

## Web 2.0 in the Enterprise

Cisco IT helps to build a scalable, secure communications and collaboration platform.

When it comes to communications and collaboration, the IT industry, in large part, is taking its cue from consumers. And Cisco® IT is no exception. Consumers who have been using Web 2.0 tools such as instant messaging and discussion forums in the home for years are now the employees exerting significant influence in what collaboration technologies should be adopted in the workplace.

The business drivers of collaboration are persuasive: productivity gains, real-time knowledge capture and sharing, workflow and business process improvements, responsive and relevant communications (internal and external), content publishing and other cost efficiencies, and a competitive edge. According to Forrester Research, there will

“Providing the ability for users to communicate whenever from wherever they are, for work or recreation, and to get meaningful information does not have to be complex or unsecured. But it does require a solid architecture foundation and planning.”

John Manville, Vice President, IT Network and Data Center Services, Cisco

be strong demand for Web 2.0 tools in the enterprise in 2008, and this is the year that IT will embrace Web 2.0 technologies.

For more than a year, Cisco IT and Corporate Communications have been helping to bring Web 2.0 tools into the enterprise and integrating them with video, telepresence, and other unified communications technologies on the network. How important is this mission to the business? *Very*. One of IT’s strategic

imperatives is to create a communications and collaboration platform that will both drive the future of collaboration within Cisco and enable the company to accelerate productivity, growth, and innovation.

### Challenge: Scaling the Enterprise

Implementing collaboration on an enterprise scale is no small feat. Web 2.0 technologies need to be evaluated not only on their impact to the network (e.g., scalability, reliability, and security) but also on their relevance to the business, says Sheila Jordan, vice president of Communications and Collaboration IT at Cisco.

For Cisco IT, a business-relevant, enterprise communications and collaboration platform requires:

- Identifying and implementing the right platform building blocks. These include industry Web 2.0 tools, unified communications technologies, and infrastructure and foundation components.
- Driving an integrated workforce experience through an intelligent framework that combines voice, video, data, and collaboration. New business capabilities begin to emerge from existing tools and technologies.
- Integrating platform foundation components, such as workforce data and identity management, with collaboration tools and technologies to create the next-generation workforce experience. Here, IT can have a significant role in changing the user experience and transforming business models.

Simultaneously, Cisco IT is architecting this platform to sustain and grow existing technology rollouts as well as rapidly deploy new communications and collaboration applications and technologies yet to be realized.

### Implementation: Pushing Out the Platform

The hub of Cisco IT’s collaboration platform is the Communications Center of Excellence, an employee-owned virtual community where new Web 2.0 and other collaboration tools are deployed, tested, and refined.

Sponsored by Corporate Communications and Cisco IT, the virtual center is a place where employees worldwide can provide input, share their collaboration experiences and technology user requirements with others via discussion forums, learn all about Cisco's collaboration efforts, and interact with the cross-functional Communications and Collaboration Board that is responsible for driving innovation and success in communications and collaboration at Cisco. Through this active knowledge environment, Cisco IT and Corporate Communications are learning how to adopt, use, implement, and support networked Web 2.0 technologies efficiently in the enterprise. The best practices that result will be shared with customers.

"As companies truly become global and start operating virtually around the world, it becomes critically important to support Web 2.0 technologies that allow a dispersed workforce to connect and collaborate as if they were all in the same place," explains Jim Grubb, senior director, Corporate Communications at Cisco.

**Implement the platform building blocks.** Over the last year, Cisco IT has implemented phased rollouts of several Web 2.0 tools, including wikis, blogs, RSS feeds, social bookmarking, tagging, and discussion forums. These technology rollouts typically undergo four stages: the proof of concept with limited users and prototype evaluations; the pilot with controlled introduction to select users and development of a deployment timeframe; the Beta release, which expands the pilot audience and uses a technical framework that mimics production; and production with full availability to the intended audiences.

**Foster the next-generation workforce experience.** Core to the concept of collaboration, communications is a foundational component of the Web 2.0 experience. In a true collaborative setting, communications have no borders. Users can move from instant messaging to voice to a web meeting to video seamlessly.

