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ROBB BOYD: Hey guys, welcome back. This is Rob Boyd and Jimmy Ray Purser. Hi dude. How you doing, man? That was your cue, and --

[Multiple voices speaking ]

ROBB BOYD: Well, we're back with another podcast, and the subject today is this new release of NAC 4.5. Right? NAC being network admission control, and that voice, by the way, which probably wasn't enough for anybody to really get a grab on it yet, but you just never know. Because he's very popular in strange corners of the world. But joining us physically in the studio Aloc Agwal [Phonetic]. Used to be simply a NAC product manager, but he's been moving up in the world and he's managing -- product line manager now. Over NAC, you've got us here to keep us honest and teach us a little bit about 4.5, welcome.

ALOC AGWAL: Hey Rob, hey Jimmy.

ROBB BOYD: Hey buddy, how are you doing? Good to see you again, man.

ALOC AGWAL: Pretty good. Always good to be back here, very excited.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Absolutely.

ROBB BOYD: Well, we're glad to have you, and you know, We've had you on a couple different shows and we always enjoyed chit chatting with you, and this new release is our excuse to do this again this time. But also just to screw things up just a little bit -- I don't know, that's probably not fair Jimmy, is it , we've got a guest on line one, because I think we only have one line, but Jamie Sandbar, welcome.

JAMIE SANDBAR: Thank you.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Jamie, you're calling in from the -- somewhere on the east coast. You work -- you're the security director. I know you because we -- actually I don't think we've ever spoken live before. But I read your blog, you do a nice job keeping up with different things NAC-related, breaking things down and helping people understand how to maximize that technology. You're probably I'm assuming a chief driver of the proper use of that technology with your company, as you run the security practice there at Force Three. Is that correct?

JAMIE SANDBAR: That's correct, we're the right-hand side of Cisco. We do a lot of large-scale NAC deployments on a day-to-day basis, and we make sure that we drive the message home.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Excellent. Well let me tell you what your job is here. We're going talk about NAC, a little bit in general, you know, just to make sure we've got the ground settling in terms of anybody that may not be complete familiar with what we're talking about. But I think we can assume that this -- we've got a pretty intelligent audience here and we need to know what's different, [Inaudible] most of our time. But Jamie, what I want you to be listening for is you're -- you're marketing alarm bell to let us know if one, we're not sharing the reality of the technology as you know it to be the case when it comes

to working in the field, be it either the things that we do well or the things that we're -- you know, having to work around on in the field. You know, that it is helpful for customers to know. That is our audience today, it's customers and people that follow TechWise TV. It's also other partners that may -- that may call me up and go why is Jamie on the call and I'm not. And I'm like, well, do you have a NAC blog that everybody likes? Well, if you don't, then maybe that's why you're not. Anyway, so I love to get hate mail. That would just mean that someone's listening. So let's move on. We've got a new release. Man, there's been a lot of talk internally, Aloc, about this new release. It does answer some problems, some people have been looking for some of the features you guys have rolled out. Walk us through that.

ALOG AGWAL: Absolutely, and so 4.5, you know, major release for us. We've been working on it for a while. And one of the things that I'm really excited about the 4.5 release is it actually solves customer problems, because many times, you know, the features, you know, that I bring to market, many times they're just cool features that I think of when I [Inaudible] come and you know, basically tell my managers that this is what we need to do, this is a cool thing. And the product managers just beat me up.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: But you're not being fair to yourself, Aloc. I think you're downplaying yourself there by insinuating that your product has not been solving customer business problems this whole time. We know that's not the case, but go ahead -- [ Multiple voices speaking ]

ACOL AGWAL: I do that sometimes. But -- but my [Inaudible] managers definitely do keep me honest. So one of the things I'm very excited and very proud of is 4.5, all the features are specific requests that we got from customers, and it actually solves customer pain points and makes it easier for our customers to deploy NAC in more environments and to take care of more different type of end points and [Inaudible] devices.

