



## **Buyer Beware: Don't Expect Consumer-Grade Technology to Meet Your Business-Class Needs**

When you walk into a business meeting, do you wear pajamas?

Do you let your children manage the accounts receivable for your office?

When you buy business technology, do you choose products designed for home use?

The pricing on consumer-grade technology *is* tempting.

But the lower price can end up costing your business dearly, in both productivity and cash.

### **Ways to Save Time and Money, by Not Going Home**

"While you may be saving money now, you're spending more in the long run," says Austin Smith, founder of Digital Son a Cisco® Registered Partner. "One of the worst things that a small business could do would be to go to a retail establishment and purchase home gear for their business. Home equipment is just not designed to provide feature sets that businesses need."

Cisco customers report that products that are designed for doing business are worth the price premium in at least four ways, because they enable them to:

#### **1. Integrate Business Technologies**

Combining the technologies that a business uses makes processes more efficient. Work gets done better, and faster.

"Our jobs are far easier now that we have the Cisco integrated system, which connects our reservation system and our CRM [customer relationship management] system," says the sales account manager at a restaurant-resort business with 37 employees. Previously the company used a variety of consumer-grade products at each of its locations.

"The efficiency in time is enormous compared to the systems we had in the past," he says. "Time is money, so for a salesperson this is very important."

Now a single business-class system provides all the company's locations with voice, data, and video service; integrates its CRM, reservation, point-of-sale, and financial applications; and puts all of the applications' tools at employees' fingertips.

The consolidation also delivers savings in telecommunications costs. The company now uses its own IP network to make phone calls between locations and securely process credit card transactions.



“All this happened because management wanted a reseller to install a new wireless network at one restaurant,” says the owner of Ask Roger!, a Cisco Premier Certified Partner. “They thought the problem was just their cheap Wi-Fi transmitter. Then they saw the bigger picture: how using a system that integrates powerful technologies and applications—CRM, video, Outlook, whatever they want to use—improves their whole business.”

## **2. Safeguard Assets**

Security is a requirement for doing business, whether transmitting customers’ private information or storing financial data. Business-class products offer stronger and more efficient protection than consumer products, with security features that your reseller or IT specialist can configure to apply multiple layers of security, within and beyond your network firewall.

## **3. Simplify Management**

Advanced business technologies—such as IP phones, web conferencing, and CRM—deliver competitive advantages. But managing the products requires a range of expertise and skills that small businesses rarely have. “Yet a business that asks the multiple vendors of its retail products for help often receives only indifference, bad advice, or finger pointing,” says the Ask Roger! owner.

By choosing a business-class solution from a Cisco partner, the 37-employee business has a single contact for its technology issues. It receives qualified expertise that is proactive and strategically aligned to its business. The partner also provides efficient service—including 24x7 management “through the cloud.”

“I’m really happy,” says the event manager at the business. “Problem resolution is much faster, and most of the time they can fix a problem the moment I call.”

## **4. Protect Their Investment**

When business changes, managers who purchased consumer-grade products tend to regret their frugality. Their investment proves short-lived.

A young company discovered the hard way that it could not add more users or integrate more advanced technology into its low-end system. The company had to replace it.

Business-class solutions tend to be more flexible. The 37-employee business can easily modify its system when it adds a new restaurant, or closes and reopens its seasonal sites. A 10-employee business expanded by using its system to connect a distributed workforce of stay-at-home mothers, and increased revenues without adding staff.

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