

## **FINAL**

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## **CISCO LAUNCHES SPECIALIZATION PROGRAM ADVANCEMENTS TO ADDRESS EVOLVING CHANNEL PARTNER AND CUSTOMER NEEDS**

*Changes Streamline Program and Creates New Channel Expertise in Deploying Commercial and Enterprise-Class, IP-Communications Solutions*

SAN JOSE, Calif., November 17, 2003 – As part of its commitment to developing programs that meet dynamic customer and channel partner business needs, Cisco Systems, Inc. (NASDAQ: CSCO), today announced a major evolution to its channel partner specialization program. One change aligns specialization job roles with Cisco® Qualified Specialist certifications, resulting in simplified training and renewal requirements, boosting productivity and improving return-on-investment for Cisco channel partners.

In addition, Cisco is unveiling two new specializations, Cisco IP-Communications Express and Cisco IP Communications. Together these replace the current IP Telephony Revised specialization and three Advanced Technology Provider program offerings (Call Manager Express, IP Telephony Basic, and IPCC Express). By building on the success of its product-specific predecessor, these new specializations strengthen Cisco channel expertise enabling channel partners to deliver the commercial and enterprise-class IP Communications solutions that today's customers demand.

“As customer needs continue to increase in complexity, the need for a specialized channel partner community has never been greater,” said Ken Presti, IDC. “Cisco was a pioneering member of the product specialization program. By transforming its specialization program to address current customer demand for complete solutions, Cisco is again leading the channel into the next program evolution.”

### **Simplified Training and Renewal Requirements**

The Cisco value-based channel partner program rewards partners for their knowledge, skill and customer focus, putting a major emphasis on channel partner training and exam-based verification. To help simplify the program and improve channel partner productivity, Cisco is altering its specialization job role renewal requirements, replacing the annual exam-based verification process with Cisco Qualified Specialist certifications. These individual certifications are valid for two years and provide channel partners with a more clearly-defined and consistent training path, reducing the number of exams required to maintain Cisco specialization status.

### **New Streamlined IP-Communications Offerings**

In an effort to help its channel partners deliver the solutions that customers need, Cisco will focus first on transforming its IP Communications channel partner program by reducing four product-based offerings into two solution-based specializations, coupling application content with product and services. The new specializations are segmented into a single-site/autonomous branch, commercial specialization, IP Communications Express and a multi-site, enterprise specialization, IP Communication.

"Today's IP communications customer is looking for a solution that addresses a business need not just a product," said John Borusheski, VP Data Services, NEC Business Network Solutions (NEC BNS), a Cisco IP Telephony Technology specialized channel partner. " NEC BNS is successful in this highly competitive market, because vendors, like Cisco, have a channel program that validates our expertise in designing, delivering and supporting complete IP Communication solutions to customers."

"One of the driving factors behind our transition to a converged Network solution was that we couldn't add more phones to our PBX system," said Randy Jackson, CIO for the City of Surprise. "Not only were we able to easily add more phones, but the costs of moves, adds and changes have been drastically reduced. NEC provided outstanding conversion support and also provided knowledge transfer to our staff and continued support throughout the year."

The small business and autonomous branch office markets represent significant growth opportunities for Cisco and its channel partners, especially in IP-Communications where Cisco

recently introduced Cisco Call Manager Express and Cisco Unity Express, a voicemail and automated attendant offering built on Cisco market leading router platforms and targeted at companies with less than 100 employees. The Cisco IP Communications Express Specialization is designed to capitalize on Cisco router market leadership and accelerate the adoption of Cisco IP Communication solutions in the small business and autonomous branch office market.

Cisco has more than 650 Cisco IP Telephony Revised Specialized Channel Partners worldwide who have played a key role in helping Cisco sell more than 2.4 million IP phones, predominantly the mid-sized business and enterprise markets. The new Cisco IP Communications Specialization will help Cisco channel partners increase their addressable markets from planning, designing, implementing and supporting point products to creating multi-site, IP Communications solutions.

Cisco channel partners are not required to transition to the new solutions-based specializations until their existing IP-Telephony Revised specialization or Advanced Technology Provider (ATP) designation expires. Channel partners working toward obtaining the Cisco Call Manager Express, Cisco IP Telephony Basic or Cisco IPCC Express legacy ATPs have until December 2003, and channel partners who are in the process of obtaining the IP Telephony Revised Specialization have until January 2004 to submit applications.

The new Cisco IP Communications Specialization is worth 40 points and the Cisco IP Communications Express specialization is worth 20 points toward a Cisco channel partner certification under the Cisco Channel Partner Program. For specific training roadmaps, exams and applications for the new specializations go to [www.Cisco.com/go/specializations](http://www.Cisco.com/go/specializations).

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