ROBB BOYD: Well, there's an increase in flexibility, here. Right? One of the top things mentioned when you look at the list of things that changed is wireless out of band support. Can you tell me why that has been so difficult to do up until this point? Maybe give us a little peek behind the scenes at maybe some of the innovation that led to this being available.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Sure. So for those of you familiar with Cisco NAC, we only had an in-brand deployment mode for the wireless environment. So a lot of customers came back and said you know, wireless in band works really well, plug and play. But now what I'm doing I'm moving to a more centralized architecture where now I have the Vizim [Phonetic] blades on the data scape and the Vizim blades believe have either a 4 gig or an 8 gig back [Inaudible] through port. Which means that I no longer want to put a bottleneck, you know, inband mode bottleneck in my network. What I'd really want to do is out of band. And hey, you know, you own the Cisco wireless infrastructure. You are Cisco NAC.

ROBB BOYD: Can't you guys talk and work something out?

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Exactly --

[ Multiple voices speaking ]

JAMIE SANDBAR: Exactly. That's what customers said. We want both of you to talk and give me an out of band solution, and that's exactly what we did. We reached out to Window [Phonetic], over to the wireless network business unit said this is what we want to do, this is how we want to do it, and we basically, you know, it was a classic case of very good collaboration between both the different business units, completely two different business units working together, getting a solution out there for customers, and actually solving pain points. Like you mentioned, Rob, it gives more flexibility in terms of how I deploy my stuff. The other thing is the two main pain points that it solves is no more bottleneck in the network. And the second thing now is that if my customers, if they wanted to deploy the same NAC server for VPN and for wireless users, they no longer need two different boxes. Also, for example, [Inaudible] wireless, but more wireless and wired users because that's typically what's going to happen, right? Because at your central headquarters or your remote office, you're going to have access points, you're going to have wireless controllers to provide wireless access. But at the same time you also have users connecting in via the wire [Inaudible] network. And previously, we would tell our customers that, well, you need to have one NAC server with would run all [Inaudible] for your wired users, and another NAC server to run an inband mode for your wireless users. We don't need to do that any more, because the same NAC server can do wireless and wired out of band on the same box.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Well now that seems like it's obviously overly redundant. Jamie, I'm curious from your perspective. You've been out working with customers, deploying NAC solutions. Does that answer some problems or some feedback you've gotten from customers. How much is that going to help you or hurt you, or what's your feeling there?

JAMIE SANDBAR: The biggest thing is, you know, I -- I love this new feature for two reasons. One because it takes care of my large enterprise customers that have, you know, very large centralized deployed wireless solution. But number two is it takes care of the little guys. So the smaller deployments that, you know, don't want to have to spend the extra money, they don't have extra IT resources to manage multiple NAC servers. You can put in one NAC server and manage your wired clients and the wireless clients all from one box.

ROBB BOYD: People always tend to bristle when they start to spend more money on external security items than they are on the actual network access itself, right? Hold on, we just crossed that invisible threshold at my branch office or wherever it may be, that could be a problem. Jimmy Ray, you agree too?

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Oh, absolutely. I mean that's typically -- you know, what I like to call the cost of security, all right?

ROBB BOYD: What is -- what is it worth to you, how risk-adverse are you when it comes to applying for this stuff. I think some of the features that came out in the 4.5 release are incredible impressive. I cannot imagine how many man hours actually went into writing the code for this.

ALOC GAWAL: Absolutely -- yeah, and then -- the tough part there was the collaboration between two completely different teams. But if you're all on one team in one particular geographical location, it's usually relatively easier. We had teams working in San Jose, we had teams working in Foxborough and in India as well. Two completely different business units. So we're actually going to try and see if we can replicate that across all the different projects in terms of how we actually carried this process and got something to market in a very quick manner.

ROBB BOYD: Wow. Timed market and the global environment. That is the nature of the world we live in now. Jamie, I'm -- I'm curious -- stepping back for just a second and talking about the adoption of NAC in general is understanding, you know, our customers do you feel like are understanding the value of that technology, or what's your feel there?

JAMIE SANDBAR: You know what, the economy is getting tough, but at the end of the day this is one of those requirements that's coming up more and more. Even though you see peoples' budgets growing smaller, it's one of those things that has been on the horizon for years to come. And everyone seems to be going down that road nowadays. So you know, we're getting more and more requests for NAC and more market shares as far as, you know, deploying Cisco NAC to different customers --

[ Multiple voices speaking ]

JAMIE SANDBAR: -- and enterprises.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: So does the team here agree that we've got assembled -- do we feel like NAC has started to make its way into one of those required elements. You know, kind of like to be overly generic, it was the firewall, right?

