

Foreword

When I started working as a sales person, the major means of business communication was very personal—face-to-face meetings—with the telephone being the most popular way to communicate. Because most business was conducted in person, it meant that it took several days or even weeks to plan meetings and travel logistics. With the advent of technology, information began to move faster—fax machines, overnight delivery, personal computers, cell phones, pagers—allowing for business to move along with it. Deals could be closed in days or weeks instead of weeks or months. Today, as we all know, with the advent of the Internet Age, information moves in real time. We are truly an information society, and business has evolved to meet those demands.

In today's information technology environment, Cisco conducts business using productivity tools and investments based on networked Internet-based solutions and technologies. Cisco is truly a networked virtual organization, which works with an ecosystem of partners to provide our customers with the best end-to-end solutions, largely from Internet technologies. We are able to close our books each quarter virtually, in a matter days, rather than weeks. We benefit from huge productivity gains we get from our Internet-based solutions, saving up to \$1.7 billion annually with our E-Sales, E-Hub, Virtual Close, E-Commerce, and other Internet-based applications, such as E-Support, as demonstrated by the TAC Web site.

The Cisco TAC Web provides customers with immediate access to technical information to troubleshoot their own issues, and it also provides them with immediate status of their issue. Cisco TAC Web is an integral part of our e-business strategy by allowing Cisco to reduce the number of phone calls and telephone technicians, while still providing immediate and thorough customer service, which is our number-one priority. This allows both Cisco and the customer to reap the productivity benefits Internet business solutions offer.

Many companies have tried to set up e-support systems. Sometimes they work, sometimes, not, but we very much want you to be successful in setting up or improving your e-support system. We truly believe that helping you along the road to success will help Cisco along in the same way. The process is not inexpensive, nor is it easy, but what Cisco can provide is the benefit of our experience, which, hopefully, will make your job easier.

A lot of the experience we have gained over the years is presented by the authors of *E-Support*. In this book, you'll learn from the Cisco experts about issues they needed to think about—and that you will, too—in order to set up a successful e-support system. Some of the things you'll learn include:

Metrics—Cisco TAC Web's mission is to empower customers, and to keep calls from going to phone-based customer service engineers. The metrics team gathers and analyzes the information (usually numerical) that lets TAC Web management know where and how they have succeeded or failed.

Marketing—Cisco TAC Web has its own marketing department. The job of the marketing department is to get customers to use the Web site—but more importantly—to truly listen to customers, so that Cisco has a basis for improvement, which keeps customers loyal.

Competitive Analysis—Cisco’s competitors also have e-support sites, so this book tells you how Cisco analyzes those sites and others to keep current with what’s happening in e-support.

Site Architecture—Site architecture takes a big picture look at the Cisco TAC Web from a very high level and then gets all of the components to work together to solve customer problems.

Community—Cisco’s online community, NetPro, is a gathering place for people to exchange information about Cisco and non-Cisco products, in an online discussion. In a survey conducted in April 2002 with people who had visited NetPro in the past, fifty-three percent of the respondents had their issues completely or mostly resolved.

During what are tough economic times, properly executed e-support solutions can meet customer needs while cutting costs, which truly adds to your bottom line. We’ve seen that result here at Cisco, and it can work for you as well.

We hope that this book will help you realize some of the enormous promise that the Internet and e-support holds for businesses, government, and individuals, changing the way the world works, lives, plays, and learns.

John Chambers

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