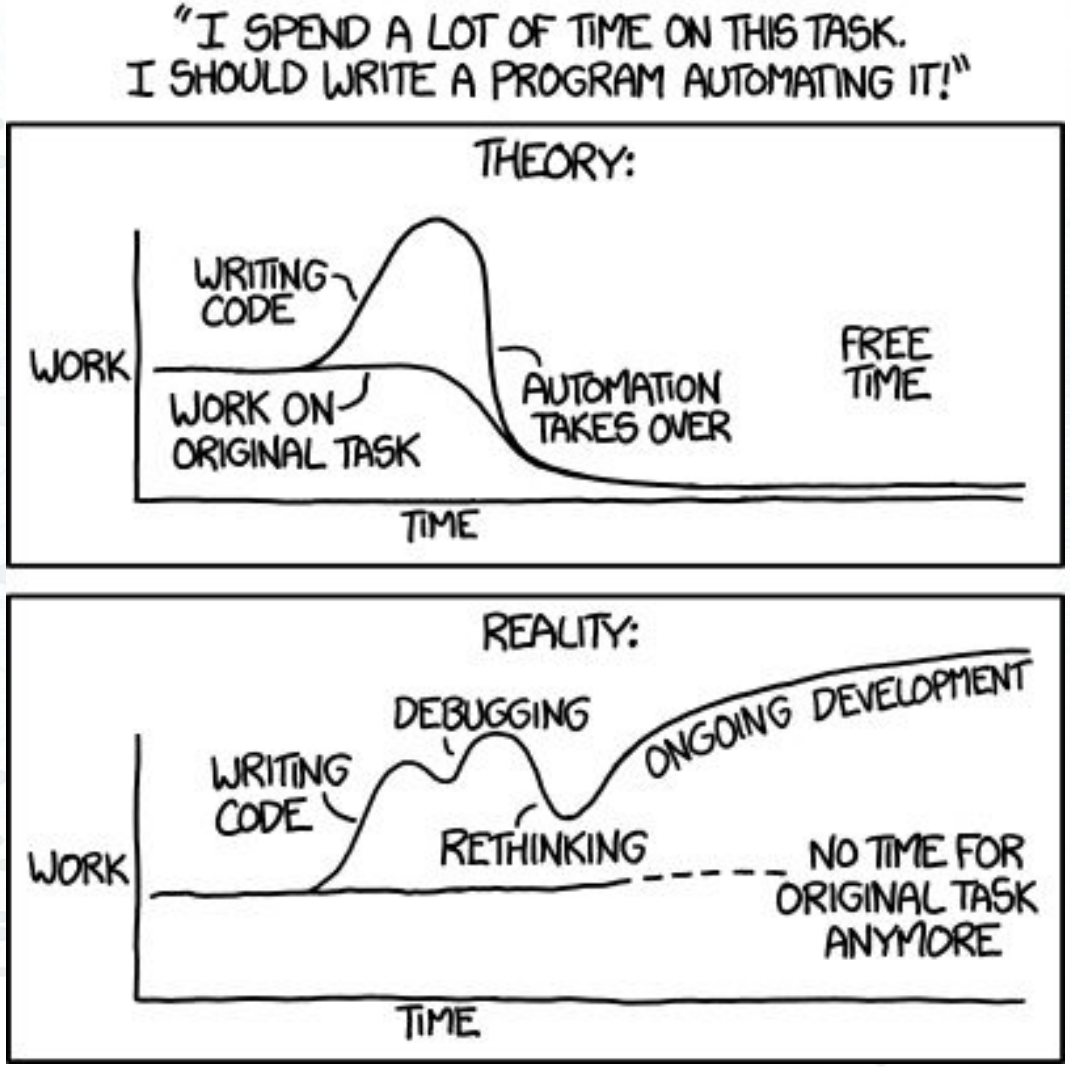
VLAN(s) misconfiguration

and more

Priorities

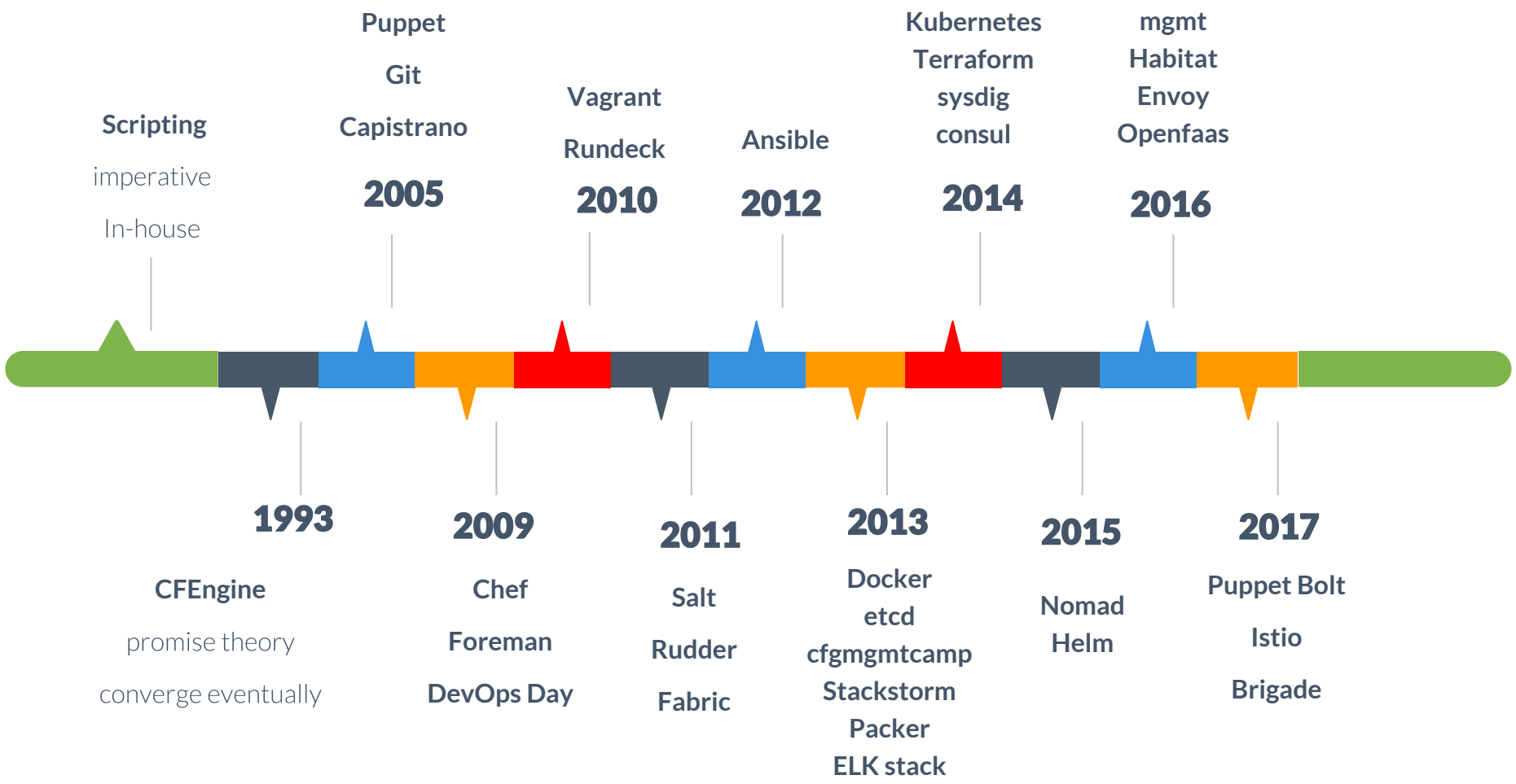

Security policy
vlan configurations
Don’t pursue
software qualifications
Pursue in Time
Best efforts
Low hanging fruits
syslog
baseline validation
NTP
SNMP
DNS
reporting
backup
Complexity
Implementation Risk
Perceived Value

What Not to Automate?

