

How Cisco IT Adopted a Collaborative Community Environment

Integrated workforce experience transforms IT culture and enables centralized knowledge and information sharing.

Cisco IT Case Study / Collaboration / Integrated Workforce Experience: This case study describes Cisco IT's internal adoption of an integrated community that provides relevant information to the IT workforce, enables centralized knowledge sharing, and fosters employee collaboration. Cisco customers can draw on Cisco IT's real-world experience in this area to help support similar enterprise needs.

“What has both surprised and delighted me is that IWE is delivering true productivity gains and saving resources. For instance, we have achieved a large and measurable reduction in our email as we adopted IWE and the new working behaviors it enables.”

Jim O'Donnell, Senior Director, IT Customer Strategy and Success, Cisco

BACKGROUND

Cisco IT has a vision to lead every move Cisco makes with networked IT, unifying the business and technology through a services-oriented organization. To enable this vision, it is imperative that Cisco IT users can easily connect with people, information, and business processes that are needed to work more efficiently.

Users need an environment that enables them to **collaborate** easily and allows the freedom to **share knowledge** and **resources**, lets them **find, organize, and share** information efficiently, and provides the ability for users to locate and

interact with subject matter experts across the company **quickly, and all of this in one place**. Furthermore, this environment must be supported by the appropriate technology, processes, and culture.

When fully implemented this environment will transform and drive innovation through an IT culture where a community shares new ideas freely, and has open discussions and debates to drive greater innovation and diverse solutions. Ultimately Cisco IT will develop and nurture an open, borderless, transparent community that works cross functionally and geographically to drive productivity.

This case study focuses on the adoption and culture change required by Cisco IT to move toward this transformed integrated workforce experience (IWE). The IWE for IT initiative is the foundation for driving adoption of the main IT and related communities.

CHALLENGE

IWE for IT brings a new way of working day to day in Cisco IT. To centralize and bring relevant information to the IT workforce and allow employees to collaborate globally, Cisco IT must overcome several technical, procedural, and cultural challenges. These challenges include:

- Information and expertise is difficult to find
- Content is typically spread across many repositories
- Content is static
- It is difficult for users to share or add value to content
- Interaction is often siloed with little reach or cross pollination

- Experts are not readily identifiable
- Knowledge about individuals' expertise tends to remain within the domain of personal contacts

The root causes underlying these challenges include:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>BACKGROUND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A centralized environment needed where Cisco IT users can collaborate, share knowledge, and find experts and information easily and efficiently.
<p>CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and content are often siloed across the organization. • Experts are not readily identifiable and frequently over exposed. • People experience information overload and are reticent when faced with change.
<p>SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted IWE for IT, a foundational community and gateway to all information and resources related to the IT organization.
<p>RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption in the main IT community boosted interest in other areas of IWE.
<p>LESSONS LEARNED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear vision, strategy, and execution. • Understand where the greatest impact will be made first. • Be flexible with training. • Measure results and adapt.
<p>NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to IWE powered by Quad • Add new IT communities

- Tendency for users to work in functional or regional silos
- Multiple IT platforms that do not easily exchange information
- Users' fear of being wrong or seen as incompetent
- Information overload, difficult to know what information is important or relevant
- Inefficient process for keeping content fresh and accurate
- Overexposure of time-constrained experts, i.e., being identified as a subject matter expert and contacted frequently
- Siloed interaction through complacency and the challenge people perceive when faced with change

SOLUTION

IWE for IT is a foundational community and gateway to all information related to the IT organization, providing a centralized source of IT-specific, targeted messaging and resources.

Within the community, users must be able to:

- Easily find information and expertise
- Organize information in a personal and relevant way
- Create, publish, organize, and share information
- Participate in ongoing conversations and debates
- Find and interact with one another through a variety of technologies
- Leverage the wisdom of crowds

To be of value to each employee, it is essential that the Cisco IT community be fresh, vibrant, and provides users with accurate, up-to-date information.

Success Measures

Activity, as measured by usage statistics, is a good indicator of adoption. Monitoring the increase in activity provides valuable information about what parts of the community are providing the most value. Metrics that might be leveraged include the number of:

- Community members
- Unique visitors
- Visits
- Hits
- Decommissioned wikis, intranet pages, etc.
- Cross-functional and cross-geographic participation
- Discussion forums

- Documents uploaded
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Comments, ratings, etc. provided by users

Tracking role adoption in the community is another metric (e.g., is a change leader driven versus gender driven?). Success can also be evaluated through qualitative approaches such as surveys, focus groups, and scorecards.

