

ESG BRIEF

Cisco Live 2020: New and Enhanced Network Solutions to Fuel Digital Transformation

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ABSTRACT: Cisco Live 2020 got a makeover this year—it went all digital (due to COVID-19) after being held live and in-person for the past 30 years. More than 120,000 people attended the event where Cisco demonstrated its commitment to the community and its customers. There were also plenty of announcements about new and updated services for networking, security, collaboration, and customer experience. In the networking arena, new services announced comprised a series of network insight capabilities covering a wide assortment of products across Cisco's portfolio—focusing on accelerating digital transformation via enhanced and improved proactive and predictive services, and the vital ability to automate data center networks globally.

Overview

Recently, Cisco hosted its first all-digital event, Cisco Live 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the vendor's annual Cisco Live customer and partner conference (think 30 years of live, in-person conventions) transformed into a two-day, online, collaborative experience with more than 120,000 registered attendees.

Over the course of the event, Cisco announced a number of new, innovative networking solutions to assist organizations enhance business and network operations through simplification, security, and analytics. Cisco's new solutions comprise network insight capabilities and span various products in the vendor's intent-based network (IBN) portfolio, including the following:

Security: Enabling Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) Environments

- **Cisco SD-WAN Innovations.** With SD-WAN version 17.2, Cisco has a fully integrated and secure WAN solution. This will enable organizations to create a secure access service edge (SASE) environment by combining Cisco's SD-WAN with Cisco Umbrella Cloud Security platform. Cisco will now offer comprehensive cloud-native security, empowering organizations to defend against advanced threats, web attacks, etc., by combining DNS-layer security, firewall, and cloud access security broker (CASB) functionality. It works by taking traffic from the SD-WAN appliance through Cisco vManage (centralized network management system) and Cisco vEdge Cloud (software router platform) out to Cisco Umbrella and Cisco Secure Internet Gateway (SIG).

Cisco Umbrella is easy to deploy; offers flexible consumption models, automated provisioning, and an enhanced user experience; and leverages the Cisco SD-WAN on-premises security stack, which includes recently added SSL Proxy

capabilities. Additional Cisco SD-WAN innovations include support for multicast and integrated voice and unified communications.

Simplify: Driving Operational Efficiencies with Integrated Dashboards

- **New Nexus Dashboard.** Cisco has combined a number of network management features to offer advanced insights via a single pane of glass (i.e., centralized dashboard), allowing IT easy access to the services required to manage an organization's infrastructure. IT can improve productivity by reducing complexity, easily scale up and manage multiple sites, and respond more quickly to the needs of users.
- **Cisco Network Insights Advisor (NIA).** NIA is an integrated application in the new Nexus Dashboard and offers a machine learning-powered view of network operations. NIA helps IT mitigate the risk of unscheduled outages, and reduce data center network downtime, offering proactive notifications and advice that focuses on maintaining availability (e.g., critical bug, security advisories, current versions of hardware/software, etc.).
- **Cisco User-Defined Networks.** With IT establishing the appropriate guardrails, users can now register their own wireless devices on their own wireless network partition by way of a secure, mobile application and share access with other authorized users (via Cisco DNA Center, the network management/command center for Cisco DNA). By simplifying the process, users feel empowered, security remains intact, and IT is freed from the shackles of time-consuming, repetitive device registrations, enabling them to work on value-added projects.

Analytics: Granular Visibility, IoT Device Management at Scale, and Location Services

Between highly distributed networks and the endless proliferation of IoT devices (think corporate, personal, and unmonitored), IT faces constant challenges. To help meet those challenges, Cisco is introducing a viable means to achieve more granular visibility and more efficient IoT device management with the following:

- **AI Endpoint Analytics.** Cisco DNA Center will now be able to identify previously unknown endpoints at scale, then employ various contextual sources and artificial intelligence to logically group them—enabling IT to establish a basis for scalable, automated policies.
- **Group-based Policy Analytics.** Cisco DNA Center can analyze traffic flows between groups of endpoints, designing policies that can be used as the basis for appropriate segmentation.

As organizations are slowly opening brick and mortar workplaces, one of their top priorities is to provide safe physical spaces for employees returning to the office. Cisco has added applications to extend visibility to its DNA Spaces (the vendor's cloud-based indoor location services platform that offers insights and context into data) for any network using its Catalyst, Aironet, or Meraki wireless access points.

- **Cisco DNA Spaces for Returning to Business.** To help organizations monitor workspaces to comply with social distancing guidelines, Cisco has introduced real-time and historical analysis tools to the platform. Organizations can configure the level of detail required—from gathering anonymous statistical counts to identifying individuals at a particular site.
- **Indoor IoT Services.** To quickly (and cost-effectively) deploy indoor IoT applications at scale, Cisco DNA Spaces is now offering Indoor IoT-as-a-Service on Wi-Fi 6 access points. DNA Spaces helps streamline activation, configuration, and management of a multitude of supported IoT devices, including support for Bluetooth (BLE) devices. Working with

Cisco's extensive partner network, Cisco DNA Spaces provides organizations across a number of verticals (e.g., education, healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, workspaces, and retail) with asset tracking; employee safety; space utilization; and room finding, to name a few.

The Bigger Truth

With the key goal of achieving operational efficiency, growing numbers of organizations have embarked on digital transformation initiatives. Because the network is fundamental in driving digital transformation in highly distributed environments, it's essential to possess an end-to-end view of this increasingly complex environment—to enhance efficiency, agility, and security. Simplifying the environment with intelligent dashboards will increase efficiency and leveraging granular analytics utilizing AI/ML will enable agility by providing the requisite insights to constantly optimize performance and ensure positive customer experiences. Lastly, by tightly integrating security solutions into the network, organizations can mitigate risk and cybersecurity threats with a unified approach.

Cisco Live 2020 demonstrated not only Cisco's commitment to its customers, but also its community. From delaying the event itself to the multiple messages of support for social equality and financial support to help organizations impacted by the pandemic, Cisco Live 2020 carried more significance than perhaps ever before. It also provided a number of significant network innovations to enable organizations to deal with the complexity of highly distributed environments and ensure a safe return to work for employees.

Cisco DNA Center, Cisco DNA Spaces, and Cisco SD-WAN innovations are available today.

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