

## Cisco on Cisco:

# How Cisco Services Upskilled 14,000 Employees and Transformed into a Consultative, Solutions-Selling Organization



It is estimated that in five short years, roughly four out of 10 organizations will be displaced or cease to exist due to the exponential rate of digital disruption occurring in the global marketplace.<sup>1</sup> To adapt and thrive in this new digital economy, industry thought leaders and futurists note that every country, every city, and every business will need to become digital, or they too will be disrupted.

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For organizations that act now, digitalization is a huge business opportunity. First-to-market leaders can capture mind share and market share in ways that were unthinkable previously. To move ahead of the curve and prepare its workforce for the digital future, Cisco decided in 2013 to shift its Services organization to a consultative, solutions-selling model. To support this transformational play, Services would need to reskill 14,000-plus employees for new positions supporting the evolved Services strategy.

By transitioning to the new consultative-style approach, leaders believed that Services employees could acquire the transformational capabilities and expertise needed to support customers transiting to digital. From a first-mover position, Cisco could gain a competitive advantage, from innovating new business models to creating additional value for new Internet of Everything (IoE) solutions. Moreover, employees could use their new skills to redefine the customer experience.

To align around this initiative, Edzard Overbeek, who formerly served as senior vice president of Services, convened a steering team of Human Resources, Learning & Development, and Learning@Cisco leaders to define the transformation vision, strategy, and journey. To understand the challenges before them, the steering team commissioned an independent Human Resources assessment of the business unit. The resulting assessment identified a number of gaps and opportunities. Most notably, two-thirds of Services employees needed new skills to shift to the newly prescribed selling motion. Additionally, nearly half of Services employees lacked access to critical learning paths to develop the transformational skills and capabilities needed to support the initiative. It quickly became apparent to executive leaders that a whole new approach to learning and talent development would be necessary for Services to achieve its desired business outcomes. With new end goals in mind, Services embarked on building a new social learning platform called Career Connection.

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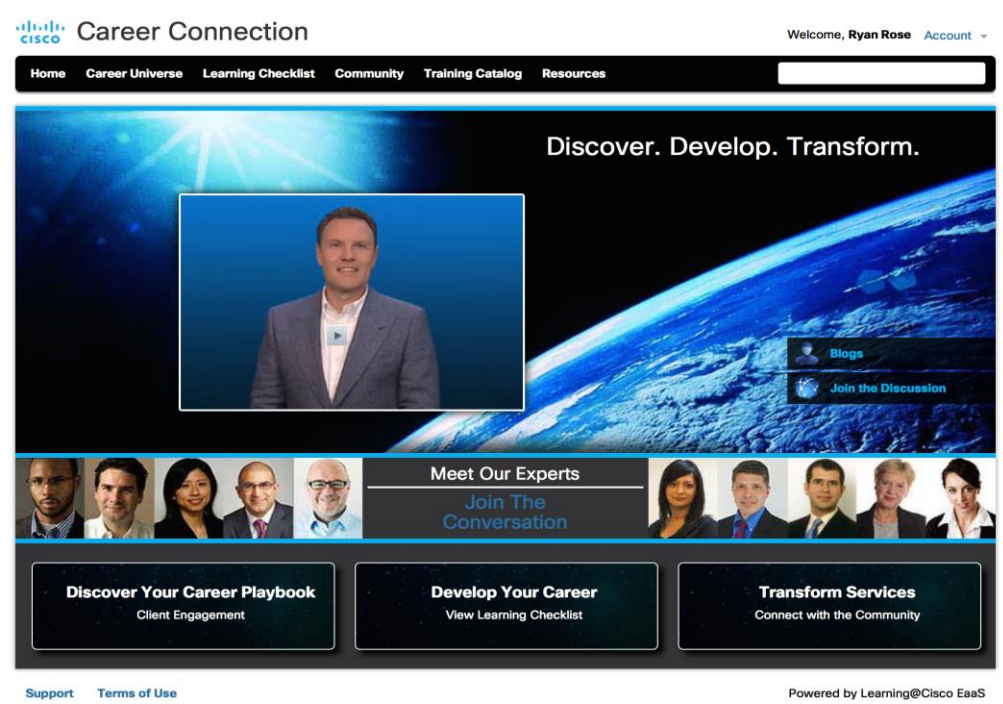
## Career Connection and the Cisco Collaborative Knowledge Journey

After months of meetings, surveys, interviews, user testing, employee participation, and executive input, the Career Connection internal proof-of-concept pilot went live in 2014. The platform, which was purposefully designed to scale content, context, and community across the enterprise, offered employees a social, collaborative environment to learn and grow within.

