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Networks



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From Cisco to Open Source: How Spicer Group Modernized Its Branch Network with VyOS

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Customer Overview

Founded in 1944, Spicer Group is a US-based professional services firm providing engineering, land surveying, and community planning services across 26 states. With 380 employees distributed across 16 office locations, Spicer Group supports essential civil infrastructure work, from surface water and transportation systems to drinking water, wastewater, and community development projects.

Underpinning that distributed operation is a branch network connecting 13 sites back to a central location over EPLAN circuits. It's a core operational dependency, with the reliability, predictability, and scalability of the network directly affecting day-to-day work across every office.

That network is led by Michael Doan, Network Administrator at Spicer Group, whose relationship with VyOS stretches back nearly a decade to version 1.1.7. Michael had already run VyOS in production at a previous employer, and when he joined Spicer Group, he brought that experience with him. VyOS wasn't selected through a formal vendor evaluation; it was introduced because the engineer responsible for the network already trusted it, and knew it could carry the business.

The Challenge

Before Michael's arrival, Spicer Group ran a Cisco-based networking stack, a conventional choice, but one that came with the familiar set of constraints enterprises increasingly find themselves working around rather than working with:

- **Licensing friction that scaled with the business.** Every new site, every capability unlock, every refresh cycle meant another license conversation. As the branch footprint grew, so did the cost structure.
- **A rigid operational model.** The Cisco stack offered limited room for Linux-style scripting, native automation, or the kind of transparent introspection that modern network teams expect. Day-to-day operations were shaped by the tooling's limits, not the team's ambitions.
- **Vendor dependence for core infrastructure.** Running the network meant running on someone else's terms: their release cadence, their pricing model, their feature roadmap. For an organization that wanted to grow its branch network without growing its vendor dependencies, that was the wrong direction of travel.

These weren't shortcomings of Cisco's platform. They were simply the wrong fit for where Spicer Group was heading.



Why VyOS

Michael had already made this call once. In his previous role, he'd built and operated networks on VyOS going back to version 1.1.7, watching the platform mature through multiple major releases, handling real production traffic, and consistently delivering the combination that's genuinely hard to



find elsewhere: a structured CLI that network engineers actually want to use, sitting on top of a full Linux distribution that gives them the scripting, automation, and transparency they need.

When the opportunity came up at Spicer Group, the decision was straightforward.

"With VyOS, I get the CLI I need and the Linux flexibility I want. That combination is rare, and once you've worked with it, it's hard to go back to anything else."

— Michael Doan, Network Administrator, Spicer Group

The choice wasn't about VyOS being cheaper than Cisco, though it was. It was about bringing in a platform that had already earned trust over years of production use, and that would give the team room to grow into cloud, automation, and next-generation data planes without having to swap vendors again.

Deployment Highlights

VyOS runs on bare-metal x86 white-box hardware across all 13 branch sites, handling the core routing functions that keep the distributed network operating:

- **Branch routing across 13 sites.** Each site runs a dedicated VyOS instance on commodity hardware, interconnected via EPLAN circuits to a central hub, proving the platform's ability to operate consistently across a geographically distributed footprint.
- **OSPF is the dynamic routing backbone.** VyOS handles OSPF across the branch network, providing automatic, reliable path selection between sites without the licensing or hardware dependencies of a traditional vendor stack.
- **Scaled without architectural rework.** The network grew from a handful of early sites to its current 13-site footprint without requiring a redesign. The same VyOS deployment model scaled with the business.
- **Stable in production with minimal intervention.** Once configured, VyOS instances require attention only when the team wants to introduce changes, not because the platform demands it.
- **Active lab work on VyOS 1.5 and VPP.** Michael is running VyOS 1.5 in a home lab and has begun testing Vector Packet Processing (VPP) and next-generation data plane capabilities, an evaluation aimed at unlocking higher throughput and new use cases as branch demands grow.

Why VyOS Works at Spicer Group

- **A true Cisco alternative, not a compromise.** VyOS delivers the routing protocols, stability, and operational rigor enterprises expect from traditional vendors, without the licensing overhead, hardware lock-in, or vendor-gated feature access.



- **CLI-first configuration backed by full Linux.** Engineers get the structured, predictable CLI they rely on day to day, plus the ability to script, automate, and introspect at the Linux layer when the situation calls for it.
- **Proven migration path from Cisco.** The Cisco-to-VyOS migration was executed in-house by Michael's team with only typical, manageable surprises: no unexpected blockers, no protracted rollback scenarios.
- **A predictable upgrade model.** Version transitions, such as the upcoming move from 1.4 to 1.5, focus on stability and performance rather than breaking syntax changes, keeping long-term operational costs low.
- **Partnership, not just support.** Architecture reviews, senior engineer access, and proactive migration guidance from VyOS Networks give the team a genuine partnership model, not a ticketing queue.

Results

- **A branch network that scaled without rework.** From initial deployment to 13 sites today, the VyOS footprint grew with the business without requiring architectural redesign or platform changes.
- **Operational simplicity.** CLI-first configuration combined with Linux-native scripting has made day-to-day network management faster, more transparent, and less dependent on vendor-specific tooling.
- **Production stability across multiple version cycles.** Michael's VyOS experience spans from 1.1.7 to today, covering multiple major releases, multiple production environments, and a consistent track record of stability.
- **Successful migration from Cisco.** The transition was completed in-house by Michael's team, validating VyOS as a credible replacement for established vendor stacks at real-world enterprise scale.
- **Freedom to evolve.** Lab testing on VyOS 1.5 and VPP, combined with planned cloud deployments, is already underway, all on the same platform the team is running in production today.

Looking Ahead

Spicer Group is actively planning the next phase of its VyOS deployment:

- **Upgrade to VyOS 1.5,** with the 1.4-to-1.5 transition expected to be straightforward given the focus on stability and performance improvements.
- **Move into VPP-based data plane acceleration,** currently under lab evaluation, to unlock higher throughput as branch requirements grow.
- **Extend into the public cloud,** taking advantage of VyOS's availability across AWS, Azure, GCP, Oracle, and Equinix Network Edge, with marketplace private-offer pricing further reducing the cost of cloud deployments.



Conclusion

VyOS has given Spicer Group a stable, flexible, and transparent foundation for its branch network, one that has scaled cleanly from initial deployment to 13 production sites and is now ready to extend into VyOS 1.5, VPP, and the public cloud. By replacing Cisco with an enterprise-grade open source platform, the team has eliminated licensing friction, gained full operational control, and built a network that can evolve with the business rather than against it.



"We replaced Cisco with VyOS, and the network has grown with the business ever since. It's stable, it's flexible, and when I want to do something custom, nothing stands in the way. That's exactly what I need from a network platform."

— Michael Doan, Network Administrator, Spicer Group

