White Paper: Understanding Brocade End-of Life (EOL) and End-of-Support (EOS) Policies

Brocade begins the process of winding down support for a product when it announces an End-of-Life date (EOL) on its website. Each EOL announcement will have four dates associated with it:

1) Notification date
2) Last Time Order (LTO) date
3) End-of-Life (EOL) date
4) End-of-Support (EOS) date

The Notification date is simply the date of the notice and the LTO date is self-explanatory. The other two dates, the EOL date and the EOS date merit some explanation.

The EOL date is the Brocade designation that indicates all software and firmware development for the product have ended. Firmware (microcode) is frozen, new software features are no longer developed, enhancements to existing features are stopped and bug fixes are no longer performed. The EOL designation tells a customerthat going forward hardware and software revision levels will remain fixed. When a Brocade product is designated EOL, Brocade software products that are designed to run on that product are typically designated EOL as well. Brocade will typically continue to offer maintenance on an EOL designated product for five years, until the product reaches EOS.

The EOS date is the Brocade designation that indicates all support for a product has ended. This means that Brocade will no longer support the product, its firmware, or the software products that are designed to run on the product, passed the EOS date.

Once a Brocade EOL date has been announced Brocade has historically raised the maintenance rate for that product by 10% per yearuntil the product reaches EOS. Over a typical five year transition period from EOL to EOS the maintenance rate for the product will increase by over 40%.

As an example let's look at the Brocade M6140 director product (formerly the McData 6140). The Notification date for the M6140 was August 29, 2008. At that time the High Availability (HA) maintenance rate was $15,821 per year. The EOL date was specified as February 28, 2009 and the EOS date was designated as February 28, 2014, five years later. A 10% rate increase went into effect on March 1, 2010 raising the maintenance rate to $17,403. On the next anniversary date, March 1, 2011, another 10% rate increase raised the maintenance rate to $19,143. On March 1, 2012, the maintenance rate increased again to $21,057 and the final rate increase scheduled for March 1, 2013 will increase the maintenance rate to $23,163, where it will remain until February 28, 2014, when the Brocade M6140 becomes EOS and Brocade will no longer support it. The cumulative effect of the four rate hikes is a 46% increase in the maintenance rate.

(Source: Brocade END OF LIFE NOTIFICATION dated August 29, 2009)

That's why when a product reaches End-of-Life itis usually a good point to jump off Brocade's maintenance band wagon and switch to a third party maintenance provider for legacy support. Third party rates will cost up to 70% less than Brocade's rates for comparable SLAs. Since software enhancements and firmware are frozen on products that are designated EOL there is little risk in moving your SAN switch and director maintenance to a third party provider because obtaining new software and/or micro-code are no longer an issue. Of course, it goes without saying that your provider must have the technical expertise and experience to maintain Brocade and McData legacy products. Don't just go with any third party provider; make sure that your provider understands storage concepts. Quiz him on topics such as zoning and trunking and restoring a software license should it become corrupted. The payoff is large. Savings on certain Brocade directors, such as the aforementioned M6140 can reach upwards of $15,000 per director per year. As Brocade winds down its McData support, it is a smart time to look for an effective alternative.

To see a list of Brocade EOS and EOL dates for 2011 and 2012, please follow the enclosed link – [Brocade EOL &EOS Changes for 2011 and 2012.](#)

For more information about Brocade EOL and EOS support please contact the author, Jeff Klein, at jeffk@teamkci.com or by phone at 201-934-6500 extension 11.