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Nutanix To Beta Free Hyper-Converged Infrastructure Software [1]

by [Joseph F. Kovar](#) [2] on May 12, 2015, 9:50 am EDT

Nutanix Tuesday unveiled the public beta of a software-only version of its hyper-converged infrastructure solution it said targets developers and potential customers.

Nutanix's new Community Edition software has the same capabilities as its hyper-converged appliances except for limited scalability and lack of vendor support, said Greg Smith, senior director of product and technology marketing for the San Jose, Calif.-based vendor.

The Community Edition will be available at no charge and can be installed on any x86-based server meeting minimum configurations, Smith told CRN. However, he said, scalability is limited to four servers, which is normally the minimum configuration when used in production environments.

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Nutanix is expected to release a hardware compatibility list, although no date has been set, Smith said.

Also, support will be handled by Nutanix's Next online community where users can ask for help from their peers. "It's not designed for production," he said. "It's designed for evaluation."

The Nutanix Community Edition is not an open-source offering, Smith said.

"We've taken the same software that powers our more than 1,200 customers today and are making it available to a wider audience," Smith said. "The goal is to build a larger Nutanix community, and a larger Nutanix brand. It's all about getting the Nutanix technology into the hands of IT professionals and IT influencers."

The Nutanix Community Edition is scheduled to be released June 8 at the Nutanix Next conference.

Smith said Nutanix hopes the company's 1,000-plus channel partners take advantage of the new software with no risk and no licensing cost.

"Channel partners get intimate access to Nutanix technology to build their skill sets," he said. "We also want to build a community of enthusiastic users and help drive the channel business."

The Nutanix Community Edition software is a great move by the vendor, said Jeff Guenther, director for solutions architecture at CMI, a Mill Valley, Calif.-based solution provider and

Nutanix channel partner.

"I think it is great and will further accelerate their lead in [this] space," Guenther told CRN via text message. "They are building a platform vs. a point hyper-converged solution. ... This is an evaluation of their road map. More exciting things are in store."

Aaron Cardenas, CEO and founder of P1 Technologies, a Hermosa Beach, Calif.-based solution provider and Nutanix channel partner, said the Nutanix Community Edition software will probably be helpful for testing hyper-converged appliances compared to getting fully integrated hardware on-site.

One issue is what will be on the hardware compatibility list, Cardenas told CRN.

"Hardware compatibility lists are brutal," he said. "It will probably be small. And hopefully anything on the list will be thoroughly tested. It's hard to get the quality assurance department of a small organization to test and support multiple hardware."

While a free version of the software can be helpful in evaluating the Nutanix technology, there may not be a big call for it from potential enterprise customers, Cardenas said.

"If an enterprise is serious about Nutanix, it will ask for an actual eval unit," he said.

While Nutanix is focused on selling its fully configured hyper-converged infrastructure appliances through the channel, the new Community Edition software is not the company's first foray into providing the software for integration with other hardware platforms.

Dell last year started offering its FX-series of hyper-converged infrastructure appliances that consists of a Dell server integrated with the Nutanix software stack on an OEM basis. [Dell in February enhanced the FX-series](#) ^[4] by integrating its latest-generation server platform.

While Dell has access to the Nutanix software stack on an OEM basis, the market should not expect Nutanix to make that software commercially available to customers, Smith said.

"The release of the Community Edition does not mean or portend to mean that Nutanix plans to introduce a commercial software-only edition," Smith said. "Right now, there is no plan to do so."

Nutanix over the past three to five years has emphasized simplicity, reliability and performance in its solution, Smith said. "And we will continue to do so," he said. "The only way we can do that is to release our technology via an integrated appliance. And that's why we have a deal with Dell."

Smith declined to speculate whether Nutanix would offer its software on an OEM basis to another vendor besides Dell.

Smith said there's no contradiction in Nutanix making its software available as a free evaluation platform or via an OEM like Dell and insisting that its technology be available commercially only as an integrated appliance.

"From the first, we've been clear that this is a software-defined platform," he said. "We can take advantage of the latest Intel processors and other hardware as soon as it comes to market. We don't need to depend on hardware platforms. Also, we can make deals like we did with Dell."

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