ESG BRIEF

Cisco Partner Summit 2020: New Solutions Connect Infrastructure, Tools, and Teams, Simplifying IT Across Platforms

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ABSTRACT: After being held live for 24 years, the Cisco Partner Summit went all digital. With more than 10,000 participants, Cisco announced a variety of new solutions highlighting how partners can assist customers in better adapting to business disruptions, accelerating digital transformation, and simplifying IT operations using automated platforms (think secure connectivity and across public and private clouds, on-premises, hybrid, data center, and edge environments).

Overview

Cisco recently held its 25th Partner Summit—and this year the event was fully digital, with more than 10,000 attendees from around the world. (Cisco has a formidable channel ecosystem, with more than 60,000 partners providing assistance to customers worldwide.) Throughout the two-day event (whose theme was "Future Ready"), the Cisco leadership team highlighted a variety of ways in which Cisco partners can assist their customers to "reimagine the way the workforce and workplace operates," focusing on agility, simplicity, and resiliency. It also highlighted significant improvements in the partner experience in interacting with Cisco.

With the Partner Summit as a backdrop, Cisco announced new, innovative solutions to help organizations be better prepared to ensure business resiliency, enable seamless collaboration across the organization, speed cloud adoption, and efficiently secure the infrastructure (think holistic visibility). Several announcements highlighted new software-delivered solutions, presenting viable possibilities for gaining advanced insights, employing automation to speed digital transformation, and driving greater operational efficiency.

The Announcements

Cisco's enhanced product announcements serve to energize and arm its partners with solutions to help them simplify increasingly complex and highly distributed IT and application environments. Here are some of the major announcements from the Partner Summit, and those shared in the week leading up to it.

- **Cisco Intersight**, Cisco's cloud-based operations platform, is offered as a service, connecting applications and infrastructure to offer full stack visibility (think bare metal servers, hypervisors to Kubernetes, serverless, and applications). Intersight simplifies and unifies operations management, connecting infrastructure with workloads, speeding service delivery, and ensuring application performance, while reducing costs.

- **Intersight Workload Optimizer**, Cisco's "intelligent decision engine," allows IT to proactively mitigate issues before they can affect performance (and the bottom line). Intersight Workload Optimizer continuously monitors

application performance and IT resource use on-premises and in public clouds, ensuring performance, while at the same time reducing operational costs.

- **Cisco AppDynamics** released new capabilities to assist IT in building cloud-native applications by connecting hybrid application performance to business performance—in real time. New capabilities include:

  - Full stack observability platform increases visibility and ingests data from multiple sources.

  - Cloud data collector captures and automates data collection, and correlates cloud services with application code, user experience, and business impact.

  - Integration with Cisco Intersight Workload Optimizer allows IT to be proactive, optimizing infrastructure resources/costs in hybrid cloud environments.

- **Cisco Nexus Dashboard**. Cisco's new centralized dashboard for the data center simplifies data center network operations and management for hybrid cloud. Scalable and simple to use, the Nexus dashboard provides a comprehensive view of operations across an organization's infrastructure, enabling more consistent and efficient lifecycle management (from troubleshooting through onboarding to provisioning). Easy-to-navigate panels provide specific views of the network, allowing admins and operators to quickly assess and mitigate potential issues. Before the Cisco Nexus Dashboard, NetOps/ITOps/SecOps/DevOps personnel navigated different tool chains, had disparate user experiences, and reacted to information differently.

Currently, the unified and simplified view provided by the Cisco Nexus Dashboard includes Cisco Nexus Insights, Cisco Network Assurance Engine, Cisco Multi-Site Orchestrator, and, looking ahead, the ability to incorporate third-party tools under a single window.

Cisco's Catalyst 8000 Series: A New SD-WAN Edge Platform for Highly Distributed Environments

As the application landscape grows more distributed, organizations require technology to enable high-performance, secure network connectivity to remote locations. With that in mind, Cisco recently announced its new wide area networking (WAN) edge platform, the new Cisco Catalyst 8000 Series Edge platforms available for on-premises, the cloud, hybrid, and new cellular gateways. These innovative offerings are an important part of Cisco's intent-based networking (IBN) portfolio, offering secure, automated connectivity to applications across clouds, on-premises data centers, and the edge, utilizing wired and wireless connectivity—providing IT with consistent policy-based automation, greater agility, and better visibility into network applications issues.

The Catalyst 8000 Series gives organizations an opportunity to adopt a secure access service edge architecture (SASE) based on their unique needs. These solutions offer Cisco Umbrella integration, a cloud-native service for integrating networking functions and controlling security across organizations, and for organizations requiring hybrid security (think on-premises and cloud), full-stack security is built into the Catalyst 8000 Series.

Catalyst 8500 and 8300 Series Edge Platforms

The Catalyst 8500 Series Edge Platform is designed for on-premises data centers, colocation sites, and aggregation sites, featuring integrated 40G and 100G with ethernet ports incorporated into a compact, single rack unit.

The Catalyst 8300 Series Edge Platform is designed to manage edge connectivity at branch sites, offering better SD-WAN service performance than Cisco ISR 4400 routers, and providing a straightforward upgrade path to wireless WAN, including 5G with a pluggable module. The 8300 Series also supports modules compatible with the CISCO ISR 4000 family.

Catalyst 8000V Edge Software

Catalyst 8000V Edge software extends visibility, connectivity, and security in multi-cloud environments (including AWS, Microsoft Azure, and Google Cloud). This flexible virtual routing platform can run on an x86 platform, an Enterprise Network Compute System (ENCS), or a communications service provider (CSP) appliance in a private or public cloud.

Catalyst Cellular Gateways

By means of a cellular WAN, organizations can more easily automate deployment, monitor network traffic, and manage policies. Cisco's new form factor devices (a secure, flexible wireless WAN) offer secure, cellular deployment from any location. Thanks to the Catalyst Cellular Gateway, Catalyst 8000 Edge platforms, Cisco integrated service routers (ISR), and aggregation services (ASR), routers can now connect to 4G (LTE) as well as 5G networks (coming soon). In addition, the Cellular Gateway provides a wireless WAN option *without* requiring hardware upgrades to Catalyst 8000 devices. All 8000 Series solutions are delivered via a flexible subscription-based offer. Cisco Catalyst 8500 and 8300 Edge Series, and Cisco Catalyst Cellular Gateway are available today. Availability for Cisco Catalyst 8000V is planned for December 2020.

Moving Forward

Now that Cisco has launched these innovative new solutions, and showcased them at its partner event, the next step is ensuring all the partners are well trained and can promote the benefits to their customers. The announcements from the event and just prior demonstrate Cisco's understanding of the complexity that exists within modern and highly distributed enterprises and even within its own vast portfolio. It needs to continue to deliver better experiences through simplified solutions that enable organizations to gain greater operational efficiencies.

Cisco also continues to grow and expand its training programs, and this year has seen significant improvements to the DevNet program with two levels of certifications available for customers and partners. ESG expects these new certifications will hold the same or even more value for the individuals and partners who obtain them as their predecessors on the physical network did (CCIE and CCNA).

The Bigger Truth

Whether modernizing infrastructure, adopting cloud technologies, or becoming more data-driven, organizations are looking for a workable means to consolidate IT and become more operationally efficient. The new products and enhancements delivered at or just prior to Cisco's Partner Summit 2020 can significantly improve an organization's ability to simplify and secure a hybrid cloud, with solutions that will enhance the network, security, and user experience.

This array of new solutions provides partners with a host of new reasons to engage with their customers. ESG expects that the simplicity and operational efficiencies gained with these new solutions will be very attractive to existing and new Cisco customers.

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