

# Reducing Data Center Design Time from Weeks to Minutes

InterComms talks to Scott Boynton, Senior Data Center Strategy Manager, Netformx



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Senior Data Center Strategy Manager, Netformx

**Mr. Boynton provides networking expertise and vision for the development of software to help resellers and service providers become more efficient and profitable. Previously Mr. Boynton spent 14 years as a Product Line Manager for Cisco Systems creating some of Cisco's most profitable products and solutions, plus 5 years at American Express architecting a global remote access network. He is the holder of six patents and has an M.B.A. in Management Information Systems.**

Last spring we discussed the complexity of data center design and the pending Netformx Data Center Designer product release with Scott Boynton, Senior Data Center Strategy Manager at Netformx. We caught up with Scott again to get an update on the launch and to see what early benefits are being received.

**Q: Scott, when we last spoke the data center and cloud markets were growing dramatically. Are you still seeing evidence of that?**

**A:** Absolutely, in fact what we are seeing supports the Cisco Global Cloud Index forecast published in this issue of InterComms: cloud adoption is going mainstream and data center demand continues to increase as internet traffic grows. More and more companies are turning to data centers and the cloud to deliver services faster and improve their operational efficiencies. This is a great opportunity for service providers and resellers, but handling the increased demand can be a challenge.

**Q: Explosive growth sounds like a “be careful what you wish for” situation. Is handling a growing pipeline of deals the only issue, or has the complexity of data center design continued to increase?**

**A:** Despite the perceived homogeneous nature of data centers, each customer tends to have unique requirements which have to be taken into consideration when building out a suitable solution. If a data center solution provider's processes are not efficient or rely heavily on manual steps, the increased volume of opportunities can reduce profitability significantly. In addition, even more vendors are

▶ competing in the data center space, adding to the number of variables designers have to consider. This is making a complex situation even more complex and poses a key business challenge.

**Q: Is Netformx Data Center Designer still targeted to improve efficiency and productivity?**

**A:** Yes, Netformx Data Center Designer reduces complexity by changing the way solution providers design data centers — using application-based configurations and guided selling methodologies. This innovative approach dramatically accelerates the design process, increases productivity, and reduces the potential for human errors.

**Q: When did the first release of Data Center Designer come out and what features does it have?**

**A:** Data Center Designer was released as a beta on June 24, 2013 for all Cisco Silver, Gold, and Platinum Edition versions of Netformx DesignXpert. The September 9th release of Netformx Data Center Designer included ApplicationGenius for most mainstream applications and ComputeGenius with Cisco UCS B-Series, C-Series, and UCS promotional bundles.

ApplicationGenius provides a unique guided selling mode for data center solution design that simplifies the process of calculating necessary application resources and deriving compute and storage requirements.

The output from ApplicationGenius is used by ComputeGenius to identify the optimal equipment needed to support the application workloads. ComputeGenius consists of unique solvers for each UCS series that provide the user with four possible answers: Cost Optimized,

Optimum Efficiency, Highest Performance, and Promotions. The result is quotes that used to take weeks to complete now only take minutes.