To drive adoption, Career Connection was designed and developed so that Services employees were the beneficiaries of crucial tools and technology that empowered them to take charge of their own careers and learning and development. To cultivate collaboration and knowledge-sharing across functions, employees could connect with peers, experts, and mentors to learn and share information in real time. They could also acquire knowledge and specialized skills through interactive discussion forums, blogs, and online training. To support transformational capabilities development, employees, Services leaders, Human Resources, and Learning & Development teams worked together to create Career Playbooks. By providing prescriptive guidance on job skills and training, employees could better prepare for current and future job roles that aligned with their career and development goals.

Unlike Cisco Collaborative Knowledge, Career Connection initially focused primarily on formal and informal learning: Career Universe, Learning Plan, Community, and the Training Catalog. **Career Universe** contained Career Playbooks, organized by job families, and skills-based capabilities. **Learning Plan** scheduled and tracked learning and development and progress toward career goals. **Community** connected peers, mentors, and experts so they could learn, encourage, and help one another on assignments and projects. The **Training Catalog** standardized learning and development across Services, providing every employee with new opportunities to learn and grow.

**Figure 1.** Initial Career Connection Home Page



The dynamic nature of Career Connection meant that learning was enabled through a rich blend of formal and informal learning opportunities, including discussion threads, blogs, and even crowdsourcing. In addition to enabling Cisco Services to reskill 14,400 employees quickly and cost-effectively, Career Connection offered many tangible business benefits:

- Engaged employees in Services' business transformation
- Increased collaboration and communication among peers, experts, and executives
- Improved employee engagement, participation, and satisfaction
- Standardized and democratized learning and development across the Services organization

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## Product Validation

Once deployed, it quickly became apparent that Career Connection had the right blend of learning and collaboration for Cisco Services. Early field trial results demonstrated that employees not only liked the platform, they supported its mission:

- Eight out of 10 employees agreed or strongly agreed they had a better sense of Services' business transformation, and consequently were more engaged on Services' business topics. They also felt empowered to share professional knowledge with peers as a result of Career Connection.
- Nine out of 10 employees agreed or strongly agreed that learning about the organization's strategic direction from leaders (directly via blogs and discussion threads) was important to engagement and career development.
- Three out of four employees agreed or strongly agreed that being able to share information through discussion forums was important to their learning and development.
- Eight out of 10 employees agreed or strongly agreed that being able to access job roles and requisites in Career Universe better enabled them to meet their aspirational career goals.
- Eight out of 10 employees agreed or strongly agreed that the information in their Career Playbook enabled them to more effectively create their professional development plan.
- Eight out of 10 employees agreed or strongly agreed that Career Connection was useful and informative in planning career goals.

With such positive feedback, Learning@Cisco executives began asking: Could Cisco customers benefit from a similar platform to transform their own companies? To determine if there was an unmet need in the marketplace, Learning@Cisco connected with over 150 customers to discuss their challenges.

Armed with customer interest and a proof-of-concept pilot validated by 14,400 Cisco Services employees, Career Connection quickly evolved from an internal learning offering into a fully integrated, cloud-based knowledge and learning digital workplace solution called *Cisco Collaborative Knowledge*.

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According to Michael Carter, former vice president of human resources for Cisco Services and an original sponsor of Career Connection, to achieve the agility required for today's workforce, talent must be empowered to define, grow, and redefine their careers. "Career Connection grew out of an in-house pilot that connected the evolving needs of the business with the skills and capabilities in the workforce. It made the business strategy relevant to how employees want to come together to connect, develop, and transform," he says.

Kathy Bries, a senior director and general manager for Learning@Cisco who led the development and marketing of Cisco Collaborative Knowledge, concurs. "Today's organizations need to inspire and energize their employees to learn, relearn, and unlearn time and again. They also need to provide them with the digital tools and technology needed to support their careers and the organization. Cisco accomplished this with Career Connection, and now our customers can build a smarter, more agile and productive workforce with Cisco Collaborative Knowledge."

### From Career Connection to Cisco Collaborative Knowledge Today

Designed to optimize knowledge-sharing and collaborative learning, Cisco Collaborative Knowledge can empower everyone within an organization with the digital tools and technology needed to access experts, learning, and knowledge in real time—anytime, anywhere. By combining the best of Career Connection with crucial technologies to streamline communication and business results, Cisco Collaborative Knowledge evolved into a digital workplace solution.