Cisco IT is in the preliminary stage of gathering IWE metrics, so bottom-line value is difficult to present. As more IT business processes become integrated and more users are socialized in the use of IWE, the true value will be easier to measure.

Key value metrics include:

- Time to market
- Percent increase in productivity
- Time/unit improvement in efficiency
- Reduction in costs
- Reduction in resources

Business Value

The value generated by driving knowledge sharing in the Cisco IT organization is realized as:

- **Impact to the business.** Positive impact on Cisco or customer revenue, cost, risk posture, or market share through IT intelligence sharing.
- **Influence.** Increased relevance with Cisco partners and customers through openness and transparency (what net new relationships were formed as a result of new knowledge?).
- **Innovation.** Increased innovation created for Cisco partners, customers, and Cisco itself through the sharing of knowledge and experience.

Change Management

For the change management to be effective, it is essential that Cisco IT understand the business processes that will be introduced into the community and the culture of the community.

In the initial community release, Cisco IT took a systemic approach, focusing on a single change that has been affected or connection to another part of the overall system, followed by another. This approach was coupled with a strong communication and training strategy.

Cisco IT used the Kotters change management methodology, striving to maintain interest without overload. This goal was demonstrated in a number of activities:

- **Waved launch.** Identify targeted audiences inside each community, to leverage leadership and viral communication, coupled with breadcrumb emails and key information through webisodes, blogging, IT snapshots, etc.
- **Train the trainer.** Have subject matter experts in business processes train like-minded colleagues; staggered related training from high touch to open WebEx sessions.
- **Adoption drive.** Create a staged approach for setting the expectation of users:
 - **Stage 1.** Recruit all IT staff for membership in the main IT community, to enable easy access to information, news, events, etc. and to act as a gateway to other IT communities. This approach provides a natural

adoption path that is personal and relevant to each individual.

- **Stage 2.** Create a fresh, vibrant environment that has a pulse on what's going on in IT, with regular content and activity refreshes and interest.
- **Stage 3.** Use key business processes of different organizations to introduce IWE as a tool to be embedded into day- to-day work life.

Sponsorship and Stakeholder Management

Sponsorship and stakeholder management is the process that helps to identify stakeholders and engage them at all levels of the change process. The engagement leads to increased commitment and ownership. For Cisco IT, the sponsorship was invaluable in driving decisions and setting priorities that aligned with directives of the company's collaboration board.

- Program sponsors: IT and collaboration vice presidents and directors
- Stakeholders: IT organization
- The audience segments and "care abouts":
 - Sponsored community: IT organization
 - Program community: data center knowledge sharing
 - Topical community: architecture center of excellence
 - Role-based community: leadership development for IT

Stakeholder management was critical to the success of the program, and was a shared responsibility of the whole team, with a lead assigned for each IT community.

This structure encouraged conversations that explored the different cultures and breadth of each community, and kept each community focused and driven.

Communications

Accurate, consistent, and timely communications is crucial when implementing changes or rolling out new processes, programs, or tools. To ensure effective and collaborative communications, Cisco IT used the following guidelines:

- Create an overall communications plan that spans the duration of the program.
- Identify key messages, audience, and cadence of communications (What are you saying? Who are you saying it to? When are you saying it?)
- Keep content concise; include a call to action, and educate and inform the audience on the specific topic.
- Seek input and approval of communications content from executive sponsors and key stakeholders.
- Inform key stakeholders of the communications plan, cadence, and timing of communications to avoid sending multiple or redundant information.

Training

Training helps to prepare, educate, and enable users to operate more effectively in the new business environment.

The aim of the IWE for IT training was to:

- Introduce users to the concept of IWE
- Make them aware of the benefits of IWE
- Provide them with insight into the capabilities of IWE and how it can be used to improve productivity and enhance collaboration

- Deliver self-help and live training, providing the opportunity for hands-on experience

Training was delivered in two ways: self help and live.

