

Cisco Extends Leadership in Customer Support with Global Service Management Solution



Cisco Systems
San Jose, CA
www.cisco.com

Industry:

High Technology

Annual Revenue:

More than \$20 Billion

Oracle Products & Services:

Oracle TeleService
Oracle Service Contracts
Oracle Financials
Oracle Purchasing
Oracle Order Management

Key Benefits:

- Integrated customer service system delivers global 24/7 support within the terms of service level agreements
- Created a seamless contact and service experience for customers
- Expanded Cisco's ability to create and track key service metrics

“Implementing the Oracle solution in our service business has given us a solid and scalable ‘end-to-end’ foundation, tightly linked with our product and customer data. We will build on this foundation, a high value customer specific service capability that will enable our customers’ success with the Cisco Intelligent Information Network.” – Jim Reily, Vice President, Global Service Operations, Cisco Systems

Since its inception in 1984, Cisco Systems has prospered right along with the Internet it helped build. Today, the company’s Internet Protocol (IP)-based networking technologies have become the foundation for business, education, government, and home communications networks around the globe. Headquartered in San Jose, California, Cisco operates in over 70 countries, serving a customer base in the millions.

Considering Cisco’s acclaimed reputation for product quality and innovation, it’s no surprise that the company also fields one of the top service and support organizations around. The company’s multi-billion dollar service business spans the globe, engaging thousands of engineers and service professionals from Cisco, and even more from the company’s huge partner network.

In continuing the tradition of excellence in service, Cisco recently launched a major initiative to consolidate and upgrade its customer-support systems worldwide. “We had three different systems with three different ways of expressing workflows,” said Chris Kirkby, strategic business systems director for Cisco Systems. “It was very time consuming to aggregate data from each system. It became apparent that we needed to get the entire service experience onto a single platform.”

Cisco’s new Technical Support solution, which was rolled out in March 2004, uses Oracle E-Business Suite applications for managing service requests, contract compliance, and logistics support. Running on a global single instance, the Oracle system is tightly integrated with Cisco’s product inventory operations, synchronizing arrival of engineers and parts at customer sites.

“We’ve seen definite improvements in service delivery,” Kirkby said. “We’ve streamlined the processes needed to ensure the accuracy of logistics transactions, and the integration of inventory and service data gives us end-to-end clarity and consistency.”

Delivering Service Worldwide

The majority of Cisco service requests are customer created via a Web portal that integrates with Oracle technology. These requests are managed by a global workforce of highly skilled engineers based in several key locations around the world. Cisco’s Technical Assistance Center (TAC) engineers diagnose and solve issues in collaboration with the company’s service partners worldwide.

Cisco’s service level agreements are among the most aggressive in the industry, typically calling for delivering support within two hours, no matter where the customer is located. That leaves little room for error—or delay. “It’s a very complex process, and integrated data, planning and timing are critical,” says Kirkby.

A key part of the operation is quickly determining what products customers have and the service they’re entitled to. With Oracle Service Contracts, Cisco’s agents and engineers always know exactly what type of type of service agreements customers have in place. What’s more, Cisco could roll out this capability with ease. “The beauty of having our installed base and our contracts within Oracle is that the entitlement rules are built into the application,” Kirkby said.

Tightly Coordinated Logistics

Engineers at Cisco’s TAC use the Oracle service request module to initiate a task to communicate with engineers and dispatch them to customer sites. In many cases, the field personnel work for Cisco partner companies, and many use virtual private network (VPN) connections to tap into the Oracle system. Cisco also utilizes a B2B connection it designed through RosettaNet Partner Interface Processes (PIPs) to standardize and manage its interactions with third-party logistics providers worldwide.

Cisco’s logistics operations are so finely tuned that replacement parts arrive reliably at the work site along with the field engineers. “It’s a collaborative event and it’s pretty amazing,” Kirkby said. “When field engineers arrive on site, they get on the phone with

support agents and they collaboratively resolve the problem. The part is replaced, it's tested, and everyone agrees to close the service request."

Service over the Web

While urgent requests usually come in through its call centers, Cisco resolves about 79% of its service request transactions over the Web. Cisco's self-service system integrates with the same service application used by the TAC and guides customers through the service request process. "We pre-populate our online system with as much information as possible and then allow customers to create the service request from there," said Kirkby.

Simply by logging on, customers are presented with a list of their installed products and contract information. Next, says Kirkby, "the online system takes the customer through the entitlement process step-by-step and suggests solutions and hot topics around their chosen subject area." By providing relevant support documents and tools, the customer has resources to solve their issues immediately. The Web portal allows Cisco to reduce the number of unnecessary service requests, and the customer's issue is resolved quickly and easily.

Complete Picture of the Customer

With each service request and interaction, Cisco adds to its knowledge base, collecting insights into what its customers are doing and how its products are performing. "We have to be able to understand the interaction around the customer, especially around service history," Kirkby said. This knowledge is fed back into product development continuously influencing the product lifecycle.

Cisco is now building that complete picture, aided by the global single instance Oracle service platform. "By having all critical customer service information within one system, we have a better feel for the customer experience," said Kirkby. "We're better prepared to deal with a customer in a more personal manner."

Ultimately, Cisco wants to reduce the number of service requests it gets in the first place. "We want to resolve issues quickly and cost effectively," said Kirkby. "But just as important, we want to make sure that future problems are avoided by improving a process or by changing the product in some way. Ultimately, we

end up with more satisfied customers, fewer service requests, and a more competitive business position.”

Already Cisco has seen clear signs of progress. “We transitioned to this new platform with minimal impact to our customers,” Kirkby said. “In the service business, that’s wonderful because we are moving the meter in the right direction.” Still, Cisco doesn’t plan to rest on its laurels. “Cisco is number one in service provision,” Kirkby said. “Being number one, you’re always looking ahead to the next five years. ‘How can we retain and expand our leadership position?’ Gaining a better understanding of our customers is essential to this effort.”

Cisco Systems, Inc. is the worldwide leader in networking for the Internet. Cisco hardware, software, and service offerings are used to create Internet solutions that allow individuals, companies, and countries to increase productivity, improve customer satisfaction, and strengthen competitive advantage.