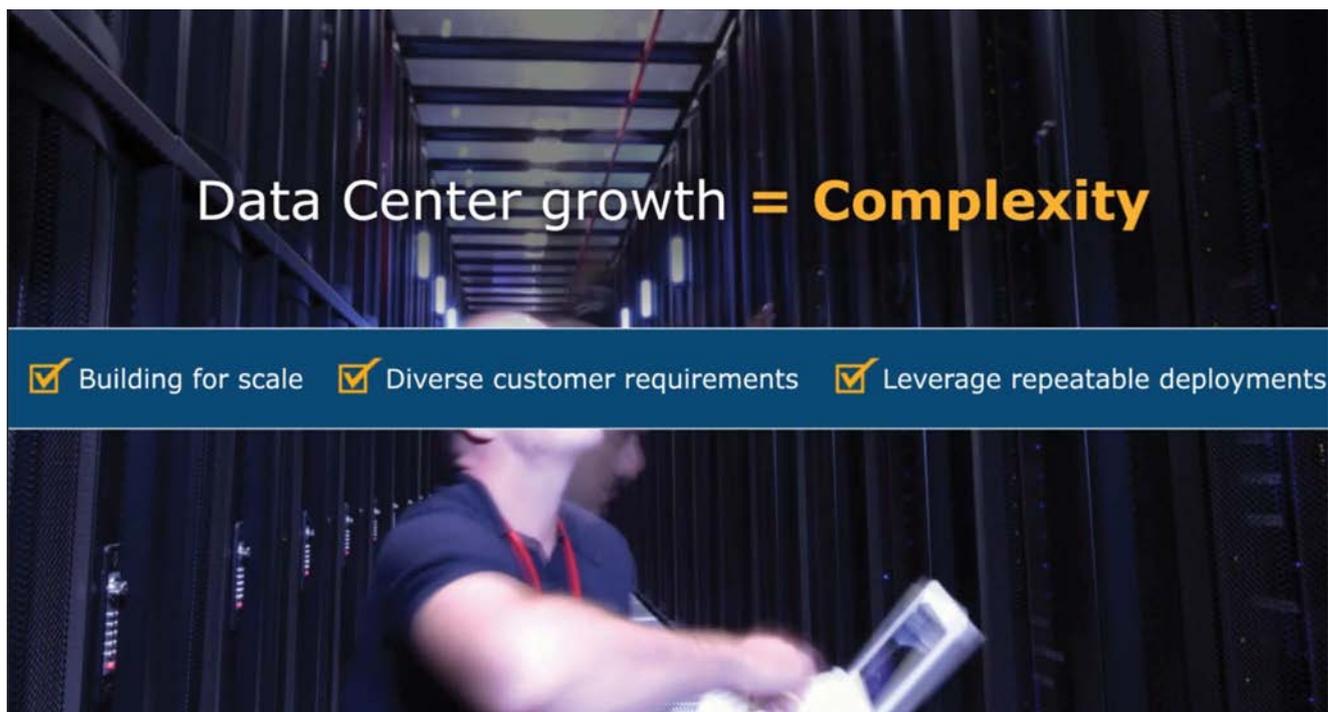
**Q: Last spring you spoke about creating an online community for sharing use case templates in the cloud. Has that happened?**

**A:** Yes, we launched an industry-first central repository called the Netformx Online Community where infrastructure vendors and resellers can share application resource templates. Users benefit from accessing existing use case templates delivering sizing requirements in a fraction of the time it takes to research the answers online. They can then quickly build resource requirements for their customer's unique needs and create winning bids. This ensures faster designs and reduces the need for individual users to have prior sizing knowledge of all applications their customers want to run in the data center. In this Netformx-managed community, users can create their own templates and also rate templates created by others.

**Q: Are users uploading ApplicationGenius templates to be shared with the community?**

**A:** Without the template repository, sales engineers use a combination of spreadsheets, documents, and sticky notes on their desk for each design. In addition, vendors have groups of engineers that answer solution provider questions about sizing applications for their hardware.

This Netformx community database gives both users and vendors a way to upload the knowledge of every sizing they have done into the repository via a simple self-help embedded template editor. It literally just takes a minute to ▶



- ▶ create a template that can then be reused by their team or the broader community.

Solution providers have been using the vendor-provided templates as starting points and modifying the resources according to their customer's needs and based on their deployment experience. This enables them to create quotes more closely aligned to meet their customer's requirements and they can do it much faster.

The users are seeing real value in posting their own templates for commodity applications in the community. Of course they will only store their "secret sauce" templates locally for use by themselves and their colleagues.

**Q: I know that Data Center Designer has just been released, but how has it been resonating with your customers?**

**A:** The initial feedback has certainly validated the approach we have taken — going from applications to compute to storage — and indicates we are filling an important need. We have been adopting some excellent suggestions from our users as they gain experience in using Data Center Designer. For example, we have just added UCS Promotion Bundles in ComputeGenius, giving an additional promotion optimization option for Cisco B-Series and C-Series solvers. This makes it even easier for users to factor in Cisco promotions as they design a solution.

