

Cisco Secure Access Control Server Express 5.0

Dave: Hi, I'm Dave Wetzel, manager of the Solutions Marketing Group in the Network Management Technology Group at Cisco. Thanks for tuning in to this edition of our online Cisco network management update. This session is one in a series of bimonthly Cisco network management podcasts where we talk about network management. Today's session, we'll cover the Cisco Secure Access Control Server Express, and with me today is Cisco's product manager Obaid Vanjara. Welcome, Obaid.

Obaid: Hey, thanks for having me here, Dave; it's a real pleasure to talk about Cisco's Secure Access Control Server Express.

Dave: So tell about the ACS Express server.

Obaid: Cisco Secure ACS Express, as you refer to it as ACS Express, is an entry-level RADIUS and TACACS+ AAA server for the small to medium business (which houses less than 350 users and 50 devices). Additionally, it can be deployed at retail branches and employee branch offices. And primarily it's used to control user and machine access to networks including wireless, wired, and VPNs. And of course also to control administrative access to network devices again using RADIUS and TACACS+.

Dave: So is this product a software product or a hardware product?

Obaid: ACS Express is a hardware appliance that comes preloaded with the software. For more specifications, you can refer to our data sheets online.

Dave: So I'm familiar with another product that we have, which is ACS for Windows. How does ACS Express position with the ACS for Windows product?

Obaid: That's a great question, Dave, and thanks for asking that. ACS Windows and ACS Solution Engine are enterprise product lines which are very suitable for highly scalable access control solutions, which require scalability and span multiple sites—and also which require higher complexity of protocols and features like NAC support, extensive device command authorization, CLI views, integration with CiscoWorks management applications, and support for MARS. Now these are some of the supported features that I specified in ACS Windows and ACS Solution Engine; of course, there are many more. Now in contrast, ACS Express is more suitable for smaller deployments, which means the sub 350 users and 50 devices that require an AAA solution, and of course, for the enterprise branch and retail sites.

Dave: So what would those deployments or scenarios look like that are best suited for the ACS product?

Obaid: So primarily, as we discussed before, we are targeting ACS Express to be placed in the enterprise branch which has a central site and acquires a local AAA server; same applies to the retail branches and to small and medium-sized businesses which are realizing the need for identity solutions to be deployed in campus.

Dave: Okay, tell me about the licensing; what kind of license does this product have?

Obaid: ACS Express comes preinstalled with what was needed from a licensing perspective, so there is nothing additional required. So, out of the box, we support 350 unique logins in a 24-hour period—and support for 50 network devices, which means NACs.

Dave: OK, so as I go out and talk with customers I know many of them are concerned with high availability; how about ACS Express and high availability environment?

Obaid: So ACS Express supports high availability as do our other product lines ACS for Windows and ACS Solution Engine from a network device point of view. It essentially means that you can have your network device point to multiple ACS servers for high availability. So if a primary fails, a secondary can take over from a congregation perspective.

Dave: Wow; what if I have multiple sites that I want to distribute my configuration across?

Obaid: Yes, we did keep that in mind, because we did realize that ACS could be deployed across multiple sites. So for that, we refer to a feature called import/export, which means if a customer has multiple sites, they can export a configuration from a central site and make modifications to that configuration as needed and then import those configurations back as a cookie-cutter configuration into the sites that need that same configuration.

Dave: OK, I know that a lot of customers listening today will already have a back-end database where they have a repository. Can you talk about how the product will integrate with us?

Obaid: Sure, ACS Express supports a wide array of external databases and some of them are Microsoft Active Directory, LDAP, and One-Time Password server, which are the most common and most popular ones.

Dave: Can you touch on the Active Directory a little bit? Is it natively, or is there integration required?

Obaid: With ACS Express from what I know there's no integration required with AD. Whatever needs to happen to talk to AD is actually already inbuilt into ACS Express product. So there's no need to install any additional software on any external hardware.

Dave: Wow; OK, so if customers wanted to learn more about this, where would they go?

Obaid: Customers could go to our Web page <http://www.cisco.com/go/acsexp>, and they could get a wide array of documentation up there including product bulletins, data sheets, presentations, and of course we have our contacts up there in case anyone wants to contact us.

Dave: Well, thanks, thanks for joining me today. So this has been some really good information. And we'd like to encourage our listeners to learn more about the product by going to <http://www.cisco.com/go/acsexp>, and that wraps it up today. If you'd like to listen to some of our other network management podcasts, please go to www.cisco.com/go/nmpodcast, and thanks for listening today.



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