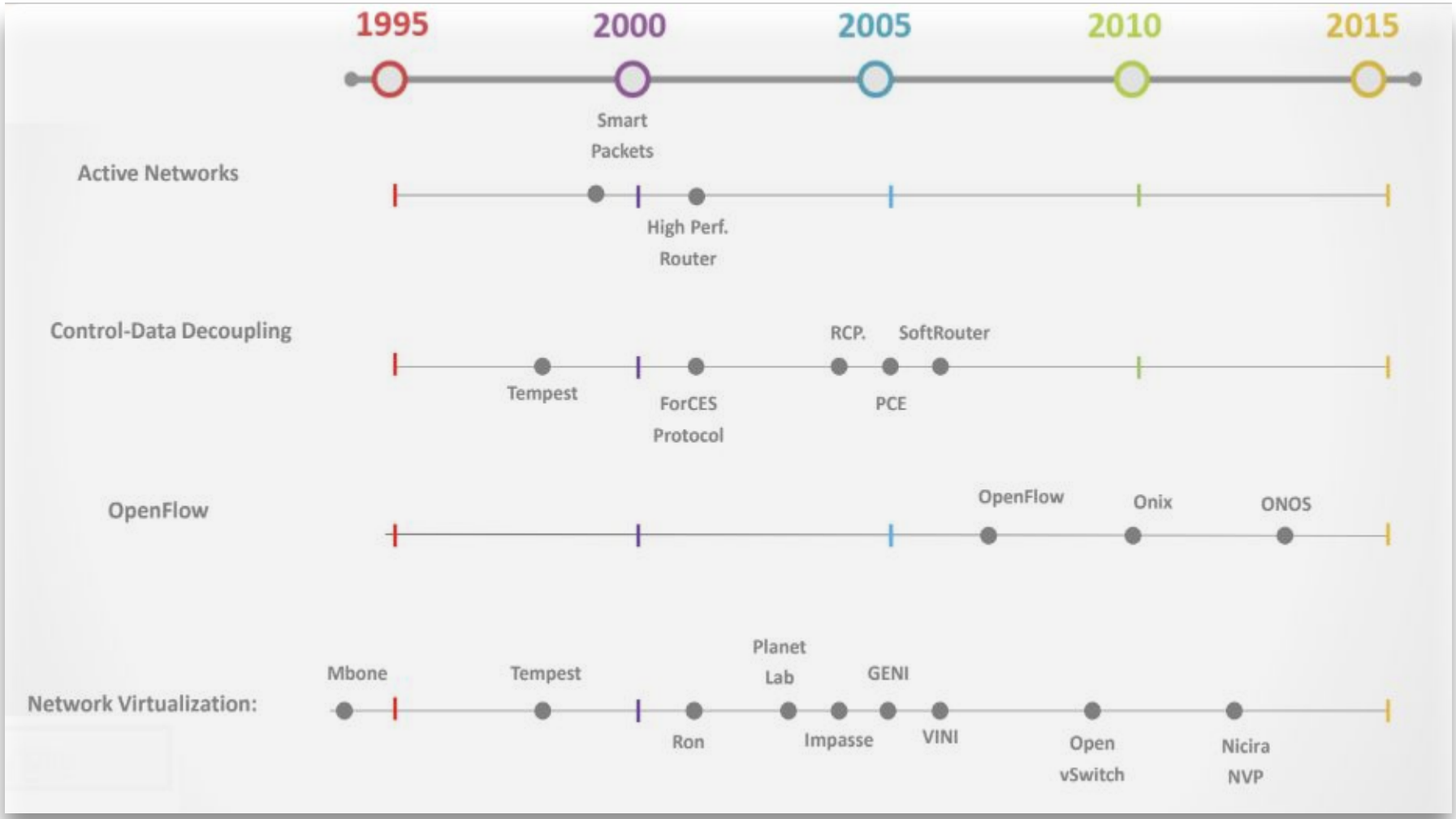


https://imgs.xkcd.com/comics/automation.png

Application and system automation

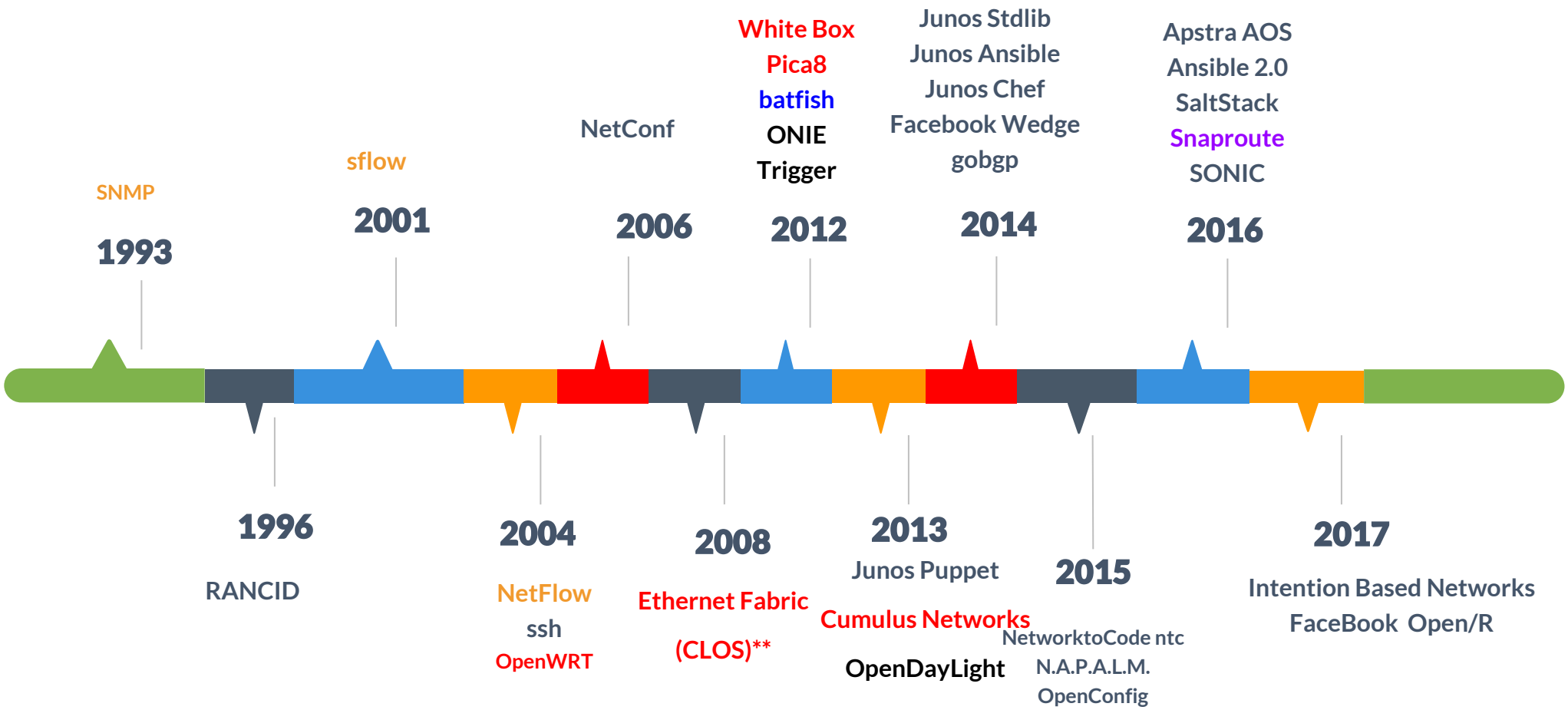


History of Programmable Network



The Road to SDN: https://queue.acm.org/detail.cfm?id=2560327

The network world perspective



* Dates may be inaccurate. they were collected from initial release of standard, commit, or project info and other talks
** Research has roots back from 1953

