ECI Survey Reveals Network Slicing Tops Priorities in Move Toward 5G

Report findings reinforce ECI's multi-technology slicing, full access-to-core 5G solution strategy

PETACH TIKVA, Israel – February 20, 2019 – According to new survey data from ECI®, a global provider of ELASTIC Network® solutions for service providers, critical infrastructures and data center operators and independently executed by ACG Research, a leading analyst and consulting firm, service providers believe that greater focus on network slicing will be crucial to the eventual roll out of 5G services globally. While the majority of respondents believe that 5G will be commercially available in the next 12-24 months, it's likely that slicing will be implemented only a year or two afterwards.

Smart cities, autonomous vehicles and virtual reality are nearly synonymous with the arrival of 5G, and global service providers believe that network slicing will play a large part of making today's advancements a future reality. 5G envisions a universal platform capable of supporting diverse services, and network slicing enables this "New Age of Services" by utilizing virtual, partitioned networks to better support the various applications based on their performance, reliability and latency requirements.

The survey, conducted by ACG Research on behalf of ECI, polled leaders in mobile, wholesale and fixed-mobile converged service providers in December 2018. A few additional findings from the survey include:

- **Primary barriers to 5G commercial deployment**: Several potential barriers remain that could delay the commercial deployment of 5G, including lack of available spectrum, immature standards like 3GPP, lack of networking equipment and the required investment.
- **Primary benefits of 5G**: In addition to network slicing, many cited additional 5G transport benefits will include higher speed interfaces and increased network capacity. Interestingly, the 5G business case -- i.e., increased revenues and decreased costs (CAPEX/OPEX) -- is not cited among the primary benefits of launching 5G.
- **Primary slicing technology**: There is no one slicing technology that was singled out – rather respondents noted they anticipate a combination of FlexEthernet, OTN and VPNs.
- **The vast majority believe that 5G transport networks will be rolled out separately**: With ~40 percent suggesting that the 5G transport network will eventually migrate/converge with the 4G/LTE network, about 1/3 suggested the 5G transport network and the 4G transport network will remain distinct. Only 1/4 of respondents believe the 5G transport networks will be rolled out initially as converged with 4G transport.
- **Need for orchestration**: Vast majority (70 percent) understand the need for a unified, multi-domain 5G network orchestration approach. Nearly half believe this will be made possible by evolving their existing solution (49 percent), while others mention embracing open-source orchestration modules such as ONAP (30 percent).

Tim Doiron, principal analyst at ACG Research said, "We believe this diversity of views is representative of the variety of service provider needs. Service providers need the help of vendors like ECI to evaluate the best path to 5G transport deployment as well as its migration over time. The right initial deployment strategy may not be right in the medium to long-term, where capabilities like network slicing will become increasingly important to support the range of 5G services and use-cases."

"We understand that the transition to 5G is not a simple one. While it appears service providers are optimistic about its future, the responses indicate there's a lack of consensus on just how to ensure a successful roll out," said Jimmy Mizrahi, head of global portfolio at ECI. "Networks will no doubt evolve at their own pace and in their own manner. Today's 'one-size-fits-all' approach to mobile networks is just not viable. That is why we ensure our solutions support whatever migration path is chosen by the carrier."

To meet market demand, ECI has made great strides in its 5G developments during 2018. Early in the year, ECI launched its dynamic, intelligent 5G connectivity fabric, which acts as a springboard to 5G. It enables operators to easily scale and build underlying infrastructure for addressing key 5G requirements such as ultra-low latency and hyper-flexible bandwidth, while simplifying and automating operational lifecycles. Throughout the year, the company consistently demonstrated advanced technology capabilities, such as segment routing (SR) and FlexEthernet, in labs, at industry showcases and at customer PoCs (proof of concepts). By the end of 2019, ECI expects to be one of the few transport vendors able to offer a full, access-to-core 5G transport solution.

ECI will be exhibiting at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain from February 25 - 28, 2019, in Hall 6, Stand 6E21. To set a meeting, click here. For more information about ECI's 5G solutions, visit: https://www.ecitele.com/5g/.

About ECI
ECI is a global provider of ELASTIC network solutions to CSPs, critical infrastructures as well as data center operators. Along with its long-standing, industry-proven packet-optical transport, ECI offers a variety of SDN/NFV applications, end-to-end network management, a comprehensive cyber security solution, and a range of professional services. ECI's ELASTIC solutions ensure open, future-proof, and secure communications. With ECI, customers have the luxury of choosing a network that can be tailor-made to their needs today while being flexible enough to evolve with the changing needs of tomorrow. For more information, visit us at www.ecitele.com.

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