Launched in April 2015, Cisco Collaborative Knowledge integrates best-in-class consumer and business applications—secure knowledge sharing, expert identification, collaboration, continuous learning, social networking, and analytics—into one complete and end-to-end knowledge-exchange solution.

Figure 2. Cisco Collaborative Knowledge Home Page.

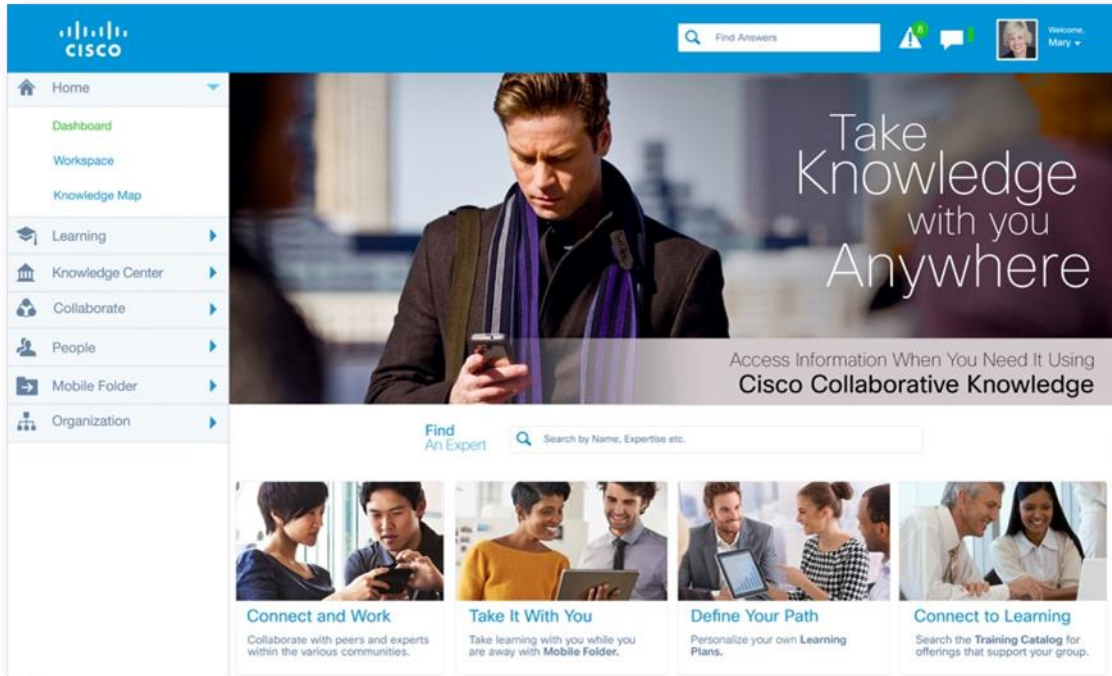
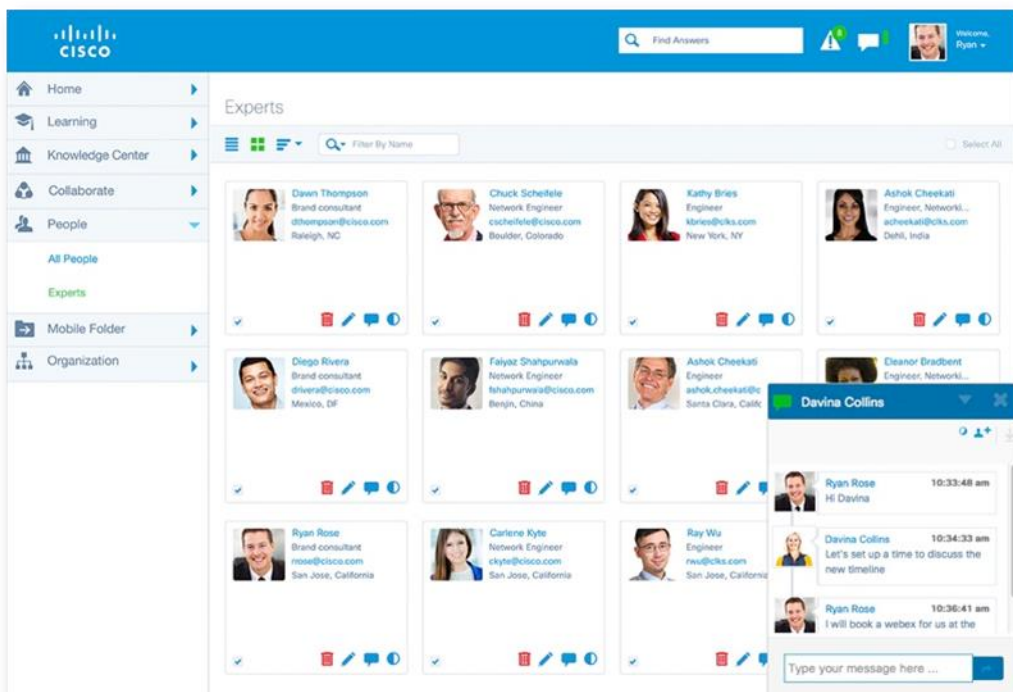


Figure 3. Cisco Collaborative Knowledge Expert Discovery.