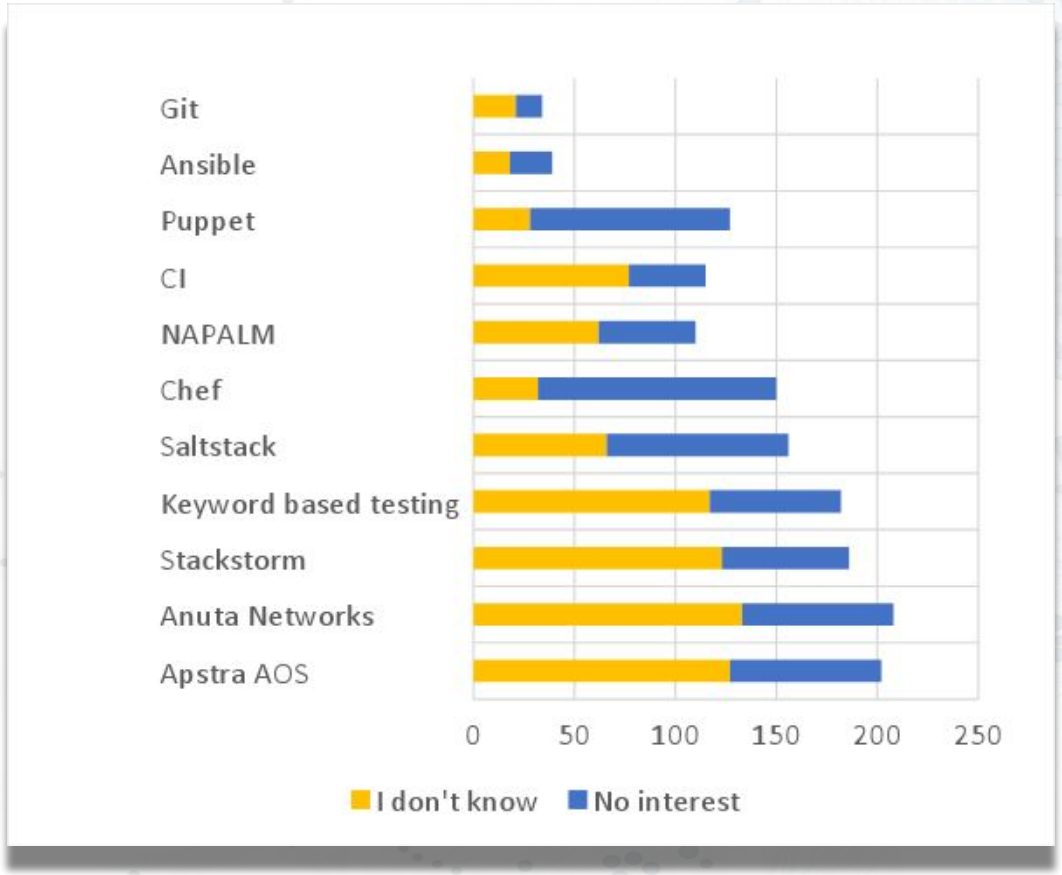
Challenge 1: The Sandbox

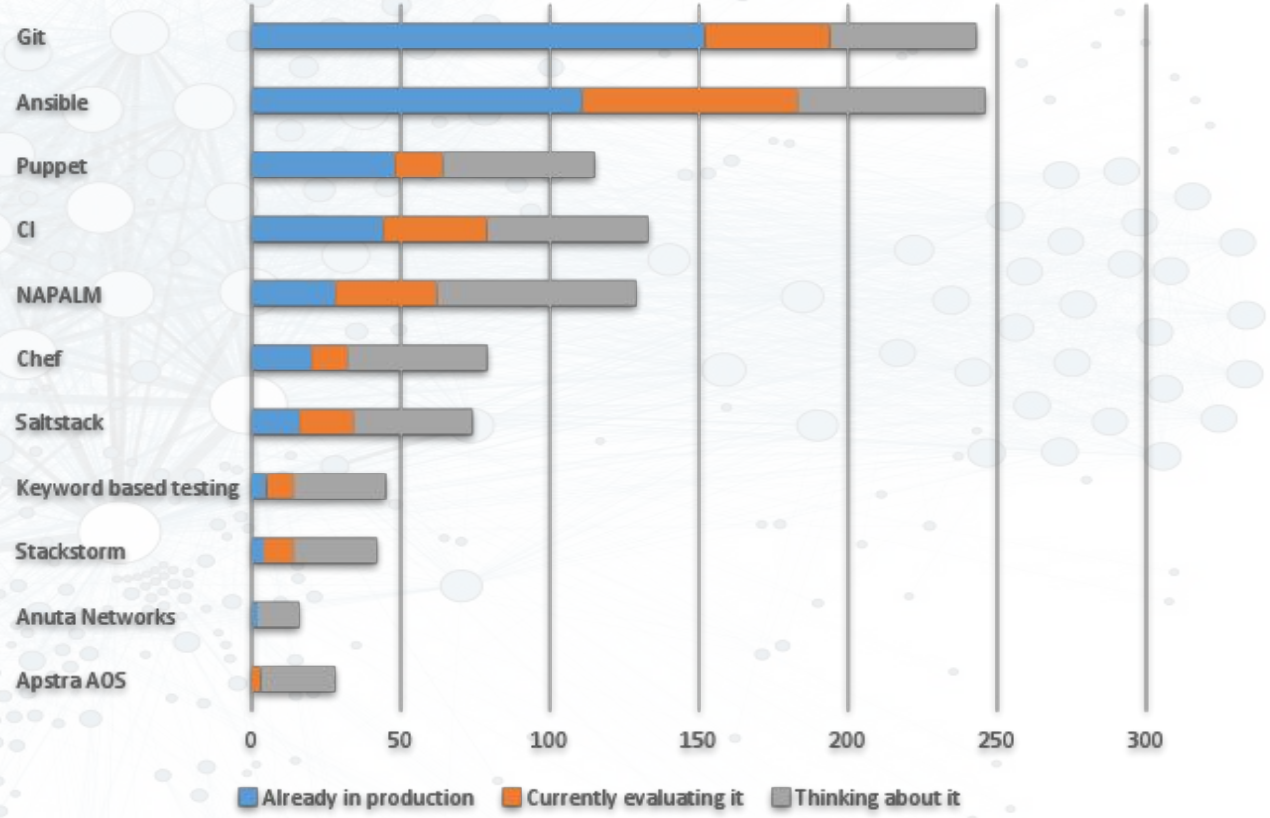
GNS3

Emulated Virtual Environment
Next Generation

vrnetlab

Technology: Tooling





Ansible! however,

From the book **“Automating Junos Administration”** by Jonathan Looney and Stacy Smith:

> “Ansible configurations can grow to become somewhat complex. There are multiple files for inventory, variables, playbooks, and roles. Like with any critical system, it’s a good idea to keep all of these files under a revision control system such as **Git.** You may also want to couple revision control with a review and testing process to ensure any changes to the Ansible configurations are thoroughly verified before applying them to a production network.”

In other Words

- Collaboration
- Version control
- How to manage scale and growth
- Testing

Small wins

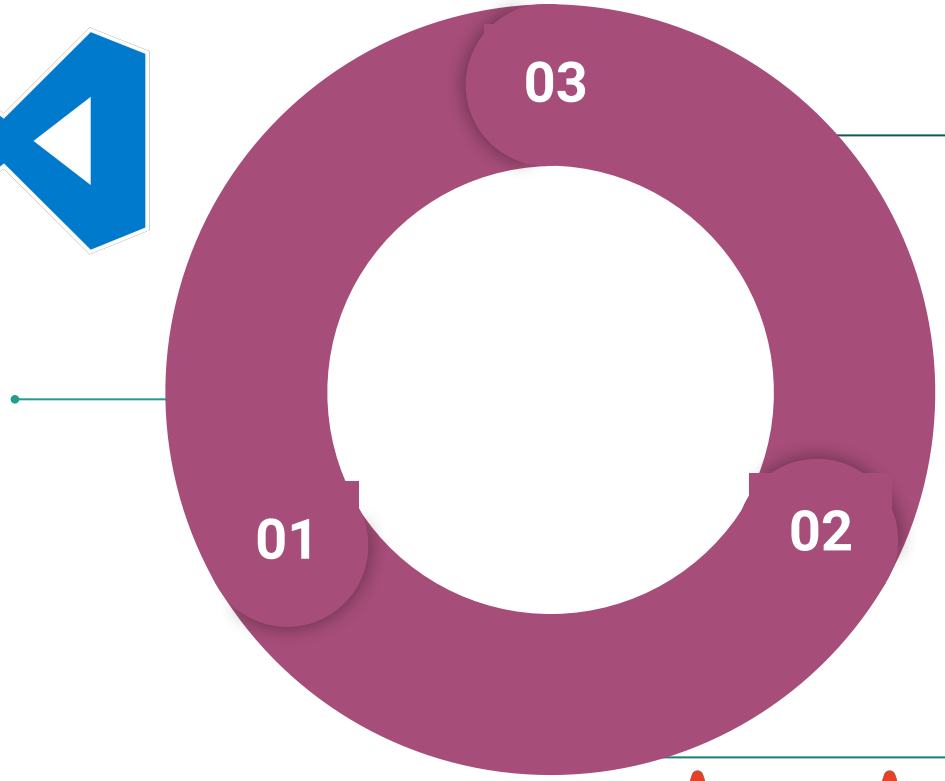
- Do what you do everyday
  However try to improve one thing a time
  Don’t try to learn more than one thing at a time
  Automation will not stand in your way

