5nine tackles security and management for hybrid and multi-cloud infrastructure

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THE 451 TAKE

Cloud and DevOps are forging entirely new approaches to IT – and to security. Cloud platforms are predicated on the programmability of infrastructure, where thousands of instances of a single server image or container can be provisioned and retired within seconds. But providing security and cloud management together remains more unusual than not, mostly because they are different operational tasks. However, 5nine is seeking to 'step change' its opportunity by riding the tailwinds of migration into Azure, Azure Stack and multi-cloud deployments with a product set that does both.

BUSINESS MODEL

Founded in 2009, 5nine launched its Hyper-V management product in 2012 and has thus far been focused only on private cloud. The product is designed to make it easier for customers to use and manage, monitor, backup, recover Hyper-V and associated security than Microsoft's own System Center and other third-party tools. 5nine has raised $15m in external investment through mid-2016 led by investors Insight Venture Partners and ABRT Venture Fund (owned by Veeam founder Ratmir Timashev). The current strategy is being led by former Verisign security executive Scott Sanders, who joined as CEO in mid-2017 and Vince Arneja formerly of Arxan/Opaq who joined as CPO in early 2018..

The 50-employee firm sells to enterprises of all sizes and does 60% of its business in the US and 40% outside – a ratio that it says will flip in 2018. 5nine claims 1,000 active customers to its subscription-based services, used by 100,000+ cloud and virtualization administrators. It started out managing Hyper-V infrastructure and subsequently added a security product.

TECHNOLOGY

5nine is on the third generation of its technology and is targeting the ability to provide unified management and security for all Microsoft platforms. The company plans to grow its customer base with the unified hybrid cloud platform and also target various types of channel partners.

5nine Cloud Manager offers VM migration (private to public, public to public), management of private/public, VM lifecycle management, capacity analysis, monitoring and dynamic optimization, backup, and disaster recovery. 5nine Cloud Security includes an agentless virtual firewall, IDS and anti-malware/antivirus, log management, Azure and various third-party integrations. The multi-tenant software is accessed by a Windows Management Console or web. 5nine added Azure support recently and plans to extend to Azure Stack by Q4.

The company believes its differentiation lies in the degree of introspection it provides for Hyper-V and Azure versus other approaches as well as its support for assisting the migration to Azure and Azure Stack (from VMware) that Microsoft is so actively pursuing. In addition, the unified platform provides tightly integrated backup/recovery, agentless security and SDN Management. As it heads toward a multi-cloud future, 5nine is planning to extend beyond Azure in 2019 – it will also make its software available in the Azure marketplace.

COMPETITION

Microsoft System Center is competitive, but 5nine believes that it is impractical, unmanageable and cost-prohibitive to use all seven of the System Center tools to that are sold separately to accomplish day-to-day operational tasks. Other vendors with integrated cloud and security offerings include Morpheus Data, Dome9, Palo Alto Networks Evident.io, CloudCheckr and DivvyCloud. Public cloud customers can also choose third-party security providers such as CloudPassage, Alert Logic, Cavirin, Saviynt, RedLock, Lacework and Cloudvisory. These players offer various options of configuration control and compliance management.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS
Microsoft has a strong public/private cloud offering with Azure and Azure stack and is gaining momentum. If it can leverage its new management and unified and hybrid cloud strategy successfully, 5nine will find opportunity as the need to move into and between public/private environments accelerates – along with the associated complexities. APIs, which are the foundation of cloud access, deliver new attack planes that must be secured.

WEAKNESSES
At some level, most cloud management platforms and services include 'security,' often as a subsector of compliance. This sometimes includes role-based identity and access management, compliance, governance and data protection. However, a cloud management platform doesn't typically have the forensic capabilities of specialist third-party security offerings. Moreover, the problem is that while CISOs may push to converge a coherent security policy and governance at scale, the fact is that cloud is often a decentralized purchase by different groups, making a coordinated and unified approach to security difficult to achieve.

OPPORTUNITIES
5nine believes organizations are seeking to move to centralized software to manage today's complex virtualization deployments more effectively, want to migrate to hybrid environments but need help, and have security products that are inefficient in virtual environments due to centralized scanning. It also believes its offering will enable enterprises to consolidate and eliminate point-product vendors. This is the opportunity it is targeting.

THREATS
While we don't see cloud security and management platforms converging in any significant way at present (with a few exceptions), going forward, hardwiring the two will become more important as cloud widens the attack plane. Although companies such as Microsoft are attempting to reconcile the two, they have a different mindset and skill set, as well as a separate operational function.