

**BRENT BURNS:** Welcome to the Cisco Unified Communications Podcast Series for Government. I'm your host, Brent Burns. Don, thanks for joining us. Tell us a little bit about your background. How long have you been working with government customers?

**DON WEINER:** Thanks, Brent. It's good to be here. Since I joined Cisco in 2000, I've been working with the federal marketplace in both Department of Defense and civilian accounts.

**BRENT BURNS:** On our Unified Communications Podcast Series, we've been talking a lot about different UC applications. One of those that we hear a lot of government customers asking about is presence. What's Cisco's approach to presence?

**DON WEINER:** Presence is a key component in our unified communications strategy. To oversimplify it, presence could be summed up as indicating availability or status. I can draw on resources whether they're across the globe or across the office, and I can do so in a way that's nonintrusive to those users. I can see their status, whether they want to be in a do-not-disturb mode, whether they're on the phone. And by seeing that presence status, I can then use the appropriate mode of communication, whether it's email, instant messaging, a voice call, a video call, starting up a rich media conference, based on that user's current status. So presence, to me, is bringing us back to the environment where we're all in the same office. And I could look at someone's cube or look at their office door and see if they're available to talk or work on a project that we have together.

**BRENT BURNS:** The common understanding of instant-message applications and how those are showing what really is presence data, I'm available or I'm not -- yet what I hear you talking about, Don, is that it's really more than just instant messaging. Is it other applications and capabilities?

**DON WEINER:** Absolutely. Cisco Unified Communications in general is really bringing all the technologies available for communication, whether it's voice, video, instant messaging, rich media conferencing, email, and allowing users to select or use that technology without having to know anything about the underlying technology. I don't need to know a special dial sequence for video. I don't need to have multiple clients even on my desktop to, say, check an instant message or check an email or check a voicemail. We can consolidate that. And I can use those most appropriately when I understand the status of the person I'm trying to connect to.

**BRENT BURNS:** What are some examples of devices that can incorporate with Cisco's presence solution for unified communications?

**DON WEINER:** Well, we have Cisco's Unified Personal Communicator, which is an essentially all-encompassing client application on either Windows or Vista or Mac PCs, Mac OS X.

**BRENT BURNS:** Can you share with us an example of how presence could affect a day in the life of a government worker?

**DON WEINER:** Absolutely. I could give a personal example of something that just happened to me recently. I had a voicemail message from a co-worker asking for a particular PowerPoint slide for a presentation they were doing. I thought I had exactly what he needed, but I wasn't quite sure. Based on my Unified Personal Communicator window, I could see their presence, and I could see that he was on the phone. Therefore, I didn't launch a phone call to him, just to leave another voicemail, I instant

messed him. I told him I had what I thought was the perfect slide, and if he'd be available soon. He instant messaged me back, saying he would only be a few more minutes on his call. I was watching his presence status, I saw him become available, and so I placed a call to him. Now this call happened to have video. I really like the addition of video because now I can see their reactions. I can see their body language. But it also creates more focus on the conversation. I told him I thought I had the slide that he needed. I clicked the button, and it immediately launched an ad-hoc MeetingPlace conference, where I could now share the slide. We made some modifications, we hung up. I posted the slide to our wiki site, and I was done. I moved on to the next order of business. In the past, it could have taken two days, and yet through Unified Personal Communicator and the merging of these technologies, it was done in a matter of minutes.

**BRENT BURNS:** On a previous edition of our podcast series, Randy, Ben and I discussed mobility within unified communications. Is there support for mobile devices with the presence capabilities that you're referring to?