- Think and do simple:
  - Start simple use cases
  - Stay simple handling generic cases

Process & Technology
KISS Workflow

The Modern CLI

- syntax highlighting
- Validation, linting, indentation
- the Automation UX



Automation Platform

- Configuration management
- Orchestration
- Role Based Access
- Scheduling
- Remote Execution
- Event based triggers

Version Control System

- History tracking
- Peer review
- Collaboration Engine
- Live Documentation
- Integration with issue tracker

Start small and simple

C:\Users\walid\Desktop\NetDevOps\cisco-router.conf - Sublime Text (UNREGISTERED)

File Edit Selection Find View Goto Tools Project Preferences Help

aruba.yaml | cisco-router.conf | junos-example.conf

```
72  access-list 102 deny   ip 123.456.321.0 0.0.0.248 any
73  access-list 102 deny   ip host 255.255.255.255 any
74  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.42 eq ftp
75  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.42 eq www
76  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.42 eq 443
77  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.43 eq ftp
78  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.43 eq www
79  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.43 eq 443
80  access-list 102 permit udp host 123.456.321.3 eq domain any
81  access-list 102 permit icmp any any echo-reply
82  access-list 102 permit icmp any any echo
83  access-list 102 permit icmp any any packet-too-big
84  access-list 102 permit icmp any any unreachable
85  access-list 102 permit icmp any any source-quench
86  access-list 102 deny   udp any any eq netbios-ns
87  access-list 102 deny   udp any any eq netbios-dgm
88  access-list 102 deny   ip any any log
89  access-list 103 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.4 eq smtp
90  access-list 103 permit udp any host 123.456.321.3 eq domain
91  access-list 103 permit icmp any any echo-reply
92  access-list 103 permit icmp any any echo
93  access-list 103 permit icmp any any packet-too-big
94  access-list 103 permit icmp any any unreachable
95  access-list 103 permit icmp any any source-quench
96  access-list 103 deny   ip any any log
97  dialer-list 1 protocol ip permit
98  dialer-list 1 protocol ipx permit
```

Line 62, Column 42 Tab Size: 4 Junos

C:\Users\walid\Desktop\NetDevOps\cisco-router.conf - Sublime Text (UNREGISTERED)

File Edit Selection Find View Goto Tools Project Preferences Help

aruba.yaml | cisco-router.conf | junos-example.conf

```
69  no ip http server
70  !
71  logging 123.456.321.3
72  access-list 102 deny   ip 123.456.321.0 0.0.0.248 any
73  access-list 102 deny   ip host 255.255.255.255 any
74  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.42 eq ftp
75  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.42 eq www
76  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.42 eq 443
77  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.43 eq ftp
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79  access-list 102 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.43 eq 443
80  access-list 102 permit udp host 123.456.321.3 eq domain any
81  access-list 102 permit icmp any any echo-reply
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86  access-list 102 deny   udp any any eq netbios-ns
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88  access-list 102 deny   ip any any log
89  access-list 103 permit tcp any host 123.456.321.4 eq smtp
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91  access-list 103 permit icmp any any echo-reply
92  access-list 103 permit icmp any any echo
93  access-list 103 permit icmp any any packet-too-big
94  access-list 103 permit icmp any any unreachable
95  access-list 103 permit icmp any any source-quench
```

Line 62, Column 42 Tab Size: 4 Cisco

Recommendations

- Favor open solutions over proprietary
- Gain yearly saving of over 25% in 2023
- Invest back the savings into the people
- PP-RPC
- Create cross functional assignments

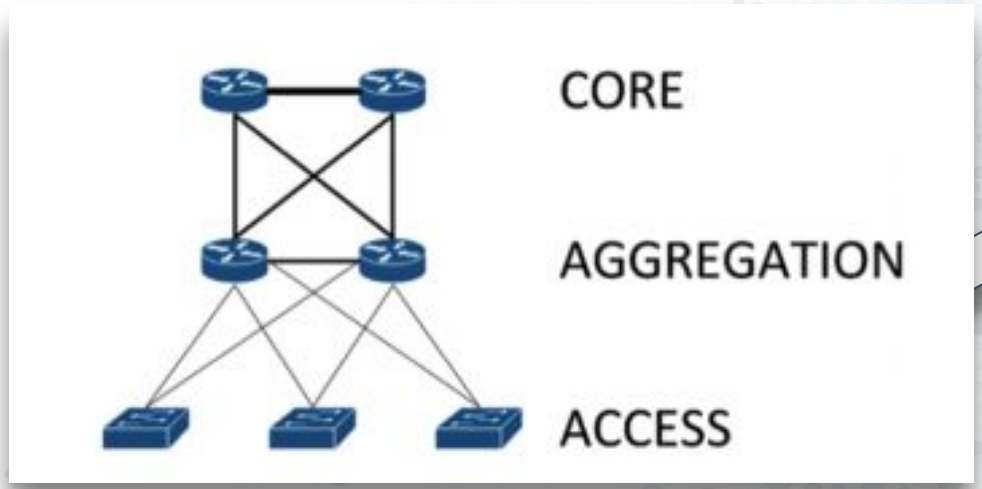
https://www.gartner.com/doc/3446727/time-shift-network-spend-premium

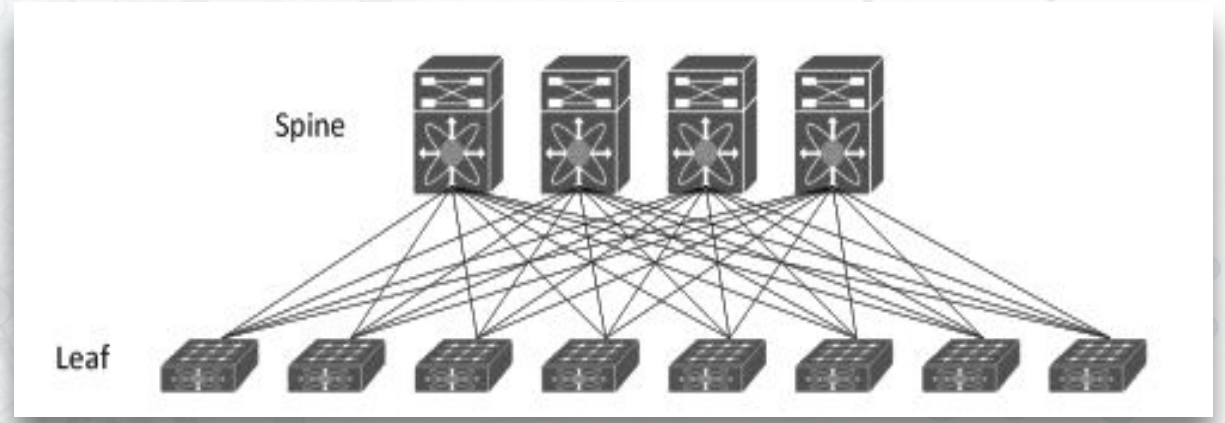
Think ahead
Devices, processes, and automation

- Standardize network elements as much as possible
  - Have standardized configurations and processes
  - Avoid massive variations in vendors, platforms, and OS versions
  - Avoid massive variations in topologies and feature use (e.g. virtual router vs. zones)