Self-Help Training

- Self-help training consisted of frequently asked questions and demo walk-through videos on how to use the community. This information was hosted in the appropriate place in the community.
- Content created by users of the first IT community, describing general use of IWE communities, was reused for subsequent communities. This reuse helps to ensure consistency throughout the communities. Business process help information was developed specific to each community.
- A support category was also introduced into the community discussion forums, for users who cannot find what they are looking for in the provided help topics.

Live Training

- Live training topics consisted of an introduction to IWE, the value of participating in communities, using the customized “ MyView” feature of IWE, and showing users how they can get started through hands-on training.
- The live training was delivered by **training champions** who were identified before the launch of the community and trained on the community topics. Training for the champions included showing them how to deliver the content and walk others through the community. The trainers were given a “Champion Toolkit” that included scripts, slides, and email templates they could use during and after the live training.
- Training champions increased the scope of training that could be delivered. They were selected from a variety of organizations and global locations so that training could be delivered in various time zones, and the champions could act as change agents in their respective organizations.

Training Duration. Live community training typically started one to two weeks after community launch. This timeframe provided the opportunity for people to visit and experiment in the community, to obtain some basic knowledge and come to the training sessions with informed questions.

The training sessions typically lasted for one hour, and were conducted across three or four time zones on a biweekly basis for one to two months.

Training Session Content. The training sessions were interactive, which helped to ensure that users were engaged and would retain more information.

- WebEx Training Center was used for training sessions as it is a scalable platform that facilitates interactive learning.
- Each live training session was split up into two parts. The first section walked through a slide deck and the audience was provided with an overview of IWE; key benefits and value statements were called out. Throughout the deck, participants were asked questions and could use WebEx functions to respond and interact with the presenter. The second section provided a live demo, where audience members were encouraged to walk through IWE on their own systems with the trainer. This demo fostered increased attention throughout the training session and thus increased retention.
- The training sessions were recorded and posted in the community along with PDF versions of the slides so that they could be reviewed by users unable to attend the live training sessions or those that want to refer to the content again.

Following the IWE rollout, Cisco IT will maintain the self-help training and update content in the community (e.g., the Q&A page and walk-through videos) as the community and business processes evolve. Questions from the support forum will also be maintained and, as applicable, topics added to the Q&A page.

As new features are introduced in the community and other changes arise, ad-hoc live training sessions will also be organized to keep members abreast of the changes and also to attract new members.

