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Cisco Announces New Support Service Offering for Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

New service offering and enhanced network management applications represent the latest developments to the Cisco SMB-Class Initiative

CISCO PARTNER SUMMIT 2005, VANCOUVER, B.C., April 4, 2005 — Cisco Systems® today announced the availability of the Cisco SMB Support Assistant service that combines basic setup, diagnostic and troubleshooting assistance to deliver cost-effective support for small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs). The Cisco SMB Support Assistant is Cisco's first technical support service available to channel partners developed by Cisco specifically for the small and medium-sized business market.

Cisco also announced enhancements to Cisco Network Assistant, a free PC-based network management application specifically designed for SMB networks. Cisco Network Assistant 2.0 adds new ease of use features such as Drag and Drop IOS® Upgrade and Smartports Advisor plus expanded support for Cisco SMB-Class devices.

According to a Yankee Group 2004 SMB Infrastructure Survey, SMBs comprise 98 percent of businesses within the United States. Results of the survey show that 79 percent of those polled regard Cisco as the leader in reliability, performance and overall quality of computer networking hardware.

“Networking can be especially challenging for smaller companies that cannot afford technology support staff,” said Chris Liebert, senior analyst, Yankee Group. “Technical support and network management is critical to a small and medium-sized business’ successful operation of these technologies. SMB customers need high-quality support services to help maximize their return on network investments, but also require affordability, simplicity and guidance for their networks.”

With these announcements, Cisco is extending its SMB-Class portfolio of solutions to help SMBs build and maintain secure, reliable and flexible networks that will scale easily and cost-effectively as their companies grow.

Tailored Support and Services

The Cisco SMB Support Assistant has been specifically designed for SMBs and provides essential, easy-to-use support on Cisco SMB-Class networking solutions. The Cisco SMB Support Assistant technical service offering provides access to Cisco technical experts, advance hardware replacement, operating system software maintenance and a Cisco SMB Support Assistant client and portal, which simplifies the ability to set up, configure, troubleshoot, and open service requests with emphasis on easy-to-understand instructions.

Cisco SMB Support Assistant will be available through Cisco channel partners. This new support program will help drive partner profitability by allowing partners to extend their reach to the SMB market with a flexible service offering for customers in this market segment and increase customer satisfaction through expanded network coverage.

"SMB Support Assistant will help us better serve our SMB customers," said Mike French, CEO Network Architechs. "It makes it easy for customers to get products configured, do ongoing diagnostics and operating system maintenance. And Cisco SMB Support Assistant makes a support contract an affordable option."

"Cisco partners are instrumental in providing Cisco solutions to small and medium-sized businesses," said Wim Elfrink, senior vice president, Cisco Customer Advocacy. "Cisco SMB Support Assistant and Cisco Network Assistant are additional options that partners can now offer to their SMB customers to help drive their profitability and increase customer satisfaction."

Network Management Tool for SMB-Class Networks

Cisco Network Assistant offers centralized management and configuration of Cisco SMB-Class networks to simplify deployment and ongoing maintenance by using Cisco Smartports technology.

Version 2.0 allows for common services such as configuration management, inventory reporting, password synchronization and Drag and Drop IOS Upgrade to be available seamlessly across Cisco SMB-Class switches, routers and access points. In addition, the groundbreaking Cisco Smartports technology is enhanced via Smartports Advisor, which automatically detects connected SMB-Class devices and suggests the Cisco recommended settings. Finally, Cisco Network Assistant 2.0 now supports additional SMB-Class devices, including Cisco integrated services routers (ISRs) and Cisco PIX® firewalls.

Availability

SMB Support Assistant is a global offering available in North America and most countries in Europe, Asia Pacific and Latin America. Cisco Network Assistant 2.0 will be available worldwide in late April, and can be downloaded at no cost from Cisco.com or via the embedded Dynamic Application Update feature for existing Cisco Network Assistant 1.0 users.

For further information, visit www.cisco.com/go/smba and www.cisco.com/go/networkassistant. For further information on this announcement, visit http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/partners/news/2005/pr_prod_04-04.html>

For more features, news, videos, and photos relating to the Cisco 2005 Partner Summit visit <http://newsroom.cisco.com/partnersummit/>

About Cisco Systems

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