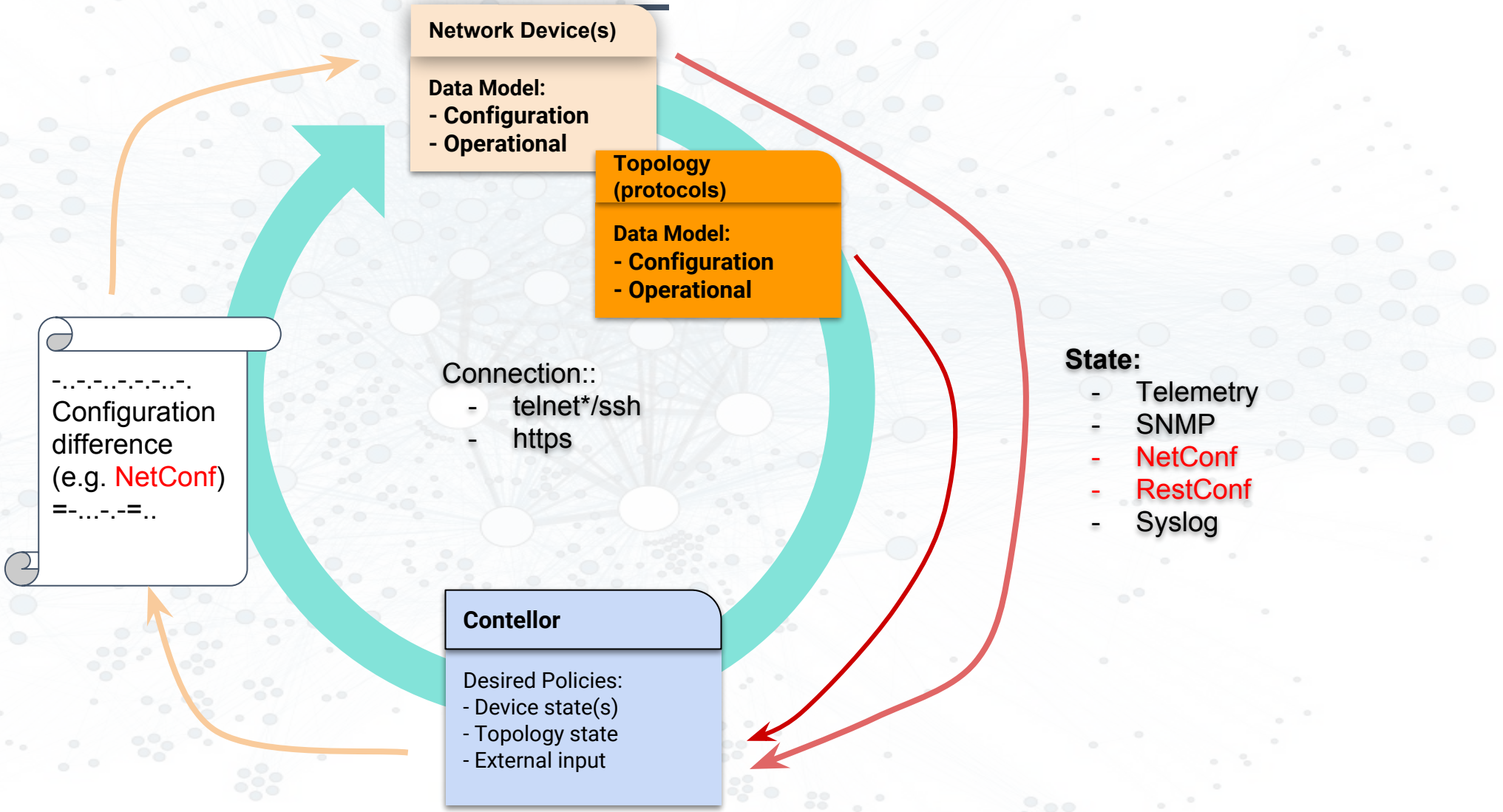
- Insist on hardware that does have usable API (e.g. Netconf) and avoid to relying on screen-scraping for automation
- Hardware that does have good commit, rollback, and diff mechanism.
- Hardware that virtual images to be able to test and validate changes.

Topology, hardware matters

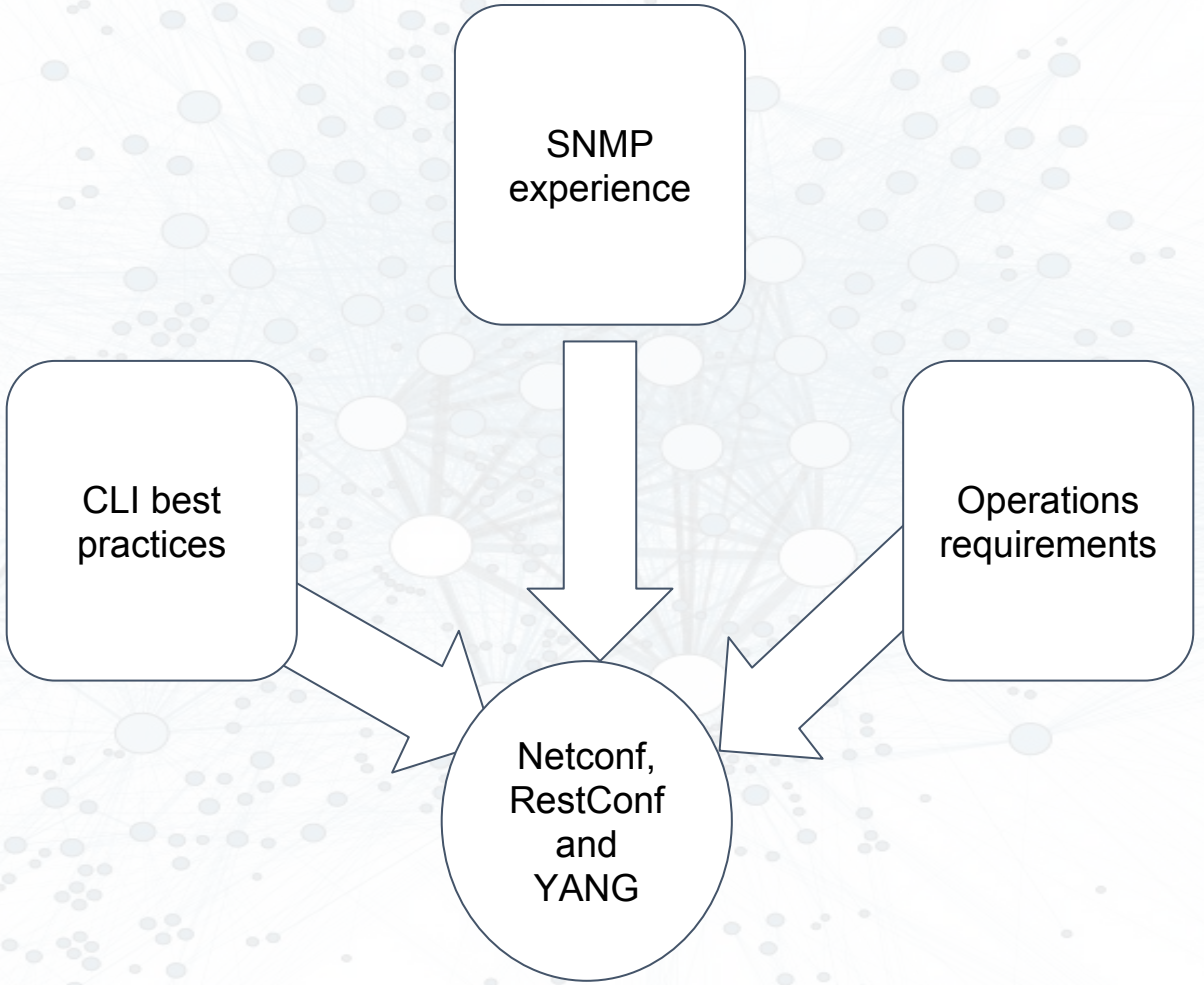




Configuration management 101



IETF Programmability Strategy



Charles Eckel, Cisco DevNet: https://fosdem.org/2018/schedule/event/opendaylight/