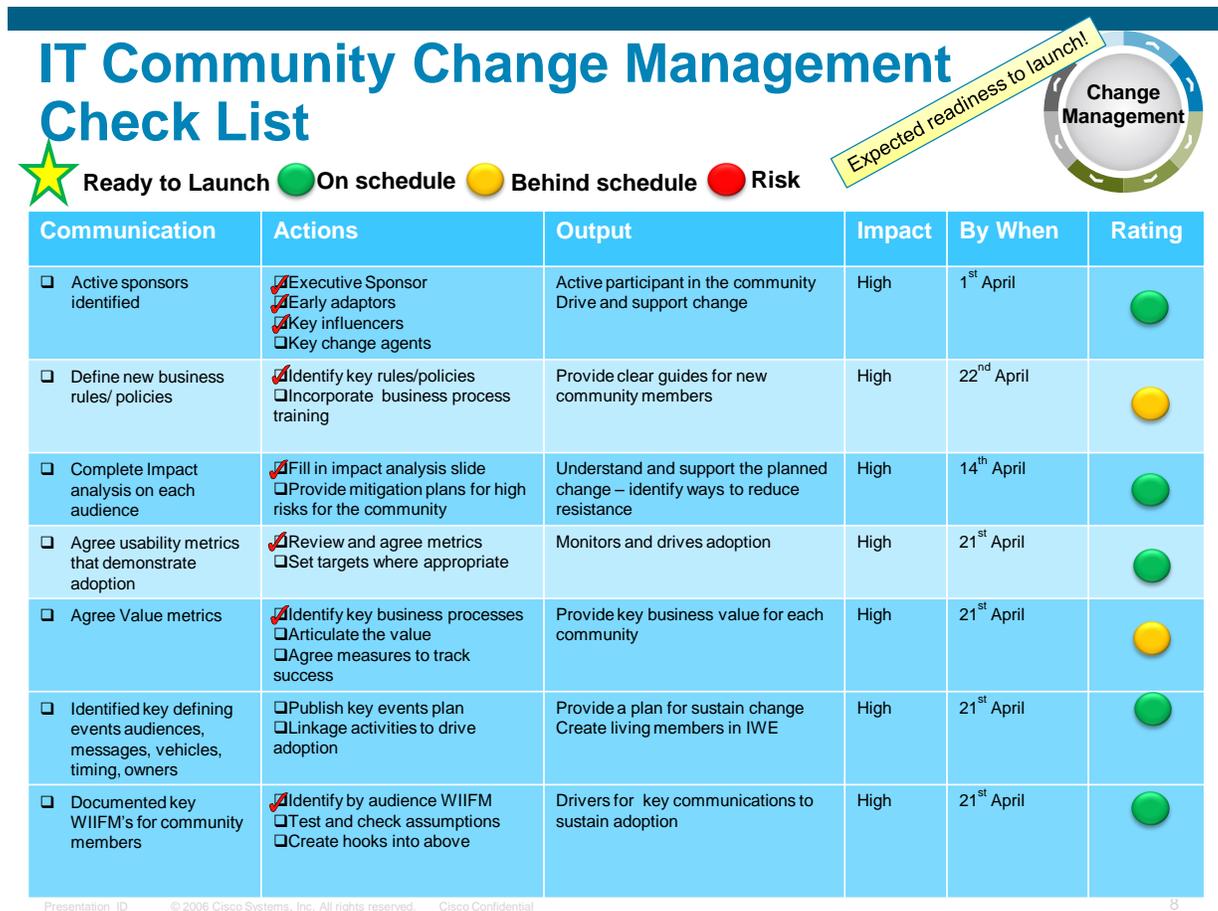
Business Readiness and Sustainability

Business readiness and sustainability is the process to help identify risks, raise issues, and ensure alignment across all aspects of a change initiative.

The IWE for IT steering committee played an important role in managing risks and issues. Regular focused meetings provided efficient, timely feedback and direction. The team was able to quickly adapt and continue the program on schedule.

A change management checklist, including communications and training, was used to track readiness and to ensure that all requirements were fulfilled prior to the launch (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Change Management Checklist



Adoption

To achieve an ambitious target of 100 percent membership in the main IT community, a challenge was posed to the participating IT organizations. For the challenge to be successful, it was essential to tap into behavior patterns that were common to all the participants:

- Create a theme with **interest** and **intrigue**
- Tap into the **competiveness** behavior to win