"Communications are in the midst of a new wave," says John Manville, vice president of IT Network and Data Services at Cisco. "The challenge for enterprises is not the lack of tools but rather the number and potential complexity of devices, interfaces, technologies, security, and cost of ownership considerations. For IS, we use

Cisco unified communications to leverage our core infrastructure of call routing, integrated messaging, and presence, along with the capabilities of the WebEx platform, to create secure, consistent, supportable solutions that can improve employee and partner productivity, enhance our customer experience, and speed up business decisions."

Directory 3.0, the next iteration of Cisco's internal employee directory, demonstrates the integrated workforce experience. In addition to new applications such as integrated discussions and interactive video, Directory 3.0 will allow users to search the database by skill sets, for easy lookup of Cisco subject matter experts worldwide. The directory will also show whether the expert is reachable, by what mode, and depending on availability, provide an instant one-click connection.

**Change the user experience.** An integrated workforce experience can extend the power of collaboration technologies to employees, customers, and partners. But it does not stop there. According to Jordan, "What will really differentiate this experience is when we take the framework and combine it with applications, business services, workforce data, and other content to create a flexible, secure, next-generation workspace that is relevant and personalized."

Currently in Beta within Cisco, WebEx Connect exemplifies IT's platform progression toward the next-generation workforce experience. WebEx Connect is Cisco's solution for shared workspaces and business collaboration. It allows employees to combine data from multiple applications into one view, share the data across multiple organizations, and act on that data to make faster, better informed business decisions. It pools fundamental collaborative applications such as online meetings, chat, audio and video conferencing, and document and task management into a single, familiar interface. "Team spaces" can be used to set up virtual rooms for managing myriad projects, and communicating and collaborating with customers and partners in real time. In the WebEx Marketplace, customers can find, try, and buy Cisco partner applications that run on the WebEx Connect platform.

WebEx Connect will be the “place where you live at work,” says Jordan. “It will be the single place where you can access all of the applications, data, services, people, and content relevant to you and what you need to do your job.”

### Results: Customized Collaboration Solutions

Cisco Directory 3.0 and WebEx Connect are two of many customized collaboration solutions that Cisco is vetting through the Communications Center of Excellence. Other examples include:

- C-Vision: With YouTube functionality, this video wiki allows Cisco employees to upload and share informal video messages, audio, and photos. Rating functionality and other tools encourage an interactive format.
- Finance Collaboration and Leadership Network: This network of finance resources, content, and learning offerings targets different audiences worldwide through multipoint telepresence, interactive online video and chat sessions, blogs, discussion forums, video-on-demand communities, profiling, and more. The network has allowed finance to reach people more effectively, disseminate information that employees need to do their jobs, improve organizational performance, and take full advantage of the leadership knowledge within finance.
- Idea Zone or I-Zone. Any Cisco employee can propose an idea for a new product or business unit on this wiki, and comment on or modify someone else’s proposal. Ideas are used as a source of potential investments. Since its inception in August 2006,

I-Zone has generated 400 contributions. Twelve ideas have reached the project stage, and four new Cisco business units have been formed.

So far wikis are proving to be one of the most popular, business-relevant Web 2.0 tools within Cisco. The number of new wiki pages swelled from roughly 21,000 in 2006 to nearly 100,000 in 2007. And new wiki pages are expected to top 300,000 in 2008.

### Next Steps

Growth and productivity at Cisco will continue to center on collaboration enabled by networked Web 2.0 technologies. A few areas of focus for Cisco IT include incorporating video into all of the existing collaboration technologies, and working with the architecture organization to standardize and pare down the number of Web 2.0 applications in use on multiple platforms. Cisco IT is also working closely with the Information Security and WebEx groups to “productionalize” WebEx Connect, says Jordan, specifically in the areas of identity management and security.

Also under way is formation of an Architecture-IT Board. This counterpart to the cross-functional, business-centric Communications and Collaboration Board will focus on implementing solutions that are relevant to the requirements of each business function, in addition to overseeing the technical integration, establishing governance and policies, and helping to develop business and user metrics for the Web 2.0 technologies. ■



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