YANG

IETF Data Modeling language standard

- IETF standard defined in RFC 6020
- Data modeling language
  - Models Configuration and operational state data
  - Data Source of Truth
  - Easy to extend on existing models “**DRY”**
  - think of it as a database or xml schema definition XSD
  - if you are into kubernetes, custom resource types definitions
- Maintains compatibility with SNMP SMIv2
- A unified solution to the multi-vendor device data discrepancy
- *Not All vendors yet serious about it*

NetConf

IETF Network management protocol

- Defined in RFC 4741 (2006), updated by RFC 6241 (2011)
- Provides mechanisms to install, manipulate, and delete the configuration of network devices
- Model driven APIs
- Distinguishes between configuration and operational/state dat
- Multiple configuration datastores (candidate, running, startup)
- Configuration change validation and transactions
- Selective data retrieval via filtering
- Streaming and playback of event notifications

RestConf

- IETF RFC 8040
- Configuration data and state data exposed as resources
- How to access the data using REST verbs (GET / PUT / POST/ …)
- How to construct URIs to access the data
- HTTP instead of SSH for transport
- JSON in addition to XML for data encoding

YANG: Yet Another Next Generation

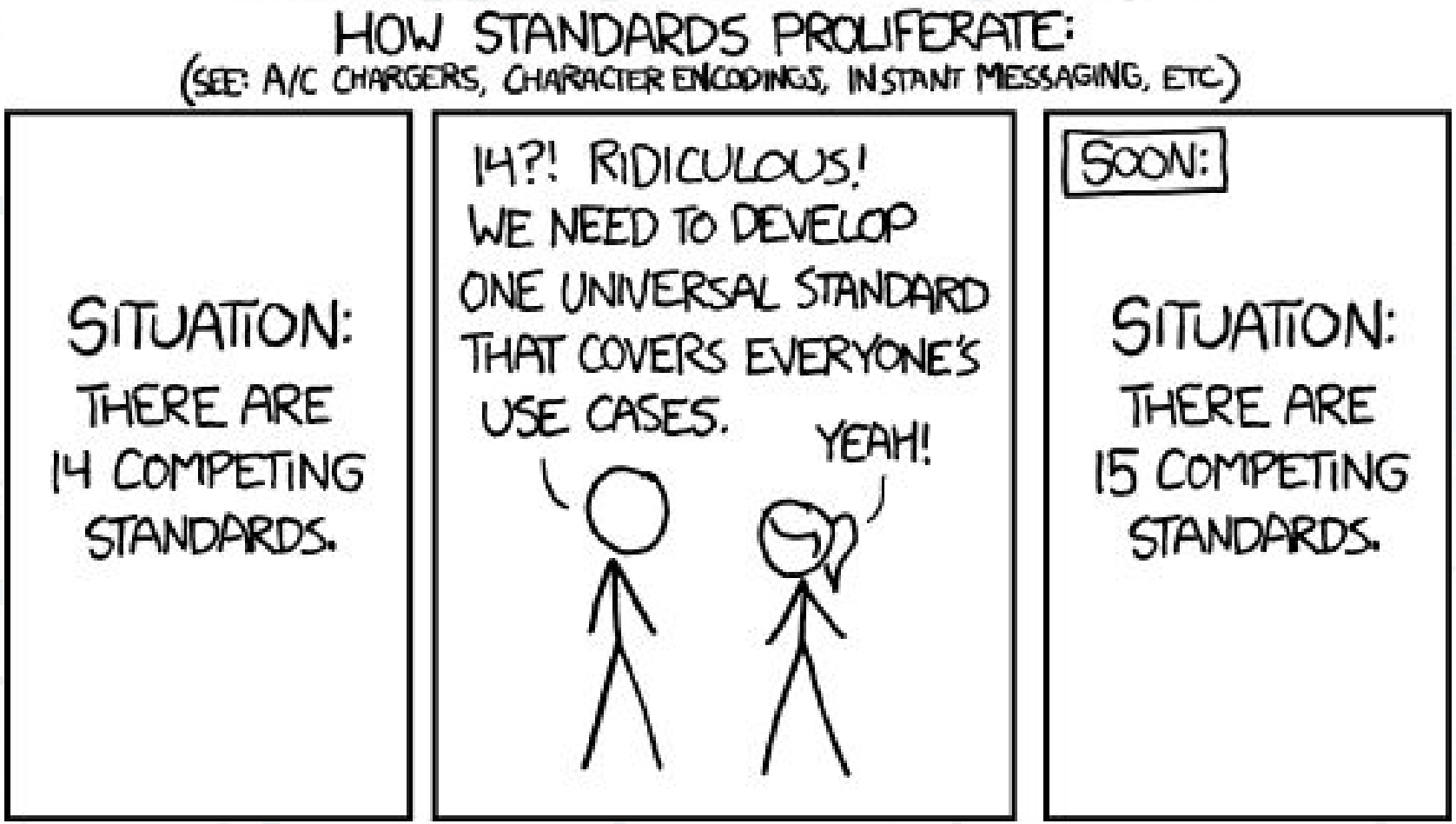
Data model language
- used to model Configuration and operational state data
- easy to extend on existing models

IETF standard defined in RFC 6020
Data model language for both Configuration and operational state data
A solution to the multi-vendor device data discrepancy
Not All vendors yet serious about it

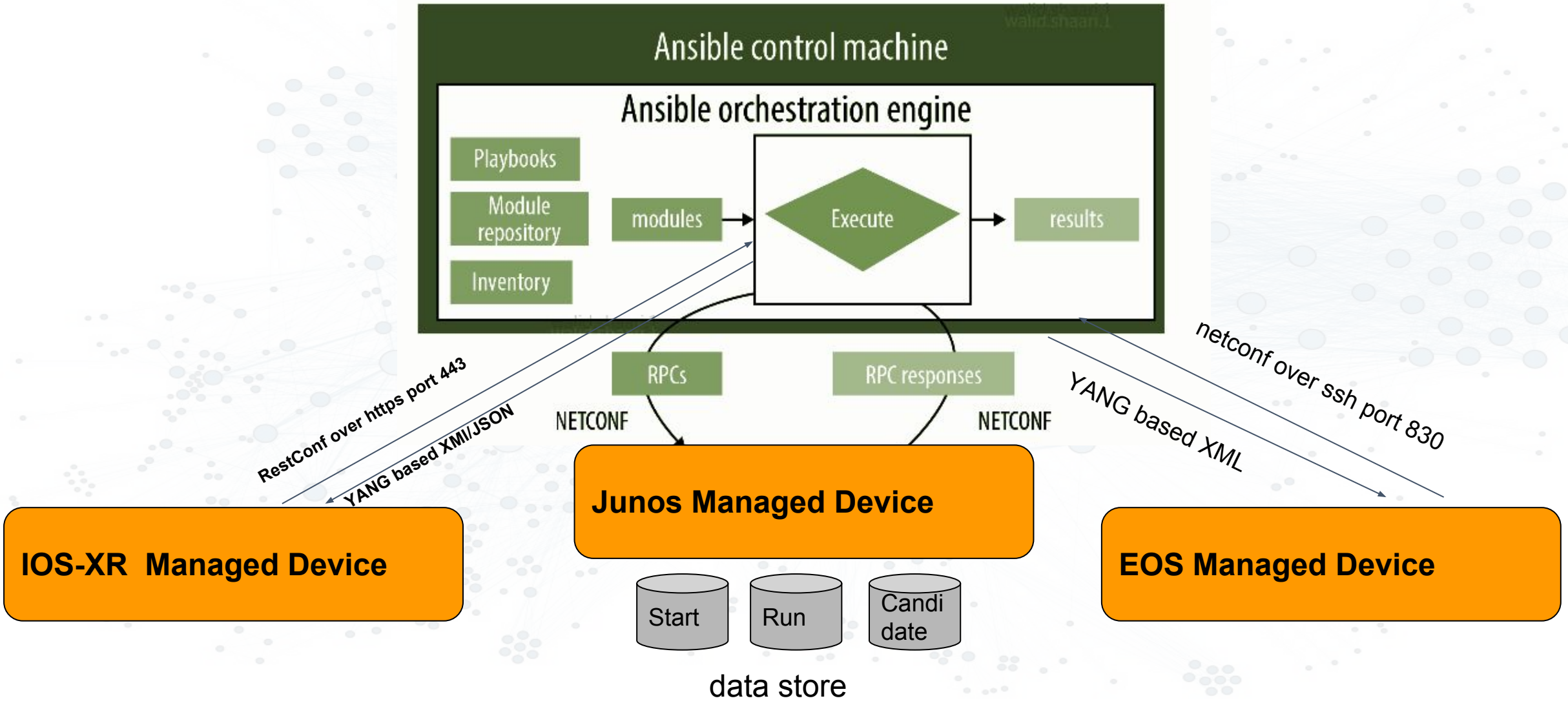
Before you write an angry comment telling me what an idiot I am – I'm all for multi-vendor interoperability, having a standard way of receiving error messages from devices, and using data models. However, based on past 30 years of experience in various areas of IT I remain highly skeptical about true multi-vendor data models. Also, what we can do today is almost no better than what we've been doing a decade or two ago.