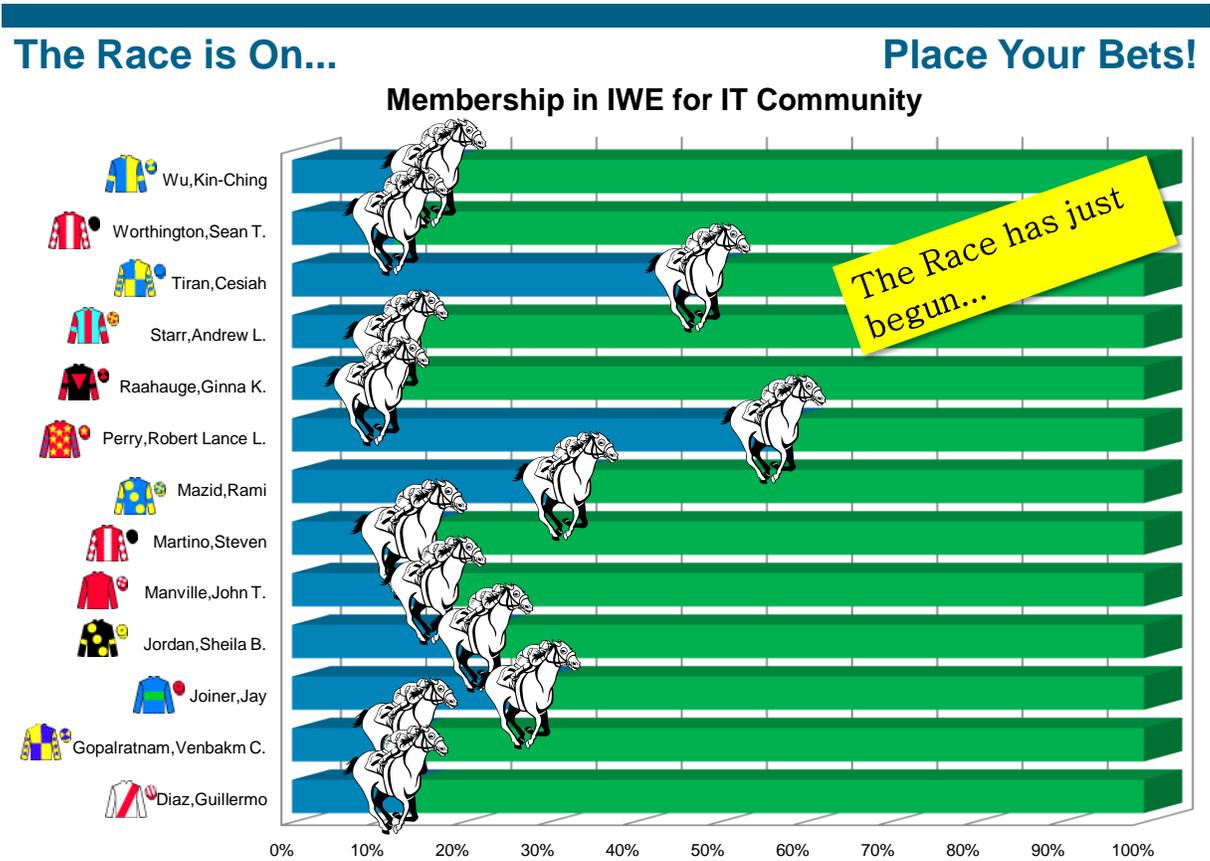
- **Have fun** in the process

A horse race theme was chosen for the challenge. Cisco not only has been a sponsor of the Royal Ascot Horse Races, but this theme was borderless by country and cultures so all could get involved. The challenge was set up in the following way:

- A horse was assigned to each group (CIO direct reports)
- “Jockey colors” were assigned to each group
- Research was conducted to use racing terms to introduce spirit and fun into the challenge (e.g., the race is on, thundering past the finish line, the favorite is a nose in front)

The event was supported at different intervals by sponsor blogging, which continued to feed information, and stimulate fun and enthusiasm throughout the event. Figure 2 depicts the “membership race” in the main IT community by the various participating IT organizations. Race results were presented weekly.

Figure 2. IWE for IT Community Membership: Weekly Progress



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After four weeks trainers were introduced to help users get access to IWE and explain the benefit of the community for them and their teams. Intrigue grew and enthusiasm to win drove the goal of 100 percent participation by all of the at-work staff (i.e., permanent employees not on a short- or long-term leave).

“This was great! Senior staff likes healthy competition, and this challenge was a light-hearted way to encourage that,” says Alice Chan, IWE team manager.

