IT solutions designed to propel your business

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) typically have very limited resources to invest in new technologies. With every IT investment made, they need to consider how to derive the greatest long-term value and make the most of their tech adoption to leapfrog the competition.

The responsibility falls squarely on IT managers to explore new technologies and keep up with rising customer expectations. They also need to consider how new technology tools will impact the way employees work and collaborate, and also assess the ease of integration with legacy infrastructure. All while keeping total cost of ownership (TCO) to a minimum.

The good news is that with Cisco Start, SMB IT managers now have a complete range of solutions tailored to address every aspect of their organization's needs—empowering them to get more done with less.

Here are some key considerations when choosing the right IT solutions to help you stay ahead of the technology curve and realize the potential of digital transformation:

1 Connecting the modern business

The growth of connected devices, IoT, and cloud applications is putting added pressure on SMBs to adapt their networks to the new digital reality. Having a fast, reliable, and flexible network—one which is able to cope with the diverse user and application demands of the business—is the name of the game here.

IT managers need to consider whether their networking solutions can be seamlessly deployed and upgraded to keep business operations running smoothly. These include wireless products such as next-generation access points that enable businesses to easily boost network capabilities without incurring additional expenses for network or cabling upgrades.

Ease of management is another important consideration, especially for SMBs operating without the luxury of a dedicated in-house IT team.

Cisco switches are simple to deploy and manage.

Up to

75%

reduction in man-hours to test and configure switches[1]

Provide greater application visibility and control to prioritize business-critical data traffic flowing through their networks.

2 Empowering the digital workforce to collaborate

Collaboration technology has become an absolute necessity in the modern SMB workplace. Today's digital business environment calls for integrated communications tools that enable a seamless collaboration experience—both within and well beyond the confines of the office—to drive productivity gains, improve workflows, and reduce operational costs.

> At the same time, an integrated approach to collaboration can facilitate faster access to information, thereby boosting your responsiveness to customer demands and improving competitiveness.

SMB IT managers should take a proactive stance toward facilitating collaboration across different platforms. The latest cloud-based business collaboration solutions, such as Cisco Webex Teams (formerly Cisco Spark), can be easily deployed to consolidate web conferencing, telephony, and messaging applications into a single platform—enabling SMBs to collaborate effectively on a simple, cost-effective subscription basis.

3 Using right-sized servers to meet evolving needs

Whether running on a single office server with basic storage capabilities or having to manage compute resources across branches, SMBs must ensure that their IT infrastructure can fulfill evolving requirements. In choosing the ideal server platform, they need to consider solutions that give them the ability to scale up server resources as their business needs grow, instead of being saddled with inflexible technologies.

SMB IT managers can tap into the reliable computing and superior capabilities of Cisco servers to unlock greater agility and innovation. Bringing together computing, networking, and storage capabilities, Cisco UCS® C-Series Rack Servers provide an entry point to a unified computing platform that matches server resources to their workloads in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

4 Building a strong network foundation for security

29%

of breached organizations worldwide report lost revenue.[2]

The growing volume and sophistication of security threats pose a major concern for businesses of all sizes. Data breaches and ransomware attacks directly affect the bottom line and can lead to significant loss of revenue opportunities—with 29 percent of breached organizations worldwide reporting lost revenue.[2] SMB owners are now seeking holistic solutions that can help beef up their threat protection and improve their security posture.

Conventional defense is no longer sufficient. The onus is now on IT managers to build stronger, more comprehensive threat protection across the entire network perimeter—and to act fast without overburdening IT budgets.

In today's threat landscape, an important differentiator for businesses is being able to rapidly identify and mitigate potential threats over the network. The Cisco Start portfolio of products has embedded security features that enable IT managers to control network access with ease, increase visibility, and reduce the time to detect and stop attacks. With Cisco next-generation firewalls, you also gain an additional layer of protection against targeted and persistent malware attacks.

5 Using cloud-managed IT for simpler, faster deployment

Imagine having richer visibility and real-time management of your IT assets across the entire network all under a single pane of glass. That's the promise of centralized cloud management for security, networking, and application control.

With networking devices centrally managed from the cloud, SMBs can reduce operating costs and significantly simplify their day-to-day operations and IT administration. More importantly, cloud-managed solutions provide IT managers with powerful, highly intuitive tools to control user access, applications, and devices or even ramp up wireless capacity in a matter of minutes, from virtually anywhere.

The possibilities are endless when it comes to leveraging enterprise-class technologies to keep up with evolving demands and business practices. And these are just a few examples of how the Cisco Start portfolio can help you get a handle of your company's IT investments and adopt the right-sized, right-priced packaged solutions to thrive in the new digital era. Are you ready to start your journey to simple, smart, and secure IT?

1. *The Total Economic Impact™ of Cisco Catalyst Access Switches*, Forrester Research, Jan. 2012.

2. *Cisco 2017 Annual Cybersecurity Report*, Jan. 2017.