

— VCF UPGRADE SERIES: PART 2

Aria in VCF 9: Same Upgrade Effort, a Very Different Outcome

VCF 9 does not give Aria customers a simple version bump. VMware Aria Operations and Aria Automation become VCF Operations and VCF Automation, and getting there is a genuine replatforming project, not a patch. Broadcom markets part of that new stack as included in the VCF subscription, but the real cost of this upgrade was never just the license line. It is the integration rework, the validation effort, and the deeper dependency on a single vendor whose licensing behavior is the reason so many customers are already looking for a way out. That combination makes this upgrade a natural decision point: spend the effort upgrading further into Broadcom's stack, or spend the same effort moving to a platform that does not lock you in further.

**150–
1,000%**

REPORTED VMWARE RENEWAL
INCREASES

**300–
600%**

COMMON FOR MID-SIZE
CUSTOMERS

50%+

ACTIVELY EVALUATING
ALTERNATIVES

THE 'FREE' ARIA UPGRADE HAS A COST

Aria Operations is bundled into the VCF subscription on a per-core basis, which is where the 'free' framing comes from. Aria Automation is not: it is sold separately as VCF Automation, and always has been. So the free upgrade only ever covered half the suite, and the other half is a paid product tying your automation and orchestration layer even more tightly to Broadcom's roadmap.

That roadmap has become the whole problem. Reported VMware renewal increases have ranged from 150% to well over 1,000%, with mid-size customers commonly seeing 300% to 600% increases and extreme cases reaching four figures. More than half of VMware customers are now actively evaluating alternatives. Upgrading deeper into Aria, even the part that is technically included, means expanding your footprint inside the exact ecosystem that produced those numbers.

Same starting effort. Two very different destinations.



Upgrade to VCF Operations + Automation



Same integration rework and validation effort as any platform migration



Deepens dependency on Broadcom's licensing and product roadmap



Aria Automation is billed separately: the included Aria Operations is only half the suite



Keeps future infrastructure choices locked to the VMware ecosystem



Renewal price increases of 150% to over 1,000% are already pushing customers to look elsewhere.



Adopt CloudBolt CMP



Same starting effort, applied to a vendor-agnostic control plane instead



200+ integrations across clouds, hypervisors, and IT operations tools



Predictable pricing and an independent roadmap, not tied to one vendor's licensing decisions



Test Proxmox, OpenShift, Nutanix, or public cloud in parallel, with no forced cutover



A brownfield, crawl-walk-run adoption model: no forklift, no big-bang commitment.



Same upgrade effort. A very different multi-year outcome.

YOU ARE ALREADY DOING THE MIGRATION WORK

Broadcom's own documentation is candid about what this upgrade actually involves. Moving Aria Automation to VCF Automation 9 requires importing through Aria Suite Lifecycle 8.18, running a blue-green cutover to a new instance, and validating every custom integration and piece of automation content before traffic switches over. Broadcom's guidance explicitly recommends treating this as an independent workstream, separate from the rest of the VCF upgrade, because the custom coding involved can take significant time to validate and remediate.

That is not a routine patch cycle. It is a full replatforming of the automation and orchestration layer: rebuilding content, re-testing integrations, and validating a cutover before anything goes live. If an organization is already committing that level of engineering time regardless of what it chooses, it is worth asking a different question: should that effort go toward reinforcing dependence on Broadcom, or toward a platform built to reduce it?

WHAT CLOUDBOLT CMP OFFERS INSTEAD

CloudBolt CMP is built on a vendor-agnostic architecture, not tied to any single hypervisor or cloud vendor's roadmap. It ships with more than 200 integrations across clouds, hypervisors, and IT operations tools, so the automation and governance layer a team is already planning to rebuild does not have to be rebuilt again the next time a vendor changes its licensing terms.

Adoption follows a brownfield, crawl-walk-run model: connect CMP to the environment as it exists today, discover what is already running, and automate incrementally, starting with a single process rather than a big-bang cutover. That matters directly for this comparison, because the Aria upgrade already requires a full validation and integration effort. CloudBolt is built so that same effort does not have to repeat itself again in a few years when the next licensing shift lands. Pricing is predictable and the roadmap is independent, not subject to acquisition-driven disruption, and on-premises and air-gapped deployment options are available for regulated environments that cannot simply move everything to a public cloud.

📅 Replatforming to VCF Automation: 8 required phases

- 1 Patch VMware Aria Suite Lifecycle to version 8.18 Patch 2 (prerequisite)
- 2 Import Aria Automation 8.18.1+ into VCF Operations
- 3 Build the upgrade plan and map the correct binaries
- 4 Provision a new VCF Automation instance (blue-green deployment)
- 5 Migrate data and configurations to the new instance
- 6 Validate every custom integration and piece of automation content before traffic switches over **LONGEST PHASE**
- 7 Cut over network traffic to the new instance
- 8 Decommission the original Automation nodes

All 8 phases are sequential and required before go-live.

Broadcom's own guidance recommends running this as an independent workstream, separate from the rest of the VCF upgrade, because custom coding can take significant time to validate and remediate before anything is production-ready.

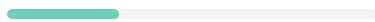
Nothing is usable in production until phase 8 is done.

☁️ CloudBolt: brownfield crawl, walk, run

🔍 CRAWL

- 🔗 Connect CMP to the environment exactly as it exists today.
- 📋 Discover current VMs, templates, and workflows.
- ⚙️ Automate one existing process, with no changes to how teams work today.

SCOPE AUTOMATED



Live day one

👤 WALK

- 🛡️ Extend automation to additional processes and teams.
- 📋 Layer in governance, approvals, and policy-as-code.
- 🔗 Add integrations as new needs come up, on your own timeline.

SCOPE AUTOMATED



No re-platform

▶️ RUN

- ☁️ Full orchestration across clouds, hypervisors, and platforms.
- ✅ Includes any alternative infrastructure being tested in parallel.
- 📊 Self-service and cost optimization at scale, across every team.

SCOPE AUTOMATED



Integrations carry forward

🎯 **One path: 8 sequential phases before go-live. The other: value at every stage.**

— A CHANCE TO TEST WHAT COMES AFTER VMWARE, WITHOUT BETTING ON IT YET

Because CMP does not require an all-or-nothing commitment, it lets a team keep running production workloads on VMware today while testing what else is out there under the same control plane and the same governance policies. That matters because VMware customers are not evaluating alternatives quietly anymore: more than half are now actively looking, and the current shortlist includes Nutanix AHV, Red Hat OpenShift Virtualization, Proxmox VE, and the major public clouds, depending on workload and scale.

Adopting CMP instead of upgrading deeper into Aria turns the question of ever leaving Broadcom from an all-or-nothing rebuild into an incremental hedge. Teams can pilot a workload on Proxmox or OpenShift, compare it against the VMware baseline, and make that decision on their own timeline rather than Broadcom's renewal calendar. After a year of watching renewal quotes double, triple, or worse, that kind of optionality is worth more than whatever Aria Operations saves on the license line.

— THE BOTTOM LINE

Every organization upgrading Aria in VCF 9 is going to spend real engineering time on this regardless of what happens next.

That is exactly why it is worth pausing before defaulting to VCF Operations and VCF Automation, and asking whether that effort should go toward a platform designed to reduce Broadcom dependency instead of extending it. CloudBolt CMP is built for that transition: the same starting effort, a materially different outcome over the next several years.

If your team is already scoping the Aria upgrade, it is worth a conversation before that work begins.

[Talk to CloudBolt](#)