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Powered by five knowledge and learning modules—Mobile Knowledge, Expert Discovery, Knowledge Center, Social Communities, and the Learning Management System, Cisco Collaborative Knowledge can provide every employee with the tools and capabilities they need to reimagine the customer and employee experience. Following are highlights of the modules that constitute Cisco Collaborative Knowledge:

- **Mobile Knowledge:** Makes knowledge portable and shareable. With it, everyone can capture, share, and manage content anytime, anywhere with a laptop, tablet, or smartphone.
- **Expert Discovery:** Provides just-in-time access to expert resources using Cisco WebEx® and Jabber® technology. Workers can identify and locate resources and connect safely inside the firewall to share ideas, exchange knowledge, or solve business challenges in real time.
- **Knowledge Center:** Centralizes and preserves institutional knowledge and best practices from across the organization in an enterprisewide library.
- **Social Communities:** Fosters real-time learning, problem solving, and innovation through social communities, discussion forums, blogs, and crowdsourcing.
- **Learning Management System:** Supports formal, prescribed, and informal learning and development through a centralized learning management system. Students can track their progress and take assessments, and instructors can leverage the system to prescribe learning.

Incorporating industry-leading Cisco innovation, including Cisco WebEx and Jabber collaboration tools and Visual Knowledge Mapping and Analytics Technology, Cisco Collaborative Knowledge can help every organization build a smarter, more agile, and more productive digital workplace for today and tomorrow.



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## One Solution: Multiple Functions

Because of its comprehensive feature set, Cisco Collaborative Knowledge can enable many outcomes across different job functions and industries. To drive digital disruption in the automotive industry, one Cisco manufacturing customer is engaging with universities and thought leaders on the platform, sharing information and research to reimagine consumer automotive safety. Another organization is scaling science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education globally so that students have access to experts and mentors. In doing so, they are preparing the next generation of scientists and engineers to handle critical global challenges.

Additionally, with Cisco Collaborative Knowledge, your organization can:

- Mobilize its workforce with knowledge, speed, and flexibility to create a more agile and engaged organization. For example, with Cisco Collaborative Knowledge, mobile sales professionals who engage with new prospects can quickly access learning modules about a particular product, solution, or market—right as they need it. Through knowledge that is available and shareable via a mobile platform, everyone can quickly access valuable resources to reinvent the way they work, learn, collaborate, and innovate together.
- Tap into the collective knowledge of the entire organization to innovate and transform the customer and employee experience. With Cisco Collaborative Knowledge, employees have instant access to experts, enterprisewide repositories of collective knowledge and social learning, and collaboration tools that enable them to innovate in the moment.

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## Learning@Cisco: From Learning Certifications to Education-as-a-Service Software

As a result of our commitment to education, Cisco has expended significant resources on advancing education and learning innovation globally. As a business unit, Learning@Cisco is focused on the development of educational, knowledge-sharing, and learning-based solutions that meet the demands of the new digital economy. To that end, Cisco Collaborative Knowledge supports Learning@Cisco's commitment to develop collaborative, virtualized, and accessible education that accelerates overall workforce performance as it removes barriers to learning.

To help customers solve their most pressing business challenges, Learning@Cisco developed education as a service (EdaaS) to reinvent the delivery of knowledge and learning. Cisco Collaborative Knowledge is the company's first EdaaS platform to address the needs of the digital workplace.

## Digitalize Your Workforce

To learn more about Cisco Collaborative Knowledge, visit [collaborativeknowledge.cisco.com](http://collaborativeknowledge.cisco.com) to request a demonstration. For all other information requests, email [collaborative-knowledge@cisco.com](mailto:collaborative-knowledge@cisco.com).

<sup>1</sup>Bradley, Joseph, et al. *Digital Vortex: How Digital Disruption Is Redefining Industries*. Global Center for Digital Business Transformation, an IMD and Cisco Initiative, June 2015



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