

Ever wonder if you could host an impactful, interactive, large-scale global meeting that reaches 10,000 leaders across the globe, at the same time and in a consistent way? In the past, Cisco used a mix of approaches to share its corporate direction and strategy with employees over the years – from in person meetings to published videos to televised broadcasts – and continued striving for communication that is even more effective. Cisco has moved its global Leader Day beyond a simple one way broadcast and Q&A to a new collaborative and interactive experience for its 10,000 leaders through a new, integrated use of its solutions.

For the first time, Cisco had its Leader Day meeting globally and virtually, emphasizing their corporate focus on developing internal leadership and reinvestment in growing the skills of Cisco leaders. To achieve increased engagement and participation across the globe, Cisco IT stepped back and looked at how to integrate multiple Cisco products in a unique way. This solution delivered the live broadcast sessions more efficiently and in conjunction with breakout sessions for participants. “We’ve never used our technology in such a concerted way for a 24-hour, always-on event with a high level of participant interaction,” Jennifer Dudeck, Senior Director, Learning and Leadership Development, Cisco.

To ensure effective communication of key messages and to give participants a similar meeting experience across the globe, members of the executive leadership team traveled to sites in Asia, Europe, and the Americas. This strategy minimized travel, but maximized impact. Each site began the meeting locally by viewing the same short opening video, followed by a keynote presentation from the onsite executive. The bulk of the day was focused on collaborative small-group discussions. For those individuals, not physically in the room, participation was in preassigned virtual rooms. The presence of the executive leadership team in each Cisco global location emphasized to the employees the importance of attending and engaging in the meeting, whether in person or virtually. Closing out the day in each site was a short video message from CEO Chuck Robbins thanking the leadership team for their attention and participation, and reemphasizing the key executive leadership messages.

Here are the details on what made it all possible. Six Cisco TV broadcast streams provided the central point for participants to access the virtual meeting sessions and supporting content. The Cisco TV broadcasts were powered by our [Cisco® Infinite Video platform](#) and optimized across the Cisco network through [Cisco Wide-Area Application Services](#) (WAAS) and the [Cisco Intelligent WAN with Akamai Connect solution](#). Cisco TV enabled handoffs of presentations among executive leaders as the meeting continued globally throughout the day. The virtual interaction as new sites joined the meeting created a buzz among participants that reflected the enormity and importance of the collaborative discussions for themselves and for peers.

Cisco TelePresence connected presenters and participants gathered in 15 global locations and hubs, with eight bridges and 32 codecs configured as primary and backup systems for the broadcast sessions. Additional viewing rooms around the world received the streaming Cisco TV broadcast, allowing local employees to gather in person. However, more than three-quarters of participants attended virtually, accessing sessions through the Cisco TV link. “We wanted to make sure the experience was good and felt the same, no matter how you participated, and the Cisco technology helped us achieve that” says Dudeck.

More than 500 Cisco Webex meeting rooms were created for the breakout and discussion sessions that involved small groups of participants. Webex allowed participants to enjoy the quality of small-group interaction even if they weren’t physically at one of the regional gathering sites. The groups were able to

start their sessions quickly and focus on collaborating with other leaders, often from very different parts of the company, and on executing the assigned exercises for the session.

Breakout sessions have traditionally been the biggest challenge for virtual meetings because there are so many sessions to support and some sessions have only a few people while others are attended by thousands. By using our existing Cisco TV and Webex infrastructure, we didn't have to build something special for this event and there was no additional infrastructure cost for supporting the large and global scale.

[Cisco Webex Teams](#) made it easy for the event and IT teams to collaborate on planning, then to manage technical support activity during the event. Cisco Webex Teams created a real-time collaborative environment to communicate, manage issues, and make changes as needed in the meeting experience. Some of the collaboration groups continue to use Cisco Webex teams for post-event discussions.

[A Positive Experience for Presenters and Participants](#)

Cisco TV, Cisco Telepresence, and Webex were all familiar technologies for the meeting presenters and participants. This familiarity helped everyone focus on collaboration through the session content and interactions through online polling, Q&A, and discussion features. The meeting content and delivery technologies garnered positive feedback from participants, with 82 percent indicating the event was engaging, informative, and collaborative. Additionally, more than 80 percent of meeting participants look forward to the next Leader Day event.

"Using Cisco technology allowed us to scale this meeting at a much lower cost and in a way that engaged people more than would be the case if they were sitting in a room with thousands of others," says Dudeck. "We were also able to give people access to company executives in ways they haven't had before, and that's critical to our ability to communicate and collaborate within the company."

[Impact on Employee Engagement](#)

One purpose of Leader Day was to influence interactions between employees and their direct manager. For example, Cisco uses an externally-developed software tool for employees to send weekly check-in information to managers; the tool also measures this interaction. After the Leader Day event, we saw a nearly 150 percent increase in leaders submitting their own information, a 90 percent increase in leaders reviewing employee check-in information, and an almost 200 percent increase in leaders sending an online poll about engagement to their teams.

[Benefits for Future Meetings](#)

The new integration design for virtual meetings offers several benefits for participants, presenters, and Cisco IT.

A single point for participant access. Each participant accessed the keynote sessions, event schedule, instructions, and technical support through the Cisco TV app developed by Cisco IT. Participants also received calendar invitations with the Cisco TV link for the general sessions and Webex links for their breakout sessions.

Access on mobile devices. Cisco TV supports streaming to many types of mobile devices, with an optional audio-only capability if the user's network connection isn't adequate for a video stream. Even participants in one of the event hubs often used their mobile devices to access the meeting's online chat and collaboration tools.

Live presentations in each world region. Members of the executive leadership team located around the world were able to address participants in live presentations using their Cisco Telepresence systems.

Reusable and scalable integration. Subsequent to the Leader Day event, Cisco IT used the virtual meeting integration for its own annual meeting of employees worldwide. In the future, this integration will also be used for other large-scale meetings within the company.

What's Next?

Cisco's corporate focus is to continue developing talent across their employees and because of the great success of their first Leader Day, they will continue to hold these global meetings every September going forward. It is Cisco's goal to share the Cisco on Cisco story and will continue to share as they find more solutions to challenges like this one.

For More Information

Cisco IT Brief: [Efficient Delivery of Live Video Streams](#)

Cisco Case Study: [Global Virtual Collaboration](#)