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Transforming Datacenter Management and Creating Smarter Datacenters: Schneider Electric's EcoStruxure IT

September 29, 2017

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IDC's Quick Take

Schneider Electric announced the EcoStruxure IT datacenter management-as-a-service offering on September 25, 2017, with availability initially in North America. This platform aligns the company's datacenter business with its broader IoT enablement initiatives and provides an analytics engine to transform the way datacenters are monitored and managed.

Product Announcement Highlights

On September 25, 2017, Schneider Electric announced the EcoStruxure IT module as a member of the company's broader EcoStruxure IoT-enabled platform. EcoStruxure IT is a datacenter management-as-a-service platform that enables visibility into infrastructure across diverse, dispersed, and hybrid environments. EcoStruxure IT runs on Microsoft's Azure cloud platform and is also available in on-premise versions. Pricing is based on the number of devices monitored. Schneider has packaged EcoStruxure in two modules initially — IT Expert and IT Advisor — and it is designed for enterprise and service provider/colocation datacenters, with features focused on the owner/operator as well as the tenant to meet the broader needs of managing datacenters in an increasingly distributed and hybrid environment. Highlights of the two offerings are as follows:

- **EcoStruxure IT Expert:**
  - Focuses on increasing visibility; users can view the entire datacenter ecosystem from the free Mobile Insights app on a smartphone
  - Provides alarming and monitoring for all datacenter infrastructure, regardless of manufacturer
  - Leverages global benchmarks and analytics from the EcoStruxure data lake
  - Offers optional 24 x 7 remote monitoring with the Schneider Electric Service Bureau
- **EcoStruxure IT Advisor:**
  - Provides asset performance and operations management
  - Optimizes your capacities and forecasts future requirements based on actual datacenter design

Fed by a data lake containing critical infrastructure performance metrics and status, EcoStruxure IT will be able to help organizations predict problems before they occur and optimize their environments. Once a critical mass of data has been gathered, the platform will be able to help organizations benchmark their datacenters with their peers. To date, Schneider reports having more than 60,000 device connections, 1.8 million sensors, and 15,000 connected UPSs. As the data lake grows, so does the ability to drive proactive service and support recommendations and improve outcomes. With datacenter operators and managers inherently risk averse, their questions of who "owns" the data and exactly what

will happen with it will need to be answered sufficiently for critical mass to occur. Once gathered, the ability to leverage big data will be especially interesting to service providers and colocation providers that are striving for greater operational efficiency and product differentiation.

EcoStruxure IT supersedes the StruxureOn digital monitoring service, announced in the summer of 2016, and expands upon the capabilities to enable proactive and predictive maintenance, with the goal of driving better performance and increasing operational efficiency. Schneider Electric's traditional on-premise datacenter infrastructure management (DCIM) solution – StruxureWare for Data Centers — will continue to be deployed in environments that prefer an on-premise solution. For those that have invested time in setting up the on-premise platform, continued support will be critical and Schneider has committed to continued development of this platform. For organizations building out their edge IT strategy, the ability to remotely monitor and control datacenter resources in a standardized way via EcoStruxure IT will be welcomed in the absence of human staffing.

The EcoStruxure family is made up of six domains — power, IT, building, machine, plant, and grid — that serve four main functional markets the vendor focuses on — building, datacenter, industry, and infrastructure. In manufacturing environments, the concept of connected products and transformation of the service delivery is more mature. The datacenter, which is essentially becoming the factory floor of the digital age, will need to undergo a similar transformation to deliver IT service quickly and with greater operational efficiency. IDC views the EcoStruxure family as a transformative platform that changes the core way that datacenters are monitored and managed. The creation of a digital twin of datacenter resources and leveraging big data and analytics to drive maintenance and upgrades is a key shift from traditional management methods, which are often reliant on human intervention and static infrastructure management systems.

IDC's Point of View

By positioning EcoStruxure IT in the broader context of IoT technologies and platforms, Schneider Electric has aligned its message to resonate with a broader audience beyond the traditional datacenter builder or manager. Schneider Electric's mission of enabling a manufacturing floor, a city, or a datacenter to be connected and "smarter" will resonate well with decision makers who are more familiar with these IoT concepts than they are with the traditional value proposition of DCIM solutions — which are often viewed as a tool for facilities' power and cooling infrastructure. This announcement is an opening salvo to other critical infrastructure manufacturers to improve their ability to not just gather large volumes of data but also drive better outcomes for their customers based on analytics and machine learning. IDC has observed that, while a staggering amount of data generated in the datacenter has been gathered for many years, very little has been done to drive better decisions and outcomes as a result of this data. The ability for EcoStruxure IT to shift datacenter management to a proactive mode based on big data and analytics is a game changer. Much of datacenter management today is in a reactive mode and responding to alarms. The pressures on datacenter managers to deliver service quickly and at the scale and scope required is necessitating a change in the way datacenters are managed. IDC believes that these pressures will motivate more investment in smarter datacenter resources to support datacenter transformation initiatives.

The ability to benchmark performance and set key performance indicators (KPIs) based on datacenter metrics will be very interesting to organizations, especially those in the midst of making decisions regarding datacenter and workload placement in an increasingly hybrid and distributed IT landscape. For

organizations that are committed to improving operational efficiency, the ability to view performance metrics and make comparisons with peers will be appealing.

One of the challenges of developing a very large data set that can be used to power analytics and proactive and predictive maintenance is gaining access to this data, which requires a conscious "opt in." As mission-critical environments, some organizations are hesitant to share this data. IDC observes a shift in organizations' level of trust, with the benefits of better outcomes and fewer incidents taking precedence over fears of data breaches. It is incumbent upon Schneider Electric to be diligent in anonymizing source data and protecting it for continued participation in the program.

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