Ivan Pepelnjak on Monday, January 29,2018 blogged::
http://blog.ipspace.net/2018/01/use-yang-data-models-to-configure.html

Takes time and effort to standardise



Ansible netconf module



Ansible netconf module

ntp server [vrf MGMT] 192.168.1.1

```
name: set ntp server in the device
netconf_config:
  host: 10.0.0.1
  username: admin
  password: admin
  xml: |
      <config xmlns:xc="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:netconf:base:1.0">
          <system xmlns="urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:yang:ietf-system">
              <ntp>
                  <enabled>true</enabled>
                  <server>
                      <name>ntp1</name>
                      <udp><address>127.0.0.1</address></udp>
                  </server>
              </ntp>
          </system>
      </config>
```

Ansible vendor modules

Arista EOS

```
- name: set ntp server in the device
      eos_commands:
                  - “ntp server  {{ ntp_servername }}”
      host: {{ inventory_hostname }}
        username: admin
        password: admin
    register:
      eos_command_output
```

CISCO IOS

```
- name: set ntp server in the device
      ios_commands:
          - “ntp server {{ ntp_servername }}”
      host: {{ inventory_hostname }}
        username: admin
        password: admin
    register:
      ios_command_output
```

Juniper Junos

```
- name: set ntp server in the device
      junos_commands:
          - “set system ntp server  {{ ntp_servername }}”
      host: {{ inventory_hostname }}
        username: admin
        password: admin
    register:
      junos_command_output
```

To declare or not to declare vendor_config

- Playbooks becomes operating manuals.

  easy to understand and replicate in the CLI
- Gradual step toward declarative, declarative network modules coverage is not complete. e.g. Junos syslog
- favor the human interactive CLI over the cut & paste machine structures.

Other types of network modules

Ansible supported modules:

- netconf:
  - netconf_config
- vendor_config
  - ios_config
- vendor_cmmand
  - ios_command

Minimum Viable Platform Agnostic modules:

e.g. net_interface

Vendor/Community supported modules:

- netconf:
  - junos_netconf
  - ce_netconf
- Network to Code:
  - ntc_install_os
  - ntc_get_facts
- N.A.P.A.L.M:
  - napalm_diff_yang
  - napalm_get_facts

Custom built module: https://www.ansible.com/ansible-module-development-101

Hit Refresh

- *Continuous Improvements*
- *Review and Improve what has been done*
- *Improve one thing at a time*
- *Learn and review past work*
- *Document and prioritize new ~~problems~~ challenges*

Resources

Networktocode slack channel http://networktocode.herokuapp.com/

SDN & NFV: https://fosdem.org/2018/schedule/event/opendaylight/

Blogs:

- Csilla Bessenyei Networker and coder https://networkerandcoder.wordpress.com/
- Kirk Byers "Python for network engineers" https://pynet.twb-tech.com/
- Mircea Ulinic https://mirceaulinic.net
- Jason Edelman http://jedelman.com/
- David Lore http://ipengineer.net/
- netmiko https://github.com/ktbyers/netmiko
- Napalm https://napalm-automation.net/

Training:

- gns3 Academy http://academy.gns3.com/
- Ansible network automation examples: https://github.com/network-automation
- saltstack: https://docs.saltstack.com/en/develop/topics/network_automation/index.html

Net survey:

- https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdiBNMK0ZUmgBSNEaOWa-YHGQ4AlZo7EhB52_dXzvMqic3eHA/viewanalytics
- https://interestingtraffic.nl/2017/03/27/insights-from-the-netdevops-fall-2016-survey/

ipspace blog and podcast: https://www.ipspace.net
packetpushers podcast: http://packetpushers.net/

Thank you

The modern Network Engineer

Productive :

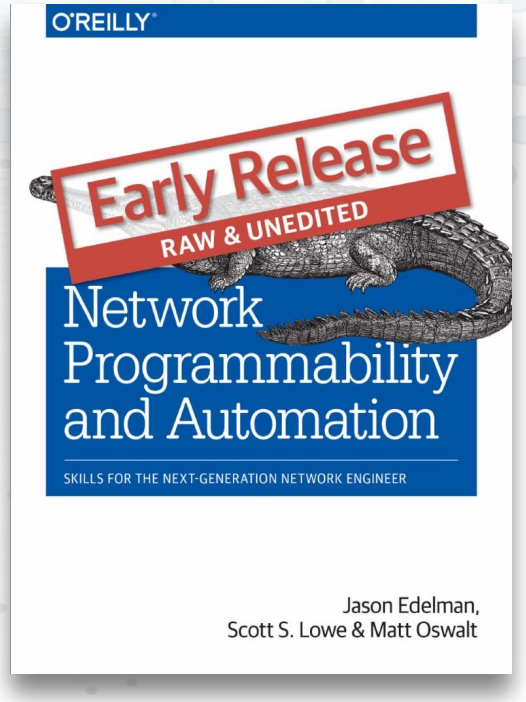
Less # lines of config manually?

Curious:

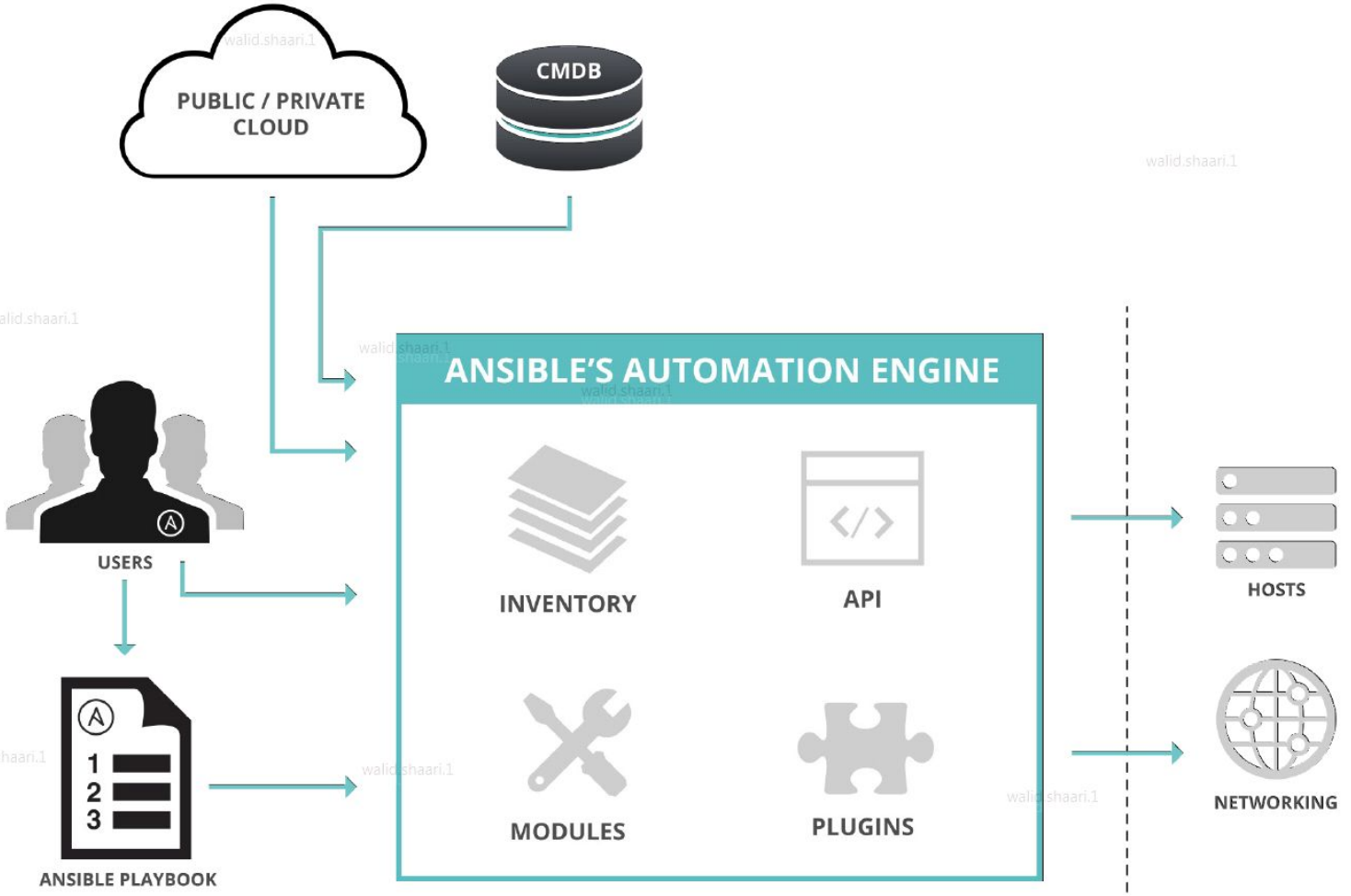
Interest in finding new problems to solve