**DON WEINER:** Absolutely. We are building presence capabilities into essentially every client that we have. And with the mobile workforce, it actually becomes more critical because, almost by definition, a mobile worker is geographically separated from other people. With the Cisco Unified Mobile Communicator, I can see the status of other people on either Symbian-based smartphones like the Nokias, on BlackBerry devices, or soon on Windows CE smartphones. I can instant message with them, I can change my own status when I'm in a meeting. So by moving out of the office, not only do I not lose my connectivity back to the office, but I can also set my status. If I'm in a meeting they can send me an email, or if I'm just working in a remote area, they can contact me immediately either on my smart device or through a phone call. But best of all, they know my status, my preference for being reached, and then can contact me elegantly.

**BRENT BURNS:** Let's shift gears a little bit and talk about interoperability. I'm personally very familiar with Sametime and have been a longtime user. Can I continue to use Sametime with the Cisco presence solution?

**DON WEINER:** You bet. Cisco is partnered with IBM Lotus to incorporate these same presence capabilities as well as other unified communications capabilities into the Sametime client. The Sametime 8.0, I can see on-hook/off-hook presence information for a user on a Cisco IP phone, whether it's a softphone or whether it's a hard phone. There are also some plug-ins to Sametime that we have posted that allow me to get my voicemail messages within Sametime, to click to call directly from Sametime, and to launch a rich media conference directly from the Sametime client.

**BRENT BURNS:** A frequent question I hear from government customers is interoperability with Microsoft products like Outlook and Microsoft Office Communicator. What can you share with us about that, Don?

**DON WEINER:** We will push out our presence information so that it can be seen in a Microsoft Office Communicator client. Now we've also opened up some hooks to allow the Microsoft Office Communicator user to control or dial their Cisco IP hard phone from the Microsoft Office Communicator. And what this allows is the convenience of a click-to-dial capability within Microsoft Office Communicator, and yet maintain the quality, reliability, and security of that Cisco IP hard phone. You can also use all the features and functionality available with the Cisco Unified Communications solution. So things that a soft client like Office Communicator may not support, things like call pickup or hunt groups, can all be done from the Cisco IP phone, and yet you're still using your Office Communicator client for those things it does well.

**BRENT BURNS:** A lot of government enterprises that are not going to have one standard for mobile phones and maybe the same way with desktop applications: can a user using Microsoft Office Communicator talk to somebody using Unified Personal Communicator?

**DON WEINER:** Yes, interoperability is actually a foremost goal in Cisco Unified Communications. So our take on it is, regardless of the client, we want to enable as many capabilities as we can. So someone on a Cisco Unified Personal Communicator can absolutely speak with someone on Sametime.

**BRENT BURNS:** Based on the vast experience that you have, Don, I'm going to ask you to look into the crystal ball and tell us what's the future of presence in unified communications.

**DON WEINER:** I think what we're doing internally at Cisco right now is an indication of what's going to be status quo out in the government in the years to come. Our web-based directory, where I can look up anyone in the world at Cisco, already shows our presence. And we can click under a presence indicator and either email, instant message, place a voice call, place a voice with video call, or launch a rich media conference, right from the directory. We also have something within Cisco called the Expertise Locator. And in this web page I can input a skill, and this application will look in our directory and find matches to those skills. All the matches are shown as push-pins on a Google map. It will show as the head of that push-pin, the presence status. And now I can pick from any of these resources that I can call upon right at that moment in time. Those kinds of capabilities of incorporating presence into our applications, our productivity applications, are going to make us much more effective at what we do, and we won't have to spend the hours at the office that we may have spent in the past trying to get something done using older technologies.

**BRENT BURNS:** I can certainly see those sort of productivity benefits having a big impact on government.

**DON WEINER:** I believe so. I mean, my job is much -- well, I don't know if I can say easier. But I get things done a lot quicker.

**BRENT BURNS:** Thanks, Don, for taking the time today. You definitely piqued our interest, and I'm very interested to see some of these impacts as they become more prevalent.

**DON WEINER:** You bet, Brent. It's been great talking with you.

**BRENT BURNS:** Thank you for joining the Cisco Government Unified Communications Podcast Series, and a special thanks to our guest, Don Weiner.