

# Dell Partnership With Brocade 'Changes The Game'

By [Brian Kraemer](#), ChannelWeb

5:01 PM EDT Tue. Sep. 01, 2009

Dell (NSDQ:Dell) continued its march into the data center Tuesday, rolling out a partnership with Brocade to bring a complete enterprise data center solution to customers and partners. Solution providers are reacting positively to the partnership, noting that the move by Dell allows them to play in the enterprise data center space.

Dell and Brocade on Wednesday will officially lift the curtain on an expanded partnership at VMworld in San Francisco that will create a unified data center solution for customers. The two companies will be rolling out five new data center products -- including switches and a data center fabric manager -- in December. The Dell-branded products are designed for customers focusing on virtualization to efficiently manage their data centers and will deliver a toolset that manages application delivery and deployment on networks.

The move to work with Brocade goes directly to Dell's stated commitment to the enterprise data center. Previously, most of the products and solutions put on the market by Dell have been limited to SMB customers, with some available entry-level enterprise functionality.

"The partnership with Brocade changes the game and bolsters Dell's storage," said Steve Brown, vice president of sales for Rev2 Technologies, a Santa Clara, Calif.-based solution provider. "Dell traditionally has not had a high-end enterprise storage switch of their own, other than something on a basic level partnership."

The partnership also allows solution providers to approach enterprise-class customers with a solution that will lessen the amount of disparate vendor products in the data center, said Bob Venero, president and CEO of Future Tech Enterprise, a Holbrook, N.Y.-based solution provider.

"It's a rarity that there will be a single OEM in an enterprise data center," Venero said. "But this partnership allows Dell to expand its footprint in the data center. That allows me to take customers to the next level of virtualization and cloud computing."

An added benefit for solution providers is that the story customers can be told changes somewhat as well. Now, rather than selling a Dell server with a Cisco (NSDQ:CSCO) switch, partners can put forward a solution with parts that customers will know work well together because all the components carry the same brand.

"Customers are always concerned about whether or not all the pieces and parts will work together properly," said Venero. "The question is whether or not three great products from three different companies will work together with singular results. Dell and Brocade working together

shows a tighter alignment and says that the products work together as a solution rather than as pieces and parts."

For Brown, the value of presenting a singular solution to a customer can't be overstated. Now, a customer won't necessarily have to approach several different vendors to troubleshoot a problem, reducing the time a highly paid, in-house employee in IT has to spend tracking down an answer to a problem.

"Presenting a consolidated front with backing from the manufacturer means a heck of a lot more to customers," said Brown. "Think of the time on the back side, for the IT guy who has to sit on the phone looking for an answer. What's the cost of that? When his data center has multiple OEMs in it, he might have to call Dell then Cisco then Microsoft to answer a question."

Zeus Kerravala, senior vice president for the Yankee Group, sees the partnership as a win-win situation for Dell and Brocade, noting that it opens up markets that both companies had previously had a difficult time cracking into.

"This expands the portfolio for Dell," said Kerravala. "A lot of the networking equipment Dell shipped would never get deployed in an enterprise. But by partnering with Brocade, Dell has access to a best-in-class networking portfolio."

Brocade, on the flip side, instantly gains traction and visibility in the SMB and midmarket space, where, according to Kerravala, the company has had problems reaching customers in the past. "Brocade never had a viable route to midmarket customers. Foundry, the networking business they acquired, was driven by large sales, not the sort found in the midmarket," he said.