

Event Managers Deliver Bandwidth Where and When It's Needed

Portable Cisco wireless routing products, plus economical Verizon 4G LTE services, add up to “tradeshow-in-a-box” solutions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>Customer Name: Cisco Systems Industry: Networking equipment Location: Global, with headquarters in San Jose, California Number of employees: 73,460</p>
<p>BUSINESS CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide reliable onsite network services to tradeshow staff before, during, and after events • Quickly, conveniently deploy extra bandwidth where and when needed during events
<p>NETWORK SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated mobile Wi-Fi hotspots for tradeshow staff equipped with machine-to-machine (M2M) wireless routers • Easily managed wireless router solutions and economical Verizon 4G LTE M2M service plans
<p>BUSINESS RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced, uninterrupted employee productivity while staffing events • Reliable backup availability for core services in tradeshow booths and meeting rooms • Cost savings
<p>Telecommunications partner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verizon

Business Challenge

“Picture this,” says Doug Robb, senior manager, events infrastructure services, who has been planning, deploying, and managing Cisco’s onsite networking resources for tradeshows and events for more than 14 years.

“You arrive at the exhibit hall a few days before an event. But you have to wait for the provisioning of the circuit you need to connect to the resources you need, then scramble to troubleshoot your setup to make sure everything works. Meanwhile, you and your colleagues can’t access email unless you find a hot spot or go back to your hotel room.”

Robb continues his scenario. “When the show opens, you’re demonstrating solutions that require a lot of bandwidth and uninterrupted connectivity,” he continues. “But you’re walking a highwire without a net. Because you don’t have a Plan B, for “Backup,” if your connection goes down.

“And remember,” he says, “you’re operating in an environment with hundreds of exhibitors and thousands of attendees, all searching constantly for a connection on the tradeshow floor, whether via wireless, Wi-Fi, or a wired circuit.”

“Welcome to my nightmare,” says Robb.

Now, as he and his colleagues will be the first to admit, Cisco tradeshow networking requirements are extraordinary. For example, Cisco has a major presence at Interop, an annual series of enterprise networking tradeshows in various U.S. cities and, occasionally, abroad. At a recent Interop, Robb says, the company showcased 19 enterprise-class integrated networking solutions with hands-on demonstrations tailored to various industries.

To support those demos in the Cisco booth on the tradeshow floor, Robb explains, he and his team travel with two (one for primary deployment, one for backup) Cisco ISRs with Gigabit Ethernet ports, scores of switch ports, hardware-based security, and more. “For the biggest events, like Cisco Live and Interop,” he says, “we build networks that could run a lot of businesses.”

Today, however, companies large and small all depend on having reliable network access at tradeshow and other events. Whether they field five employees or 500 at an event, those people all want and need reliable, always-available connectivity with each other and with their offices back home, not only during the event but while they're setting up for it and packing up when it is over.

And as every event manager knows, wired bandwidth is not cheap. "Cable drops" can range from US\$2000 for one or two megabits to \$60,000 for 20 or 30 megabits or even more for Gigabit connections. If a company needs connections at multiple locations, from tradeshow floor booths to hotel rooms, for the duration of an event or for a just a few hours, the costs can mount up.

"Our people used to have to go back to their hotel rooms just to send an email. They also dreaded what they called the 'hangover' that followed a big tradeshow. That would hit them when they returned to their offices and had to deal with 500 emails while they wrote a report on the event, followed up with customers, and debriefed colleagues, all on about four hours of sleep!"

— Doug Robb, Senior Manager, Events Infrastructure Services, Cisco Systems

Network Solution

Robb and his colleagues have turned to the Cisco product line for solutions to the connectivity costs and complexities of event management. With the introduction of Cisco® Fourth-Generation LTE Wireless WAN Enhanced High-Speed WAN Interface Cards (Cisco 4G LTE WWAN EHWICs) for Cisco Integrated Services Routers (ISRs) and, most recently, the compact Cisco 819 LTE Gateway ISRs, they now have lightweight, but high-performance, solutions to supply the bandwidth and backup requirements for each event and venue.

"We call it a 'tradeshow-in-a-box,'" says Robb.