ROBB BOYD: Of course you have a firewall, right? We ran into customers that didn't for many years. NAC now is like, well, hold on. If you're not doing posture checking, if you are just blindly opening up your access like that without checking some basic levels, people get that.

JAMIE SANDBAR: Absolutely. So it -- it's moving from just a good to have security requirement more than it's just a necessity in my network. Because if you see out there in the world today and most organizations today, the type of users that they have to give access to on the network and the type of devices that they have to give access to the network is changing. Right? We are at this threshold where we are catching this transition happening. All this [Inaudible] happening, because what I -- some people call this consumerization. So basically bringing in your iPod or smart phone. It can connect your corporate network, and there's nothing you can do about it. I like to flip it around and basically say it's the enterprization of consumer devices. So --

ROBB BOYD: Did you say enterprization?

JAMIE SANDBAR: Enterprization of consumer devices. If I can trademark this, I will.

ROBB BOYD: Yeah. You're making up words.

JAMIE SANDBAR: Absolutely.

[Inaudible] Red Hot Chili Peppers song?

ROBB BOYD: That's California --

[ Multiple voices speaking ]

ROBB BOYD: But good try.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: But you'll see, the environment is changing. Most customers cannot say that I'm not going to give any guest access, or I'm not going to give access to the Internet to my consultants. I'm going deny access to the, you know, to the iPod or the iPhone to connect to my network. You cannot put such restrictions any more.

ROBB BOYD: People revolt.

ACOL AGWAL: People revolt. Exactly. So you see, again, one of the other things that you know, we have with 4.5 is posture capability for the Macs. Previously we had --

[Multiple voices speaking ]

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Now we're talking. That's what I'm talking about.

ROBB BOYD: Yeah. Well now most of us are Mac users as well, too. It's a very large group of closet-based Mac users in this environment.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: And it's increasing, right?

ROBB BOYD: Yeah.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: It means it needs that kind of thing already anyway. Not that Mac users are saying, hey, when are you going to restrict me a little bit more on the network. We weren't exactly begging for that. But from an enterprise perspective, it's a reality, right?

ALOC AGWAL: It's a reality. It's a reality. So you see that the concept, I mean, every release that we come out there are two concepts that I always drive my team through. So one is how do you make the life of the network admin and for the end users better. So make it an easier deployment, make it easier management, make it better reporting. And also add additional features to the product in terms of what the market and customer environment reality is. So like I said, Macs in an environment is increasing.

ROBB BOYD Yeah.

ALOC AGWAL: Previously, we only had an agent that can do authentication or single sign on for the Mac. We could not do posture. But the reality now is that we need posture capabilities for the Mac. And that's what we have introduced with 4.5.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: You know, I'll tell you, one of the things that I like about the -- about the upgrade you guys did is the -- the database snap shot feature. Because one of the things that -- you know, we all talk about the great features added to an upgrade. But you know, for [Inaudible] it's like, okay, I've got get to that upgrade. I've got to go from my previous version and next version. We've all been through the nightmare of upgrades and stuff. And typically we'll do all the configuration, we want to save our database and then just reimport it. And you guys have made some pretty major enhancements to the database snap shot process, right?

ALOC AGWAL: That's correct. Yeah. So again, we want to make -- like I said, we want to make the life of our network administrators as simple as possible. That's always the goal. Because you know, a

customer might buy the product because of features that, you know, he needs. But then if he does not like it on a day-to-day basis, you know, he's not going to be happy. And I don't want unhappy customers, right? I mean, my job really is to solve customer pain points and make life simple for them. Because if you're not making life simple for them, there's no point.

ROBB BOYD: Oh no, I definitely agree. And -- and you also did some upgrades on the FIPS requirements as well. Or actually you know, adding some of the FIPS compliancy parts in here, which is huge in the federal government. I'm hearing this all the time. Can you elaborate on any of that stuff just a little bit?

JIMMY RAY PURSER Yeah. Definitely. If Jamie wants to jump in --

ROBB BOYD: I know Jamie's got opinions, but go ahead, Aloc. I'll bring Jamie back in on that one.