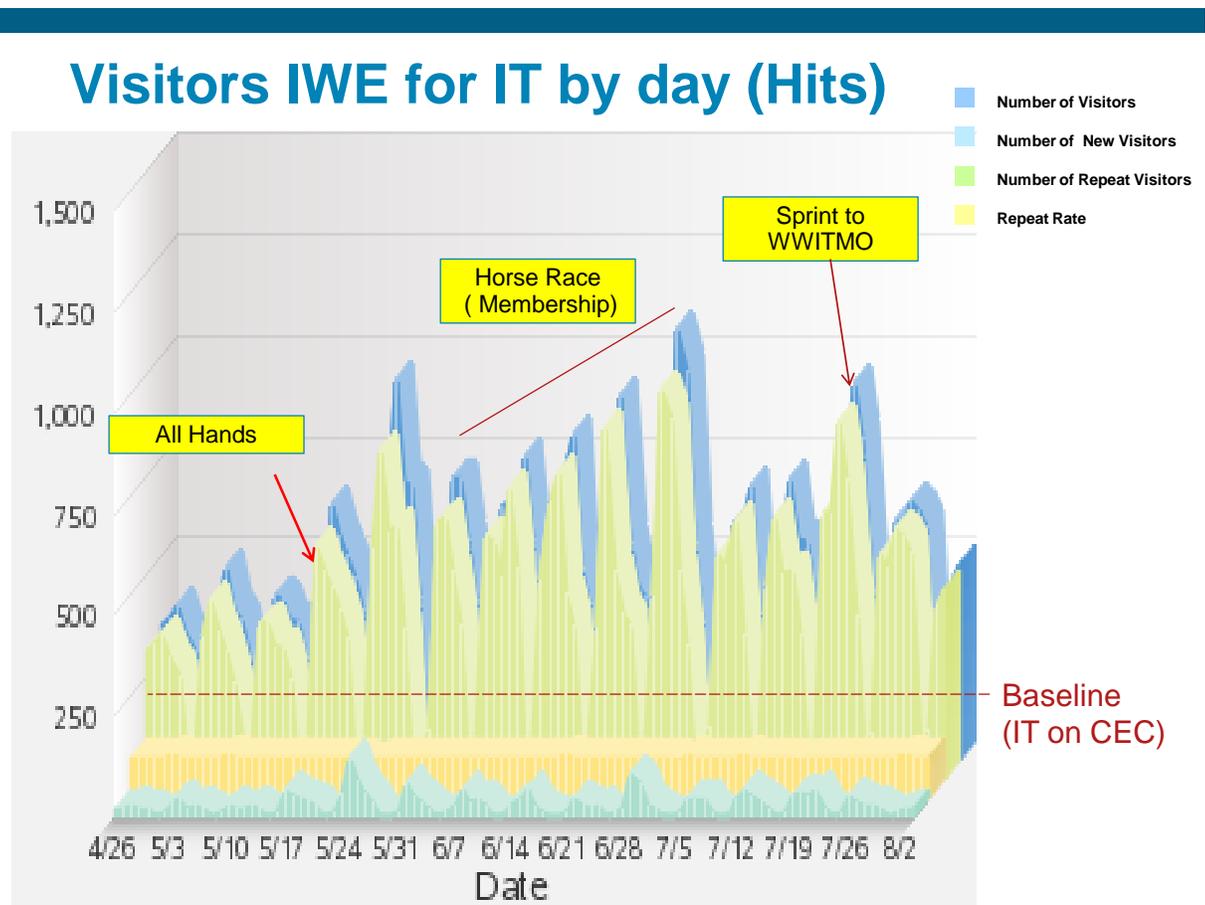
RESULTS

The IWE for IT team achieved its goal of 100 percent adoption in the main IT community. That is, 100 percent of all at-work staff became members of the community. This equated to 82.6 percent of permanent staff in Cisco's human resources records.

Adoption in the main IT community resulting from the challenge created interest, which in turn boosted user interest in other IWE areas. Adoption and activity across all IT communities increased significantly.

Figure 3 shows the hits to the main IT community over 15 weeks. The target hit rate was achieved 12 weeks from launch.

Figure 3. IWE for IT Visitor Hits for 15 Weeks Beginning April 26, 2010



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LESSONS LEARNED

Cisco IT offers the following suggestions to enterprises interested in adopting an integrated, collaborative community into their organizations.

- Ensure you have a clear vision, strategy, and execution plan.
- Understand where the integrated workforce experience will have the greatest impact first.
- Incorporate effective, systemic waded adoption into the rollout strategy.
- Interweave communications, training, and adoption to give the greatest experience for users.

- Do not migrate. Transition.
- Close down old sites where possible; people revert to using old favorites easily.
- Be flexible with high-touch training. Encourage use of the integrated workforce experience in a practical, relevant way through training sessions.
- Keep the community site regularly updated, current, vibrant, and fresh.
- Measure results and adapt.

NEXT STEPS

“As we progress through the evolution of collaboration and social networking in the business world, our next steps will be to sustain community behaviors in our day-to-day work life, and adapt business processes to be simpler and more efficient through collaboration,” says Bram Van Spaendonk, IT program manager for IWE, Cisco.

This goal will be assisted by the transition to IWE powered by Quad, a Cisco collaboration platform, and future releases that add new community content portlets and provide additional functionality and a more personalized experience

In the next six months, the IWE for IT team will transition the existing IT communities to IWE powered by Quad and add seven additional communities. “We expect the benefits to be greater collaboration, which fosters greater innovation,” says Van Spaendonk. “All of this can reduce our time to execution, improve efficiency, and reduce costs with a more agile workforce.”

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