To provide Cisco employees with access to email and other services before, during, and after a show, the events infrastructure services team use a Cisco 819 LTE Gateway ISR and a modestly priced short-duration Verizon 4G LTE machine-to-machine (M2M) service plan to set up a private, secure Wi-Fi hotspot just for Cisco employees.



“With our own 4G hotspot, we can isolate our staff from the wireless congestion you get on a tradeshow floor,” says Robb.

“The private networking capabilities of Verizon Wireless give them a secure, always-on, reliable connection for everything from email and browsing to WebEx meetings and video chats. In effect, they can ‘virtualize’ themselves and their offices, without even going over the Internet.”

Typically, Robb and his team employ a Cisco 819 ISR, combined with Verizon’s LTE services, as a back-up for core services, including routing, voice, and video, for the duration of an event. “Tradeshow-in-a-box” solutions also enable Robb and his team to plan for the unplanned and adapt to the unexpected. At the recent Interop tradeshow, for example, an important customer asked for a private meeting and demo with Cisco technical marketing engineers off the tradeshow floor. The only challenge was finding a meeting room large enough to accommodate the group, because Robb and his team had a ready-made way of establishing a high-speed network on the spot: a Cisco 1900 Series ISR equipped with a 4G Wireless WAN EHWIC combined, again, with an economical short-term Verizon LTE services package.



The annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas is another event where Cisco normally “goes big,” as Robb describes it, with 500 or more employees in attendance. At CES, however, the action for Cisco is not on the tradeshow floor, but in several meeting rooms. “We’ll reserve three or four floors of one of the large hotels, move out all the furniture, and turn every guest room into a demo room,” says Robb.

While they ordinarily use the hotel’s built-in copper network for connectivity in the demo rooms, they’ll sometimes need additional bandwidth for spontaneous demos requested by customers. For those occasions, also, quick-to-deploy, easy-to-use Cisco 4G LTE solutions come in handy.

Business Results

Since late 2012, Doug Robb and the Cisco events infrastructure services team have saved as much as \$4000 per event by deploying Cisco 4G LTE solutions to meet or supplement specific tradeshow networking bandwidth requirements. But cost savings actually play a very small role in this story.

Having portable, plug-and-play, high-speed, secure “tradeshow-in-a-box” network solutions empowers Robb and his team with greater control and flexibility. “We have productivity from the moment we arrive,” he says. “We can build our infrastructure, test it, and have time to fix what’s broken.

“We also have a viable backup solution if there’s a delay in getting a cable drop from the venue staff or another vendor, or if there’s a glitch in one of our wired network connections during the run of the show,” he continues. It all adds up to peace of mind that they’re ready for any contingency.

It also makes other Cisco employees who work the events happier and more productive.

“Our people used to have to go back to their hotel rooms just to send an email,” he says. “They also dreaded what they called the ‘hangover’ that followed a big tradeshow. That would hit them when they returned to their offices and had to deal with 500 emails while they wrote a report on the event, followed up with customers, and debriefed colleagues, all on about four hours of sleep!

“Now, with all their usual tools and applications at their command, they can work an event **and** keep up with things back at the office.”

No wonder Robb and his team expect, by fiscal year 2014, to deploy Cisco 819 4G LTE ISRs at every event, whether for backup or primary use in various venues and locations.

“The ‘tradeshow-in-a-box’ has become an essential element of our luggage every time we go on the road,” he says.

PRODUCT LIST

- Cisco 1900 Series Integrated Services Router (ISR)
- Cisco Fourth-Generation LTE Wireless WAN Enhanced High-Speed WAN Interface Cards (Cisco 4G LTE WWAN EHWICs) for Cisco Integrated Services Routers (ISRs)
- Cisco 819 4G LTE Integrated Services Router
- Verizon short-duration metered 4G LTE M2M service plans

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco 4G LTE wireless solutions, go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/4g>.

To learn more about Cisco ISR G2s go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/isrg2>.

To learn more about Cisco ISR G2 1900s go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/1900>.

To learn more about Cisco ISR G2 819s go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/819>.

For more information about Verizon 4G LTE machine-to-machine (M2M) service plans, go to:
<http://business.verizonwireless.com/content/b2b/en/shop-business-products/business-plans/machine-to-machine.html>.



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