**Q: So, is Data Center Designer changing the methods your customers have traditionally used to design data centers?**

**A:** Many of them have used the Netformx UCS Advisor for years to configure Cisco UCS servers. Now with Data Center Designer they don't have to figure out the application resources and translate them into a UCS configuration. Instead they use ApplicationGenius and have Data Center Designer automatically configure the proper UCS design. They are telling us this is a huge timesaver.

**Q: What other benefits are they seeing at this early stage?**

**A:** Our customers are excited by the amount of time they can save and Data Center Designer's ability to simplify the

design process. By reducing the complexity and automating many of the steps they are able to increase productivity, reduce their reliance on subject matter experts, and create designs that map extremely well to the customer's requirements. This helps them win more deals, reduce costs, and increase customer satisfaction.

**Q: Have they quantified those benefits?**

**A:** Previously, they would need to research vendor documentation, build their expertise, and leverage deals already done to figure out what to order via UCS. Creating the quote was a very manual process often taking weeks to complete and prone to errors or misalignments with company best practices. Instead, Data Center Designer's application use cases calculate the UCS needs in minutes.

**Q: What additional capabilities and features are your customers asking to see in Data Center Designer?**

**A:** Now that they have seen the power of our approach they are just starting to share their ideas for new features that would make their jobs even easier. In the near term they would like to have more templates in the Netformx Online Community. They are also looking beyond ApplicationGenius and ComputeGenius, wanting us to add tools to determine storage and networking requirements so they can size VSPEX and Flexpod solutions. Another request we are getting is to add multiple server vendors into ComputeGenius.

It is refreshing to hear their enthusiasm and validation for our Data Center Designer roadmap. We are actively pursuing and prioritizing the enhancements they have suggested, so stay tuned!

Thank you Scott for sharing the latest information on creating data center infrastructures.

**For More Information:**

Netformx Data Center Designer:  
<http://www.netformx.com/data-center-designer>  
 Netformx: [www.Netformx.com](http://www.Netformx.com)

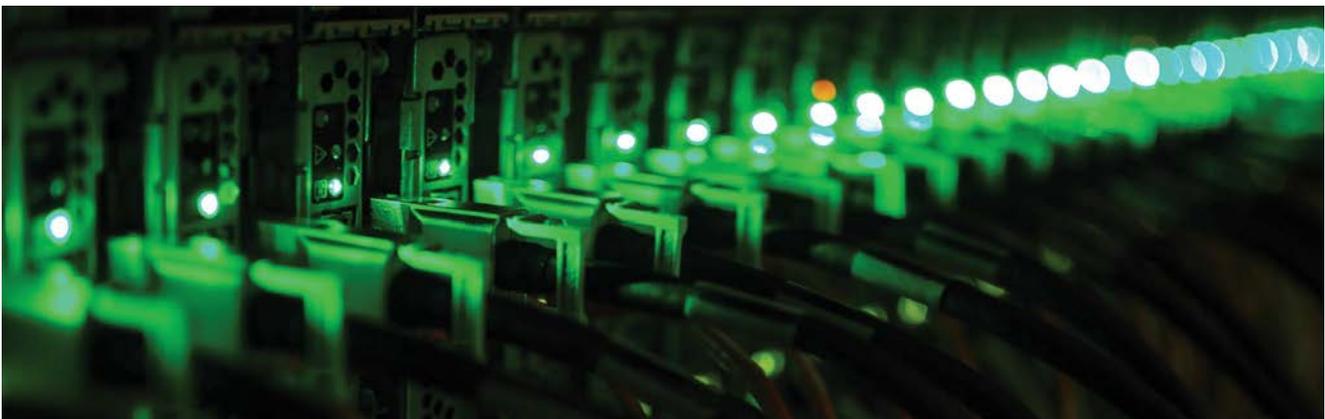


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