I'll Take One Network, Without Wires

Tips for Gaining Secure Access From Anywhere

» Smartphones, tablets, and other new devices can deliver big productivity gains, if you can support and secure them on your wired and wireless networks. In this issue of Meet the Expert, Pete Eisenhower, Cisco Business Development Specialist for PC Connection, talks about how you can optimize your network infrastructure to deliver mobility and create a borderless network.

Q: What is driving IT organizations to find a better way to manage their networks?

A: A lot of IT departments have downsized to remain competitive in today's economy. This means that fewer individuals are left to manage access for more devices. It is estimated that by 2015 more than 7 billion new wireless devices will be connected to the network. While some companies have the budget to provide standard devices to their employees, some companies take a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) approach—allowing employees to pick their own platforms. Those employees expect to conduct business with these devices from anywhere, as if they were at their desk. Now the IT staff has to accommodate those expectations. Any company that isn't bringing their infrastructure up to speed for increased mobile deployment is going to find themselves at a competitive disadvantage.

Q: What challenges does an IT department face when enabling distributed workers access to applications while on the road and in the home office?

A: Many organizations tap into talent pools all over the world. Workers might be full-time or contractors, and many of them may not come into the main office. This changes how we are doing business. IT now has to make decisions about how they manage the tools required for this new business model; security solutions need to be enhanced, policies need to be created, enforcement for those policies needs to be automated, and applications might need to be hosted off-site or in the cloud. With the decentralization of employees, IT departments that use old models may not have the staff, infrastructure, or budget to manage the expectations of this new techno-centric workforce.

Q: What strategy does a company need to move off of traditional IT models and approach new demands on the network?

A: The ideal situation is a robust network platform that is capable of delivering a real-time collaboration experience to any device. The Internet gives smaller companies the opportunity to reach far more customers than ever before. They can arrange face-to-face meetings and create customized demonstrations—either live or by video-on-demand. They can create personal B2 portals online and give a showroom experience to people across the planet without anyone ever having to leave their office. Demand for this is coming from customers and employees who are enamored with online services like Skype, Netflix, and Facebook in their personal lives. They want to import that positive experience into their work environment. In order to do that successfully, companies need a cutting-edge infrastructure that includes high-speed WAN and LAN connectivity, vast increases in storage capacity—especially if you are doing any kind of video—application support, and security. Companies who can't afford to upgrade their on-premise equipment are going to have to find alternate ways to stay competitive.

In addition, a lot of companies are expanding their reach for customers from regional to global. These new customers are relying on transparent mobility and security so that they can have anytime, anywhere communication with their business partners. That carries with it an ever-increasing need for security on devices locally and across cloud-services—making collaboration between companies and their cloud partners as important as communication between companies and their customers.

Q: What is Cisco doing today to help IT departments make a change?

A: Cisco Borderless Network architecture helps IT departments balance demanding business challenges and changing business models, like those promoted by the influx of mobile devices, at all levels of the network. It provides a framework to unify wired and wireless access to a single network—so users are available any time, at any place, and can be as effective and productive as if they were sitting at their desks. Security is key to this and network access control, policy creation and enforcement, application accessibility, performance management across many different device types, and the tools to make global collaboration easy and intuitive are necessary. Cisco and the experts at PC Connection can help IT departments evolve their infrastructure to deliver secure, reliable, seamless user experiences in a world with many shifting borders.

solving IT one customer at a time™ | PC Connection®

Q: From a technical standpoint, what do borderless networks encompass and how do they work?

A: A Borderless Network is exactly as it sounds. It takes advantage of the ubiquity of networks—they are everywhere—to link users, devices, applications, and business processes together. The architecture enables IT to innovate faster while providing control in an environment that includes partners, customers, and employees.

A Borderless Network delivers two primary sets of services: network services, and end-point and user services. This is managed by a comprehensive and integrated network solution. Network services are end-to-end services delivered by the infrastructure. They include secure and high-speed routing and WAN optimization, intelligent and flexible switching, the ability to prioritize collaboration applications, mobility features that let salespeople be available all the time, VPN connections, security policy enforcements, and protection of proprietary intellectual property and customer information. End-point and user services define the user experience and enable the attributes of secure, reliable, and seamless performance on a broad range of devices and environments.

Q: Can you describe the challenges that come with securing a borderless network?

A: Security is the number one challenge facing all IT departments today. Security breeches can be devastating to a company's bottom line. Some examples include: theft of proprietary corporate information, losing trust with customers if their confidential information is leaked, missing compliance regulations for an audit, or the inability to transact business if hackers block access to websites or applications that are needed to conduct day-to-day processes.

With the explosion of devices that can now be used, enabling secure access from anywhere, with any device, becomes more challenging. Cisco Borderless Networks meet that challenge by creating an environment where every device on the network plays a role in keeping it secure—security doesn't begin and end at the firewall. The crucial element to scaling secure access is a policy-based architecture that allows IT to implement centralized access controls with enforcement throughout the network from server, to infrastructure, to client.

Q: With today's economic challenges, some companies have not deployed and upgraded their network yet. How can they move toward this new type of network architecture and support a borderless experience?

A: The process starts with assessments. Before a company can know what their network can and can't do, they need to assess their own technical and financial capabilities. If an IT department has weaknesses in their security and wireless LAN skills, they will need to partner with a company that can provide that expertise before they can think about buying equipment or upgrading. After that, the IT staff and their partner can document the company's business requirements and objectives. From there they can conduct technical assessments of the company's network infrastructure and create a strategy. This is where ROI is created and the customer experience can be improved—leading to increased productivity and an improved bottom line.

To learn more about Cisco Borderless Networks and the Network Assessments available from PC Connection, contact your Account Manager today.

Get Ready to Leverage Your Network

Our network services combine infrastructure and applications to provide you with secure, dependable wired and wireless connectivity. Our experts can show you how to take advantage of the flexibilities of application delivery and productivity benefits of mobile technologies.

To help you get more from your existing infrastructure we offer the following:

- Cisco WAAS Proof of Concept
- Network Assessment
- Network Inventory Assessment
- Security Assessment
- Voice and Video Assessment
- Wireless Site Survey

**Ready to learn more?
Contact your Account Manager today.**

**1.800.800.0014
www.pcconnection.com**

solving **IT** one customer at a time™ | **PC Connection**®