ALOC AGWAL: Absolutely. So you know, we have a lot of customers in the federal segment, and they came in with the requirements that say, you know, hey, you know, we like the product, we deployed it, we [Inaudible] it, but for us to be able to mass deploy, there are certain things that you need to do in terms of making it FIPS compliant and things like that. And we've been adding features to get to that point. So things like better passwords, a banner, being able to track the admin console login using a back in server, so we've been adding features towards that in 4.5. There's a whole bunch of additional capabilities coming in the next future release as well.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Well, I think some people don't realize, though, there's a cost associated with getting all the different levels of certifications associated. You not only have to bring your product up to meet the myriad little itty-bitty things that are on these government checklists, if that's -- if that's the one you're talking about. But at the same time there's a cost associated with the testing that's required, right? And to get certified into that.

ROBB BOYD: That's a complete process that we have to go through. So luckily, you know, Cisco has --

[ Multiple voices speaking ]

JIMMY RAY PURSER: A lot of documentation, a lot of testing has to go through it. Luckily we do have a group within Cisco that helps the business unit and the product teams out with it. So we've been getting very, very good help from that team. So it definitely makes my life a little bit simpler. But you're absolutely right. In terms of getting certified, there's a lot of work that goes behind it.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: All right. So the FIPS compliance obviously is to bring us up to a level that -- because certain customers say -- and this is going to be on the government side, right? That say you have to be at a certain level or we can't just -- can't buy your product. We can't even consider it if it's not compliant. Jamie, are you seeing -- you got some customers like that, that that becomes important?

JAMIE SANDBAR: We definitely do. And one thing that I wanted to point out to that was a huge feature for a lot of my government customers, federal and DOD, is the ability to have external authentications. And as simplistic as it sounds with LDAP and radius and NT authentication, that actually opens up a whole door of authentication parameters such as one-time passwords and things that on the government side we want to do everything we possibly can to make sure that the risk is mitigated and the box is secure from a management perspective.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Hmm.

ROBB BOYD: Now those are good points. So before we close out with a look in terms of making sure we know where to get this stuff, because I think it's all available now. Jamie, before we let you go I just want to give you a chance. It's Force Three. Where are you guys located out of?

JAMIE SANDBAR: We're based out of Crofton, Maryland, which is right outside of Annapolis.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Well, see, you probably do a little government business.

ROBB BOYD: Oh yeah.

JAMIE SANDBAR: We are about 60% government. So we're a very large government partner, as well as we're big on the enterprise side as well.

ROBB BOYD: Now is Force Three a purely security-focused company, or do you guys do a number of other things as well.

JAMIE SANDBAR: We're focused on Cisco advanced technology. So we're definitely drinking the Cisco Kool-Aid.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Appreciate that.

JAMIE SANDBAR: So we -- we do the voice stuff, the storage, security, security's probably one of our strongest suites, but I'm a little partial to that. But we're definitely growing every day. So we do have international capabilities as well.

ROBB BOYD: Now you may not get this chance again. A lot of people don't realize that Jimmy Ray and I actually control all decisions made within Cisco. Is there any acquisition you think we need to make or product we need to development or something we need to improve? This is your one chance to get it done, because I guarantee you no matter what you say, we can execute on.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Nothing? That's it. I'm putting you on the spot awfully quickly right there. It's probably not fair. So see, Jamie Sandbar, you are now actually -- because this is a relatively new -- you continue moving up over there as we keep up with you. You are a director of security for Force Three there in Maryland?

JAMIE SANDBAR That's correct.

ROBB BOYD: We certainly appreciate you taking the time to join us. Your blog, which focuses on the NAC side, can be found where?

JAMIE SANDBAR: [Cisconac.blogspot.com](http://Cisconac.blogspot.com).

ROBB BOYD: [Cisconac.blogspot.com](http://Cisconac.blogspot.com).

JAMIE SANDBAR: My contact information can be found on the blog as well, if anyone wants to shoot me the great 4.5 questions.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Absolutely. And then anything else NAC-related or probably security-related. Because you know your stuff pretty well. I certainly appreciate you keeping up with us and tuning in for the different things that we produce. With that, [Inaudible] so this -- so thank you very much Jamie. Aloc, this product, excuse me, this update is now available. People can download it.