Collaborates with other teams

developers, server and application support and peers



Ansible under the hoods



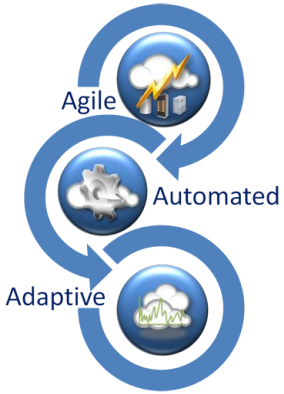
Initial Assignment Objective :

Deploy Ansible for network devices backup, and interface descriptions on Junos devices.

Involve only 3 out team of 9.

Post-assignment recommendation:

Continuous network infrastructure improvements through adopting NetDevOps culture and tooling to address future business requirements.



The Human Factor: a Challenge for Network Reliability Design

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***Abstract*—Computer and communication networks form part of the critical infrastructure of planetary society, and much work has gone into making the technology for such networks reliable. However, such networks have to be administered and managed by human administrators. The process of such administration, as it becomes increasingly complex, itself poses a challenge to protocols and systems designed to enhance network reliability. Several studies of highly reliable systems have shown that human operator error can account for 20-70% of system failures, and as the system become more reliable, the human factor gains increasing significance. Nevertheless, efforts to design reliability measures have remained largely disjoint from considerations of the human process of network administration.**

configured by hand, routing protocols themselves need to be configured. Thus the effect is to trade one sort of configuration tasks for another - now more scalable, but in fact more complex.

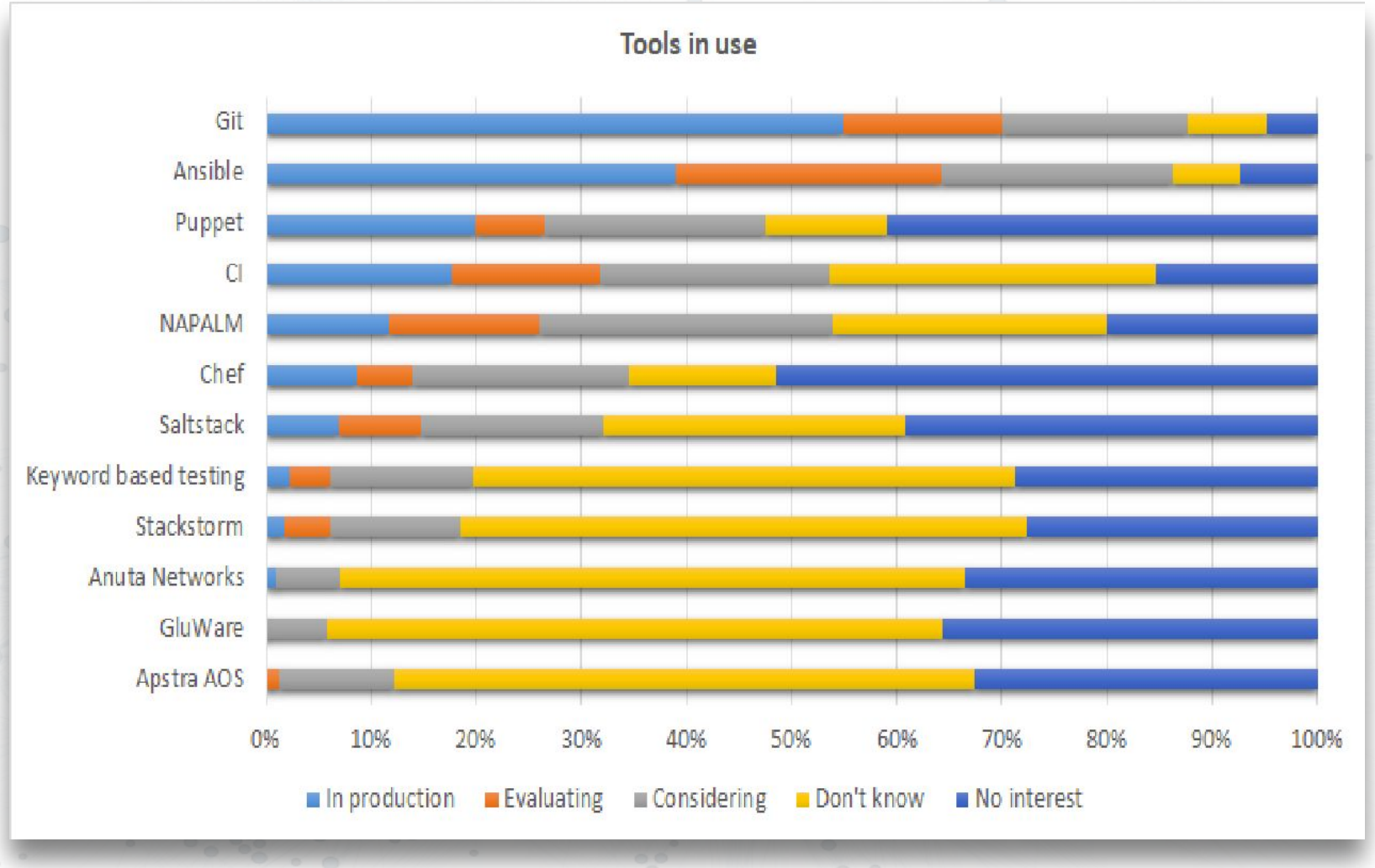
At the same time, the job of network administration is now much more common: every medium or even small organization of any type - business, education, governance, societal - now needs to own devices to connect to the Internet, and its own internal network, even if small. In turn, they need to hire network administrators. Network administrators and managers, acting under the coordination of network architects, form a

https://www.infoworld.com/article/3114195/system-management/the-8-fallacies-of-distributed-computing-are-becoming-irrelevant.html

Roles

- establish the main core modules and functionality
- roles:
  - automation engineer : writes new playbooks when needed, mostly will be updating data
  - operator: runs playbooks when necessary
  - reviewer: inputs or reviews data
    -

NetDevOps 2016 survey
Tools of Interest



https://interestingtraffic.nl/2017/03/27/insights-from-the-netdevops-fall-2016-survey/

How: Utilize current team knowledge

Improve upon the knowledge team already have on the networking side.

Add Ansible manifests to capture processes, repeatability, documentation, you should start automating one task at at time.

little bit of code and formatting from Ansible they are able to start automating from day one.