JAMIE SANDBAR: Absolutely. The software is available. We have a bunch of white papers, we have a white paper on wireless out of band design, we have a white paper on Mac posture. We also have a feature called policy [Inaudible] export. What this really does is basically makes our solution very much scaleable for those who are familiar --

[ Multiple voices speaking ]

ROBB BOYD: That's cool.

JAMIE SANDBAR: So our super- manager can right now kind of manage about more than 100,000 end points. We are -- we have customers requesting us for more support than that. So what we've pretty much done is you can have two manages and configure one to be the master and the other to be the slave, or you can configure one master and ten slave managers. Configure just one box and then basically sync the policies across all the different managers. So you don't have to go and configure each box separately. So added a whole significant scaleable detour product line using that vertical feature.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: And so you've got new documentation out --

ROBB BOYD: Documentation on this --

[ Multiple voices speaking ]

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Obviously there's some new design considerations with this new release. It's all good, it's all positive. I always enjoy the white papers, actually, because they do a very clear, concise job of helping me understand kind of how to understand, you know, how to architect this thing. How does it relate to the rest of my network, so on and so forth. Thank you so much for taking time to join us today. Also want to send a big thank you out to Jamie Sandbar. I appreciate you dialing in and giving us your opinion on these things.

ROBB BOYD: Jimmy Ray, what do you think? Any final thoughts?

JAMIE SANDBAR: I -- I -- I'm so impressed. I mean, you know -- I've always been a believer in NAC, you know, from the last show and stuff. And I'm amazed at some of the -- the -- the great forethought that went into actually designing this release. [Inaudible] sloppily gushing over it.

[ Multiple voices speaking ]

ROBB BOYD: You guys did -- you guys did a great job here. This is really -- this is really darn impressive.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: Thanks. And for anybody, you know, whose listening out there, viewers of TechWise TV, any time you guys have any feedback, definitely, you know, give that feedback on the blog, you know -- I visit that, you know, I'm a member of that web site. So -- of that blog. So I go and look it up, you know, at least every two or three days, if not daily. But any information, any feed back that you have, let us know. We are here listening to you, we want to solve your problems.

ROBB BOYD: And the easy way to get more NAC information is [Cisco.com/go/nac](http://Cisco.com/go/nac) or do you have a new -  
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[ Multiple voices speaking ]

JIMMY RAY PURSER: that's the URL.

ROBB BOYD: Okay. Fantastic. Well, as always, I certainly appreciate your time. Jimmy Ray -- thank you.

ROBB BOYD: I love having -- you are my favorite guest. I always love having you here.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: I love being here. I love being here.

ROBB BOYD: I like you too.

JIMMY RAY PURSER: He says that to a lot of guests.

[ Laughter ]

ROBB BOYD: It's always fun to work with you. Jamie, thank you for your time. Hey guys, this has been Rob Boyd, and Jimmy Ray Purser. This is a TechWise podcast on the Cisco Interaction Network. Remember, for more information get out your pens, there's a couple different things to write down here. You can go to our rouge wiki, that's at [mytechwisetv.com](http://mytechwisetv.com). All of our shows, up coming show notes and things like that can be tracked there, as well as the registration links. If you're not a customer and you're a partner, please share that information with your customer. There's hopefully ongoing good information as we come out with a new show every month and a new podcast every week. You can weigh in on the blog that we've got, kind of keeping stuff up, which is at [Mytechwisetvblog.com](http://Mytechwisetvblog.com). If you have not been paying attention, tracking the feed for Jimmy Ray's blog, he's got two very popular blogs. One on Cisco Subnet, which is a network world, stuff all about Cisco. A lot of good information there. I think you're blogging twice a week on that one.

JIMMY RAY PURSER Twice a week, yeah.

ROBB BOYD: And at least once or twice a week on your network blog, which is on the Cisco Learning Network. Fantastic interactive community that -- that our friends over there -- if you're working on certification paths and who isn't these days, you need to be checking out that community as well. So again, my name is Rob Boyd, we thank you guys for tuning in. We will talk to you on the next one.

[ Music ]