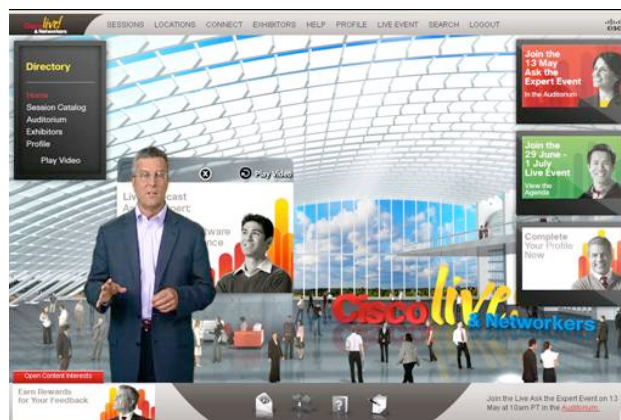


## Next-Generation Events Case Study: Cisco® Live



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August 2010



Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG)

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### Overview: Next-Generation Events

With the pressures of globalization, increased competition, and the continually accelerating information explosion, the need for employees, customers, and partners to come together, exchange knowledge, gain fresh perspectives, build networks, and nurture relationships has never been greater. Despite these important benefits, many organizations are questioning whether events deliver business impact commensurate with their costs, especially during an economic downturn. Traditional events suffer from high costs, limited audience reach, low flexibility, and inconsistent outcomes.

Many of the challenges associated with in-person events can be overcome by augmenting a traditional event with a wide range of technology-enabled enhancements. The resulting next-generation event expands options for participation in both space and time, enabling the attendee to choose to attend in person or remotely, live or on a delayed basis, and for the entire program or just selected sessions. This flexibility can help the event organizer attract a wider audience, engage that audience more effectively, and lower costs for both the host and attendees.

Cisco has been a pioneer in creating highly successful next-generation events, and we are sharing our experiences through a series of case studies and a strategic event management framework for getting started.<sup>1</sup> Cisco also provides a wide range of products and services that enable next-generation events under Cisco's Collaboration for Events experience<sup>2</sup> (see [www.cisco.com/go/collaboration4events](http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration4events)). In this paper, we profile Cisco's next-generation training event for customers and partners called Cisco Live.

**Figure 1.** How Next-Generation Events Differ from Traditional Events

From Traditional Events . . .	. . . To Next Generation Events
Incur cost, lost productivity, and environmental impact of travel	Reduce costs, lost productivity, and environmental impact from travel
One physical location	Multiple physical locations possible
Must attend in person, limiting participation	Can attend remotely, greatly expanding audience
Must attend in real-time	Can view on delayed basis
One-size fits all agenda	Individually tailored agendas
Experience is limited to event itself	Experience extends before and after event
Audience feedback given after event	Real-time feedback given during event
Personal networking is random process	Interest driven networking via social tools
Awareness generation via traditional marketing	Awareness generation amplified via social media

Source: Cisco IBSG, 2010

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**Cisco Live Highlights:**

- Set record for live (in-person and remote) attendance despite economic downturn
  - Enabled participation from anywhere in the world
  - Extended event from five days to 365 days
  - Achieved high satisfaction for in-person and virtual elements
  - Received *Event Marketer's* "Grand Ex Award" (first place from 600 submissions)
  - Received Corporate Events "Best Customer Conference" Award
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**Introduction: Cisco Live**

Cisco Live is the premier thought leadership, education, and training event for Cisco customers and partners. The flagship Cisco Live conference in North America is a weeklong event that includes hundreds of programs tailored to meet the specific needs of different types of customers. Cisco Live typically attracts more than 10,000 in-person attendees. There are also several international Cisco Live/Networkers events annually in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Australia/New Zealand.

Attracting several management levels within the IT organization, Cisco Live is one of our most complex events because of the audience's broad range of interests. Session content and formats are structured to provide relevance to specific roles. Major segments of attendees include:

- Customer network engineers and developers
- Customer IT managers and directors
- Customer CXO technology professionals and business executives
- Personnel from strategic partners, including technology, development, and channel partners
- Members of the press and analyst community

To align more effectively with the needs of this diverse audience, Cisco uses an event planning approach called strategic experience mapping. This framework allows the event marketer to segment the audience and deliver against specific objectives based on what each type of attendee should know, think, feel, and do as a result of the event. This includes not just orchestrating the details of the event itself, but also planning the pre-event and post-event experience so that each touchpoint is suited to the attendee's job function and position in the purchase cycle.

**Figure 2.** Cisco CTO Padmasree Warrior Presenting at Cisco Live



The business objectives for Cisco Live are focused on:

- Delivering training and education
- Communicating strategic messaging
- Enhancing product awareness
- Increasing customer loyalty
- Accelerating sales

Since many of the attendees already have some familiarity with Cisco's offerings, our communications focus is on creating broader and deeper knowledge. The specific objectives vary by customer segment:

- For the CIO, VP, and senior director audience, we communicate the high-level picture around Cisco's vision and thought leadership.
- For the middle-management layer of directors and managers, we provide strategic IT and business education with technology directions.
- For engineers, developers, and technical managers, we deliver deep technical training and education along with one-on-one interaction opportunities with Cisco technical experts.

## Challenge

Beyond the complexity of orchestrating a major in-person event to align with the different needs of this diverse set of customers, we also recognized the need to extend the event beyond the on-site experience. We sought to provide this valuable information and education to a broader audience than those who were able to travel to Cisco Live. And, we



wanted to connect with our customers and provide them with relevant content throughout the year.

### New Approach: Adding Virtual Capabilities

Virtual capabilities have played a vital role in enhancing the attendee experience. Such capabilities not only help meet attendees' needs for choice and flexibility, but also help Cisco expand attendance to those not able to participate in person. Cisco can shift the experience from a single point in time to a yearlong series of interactions, allowing both remote and in-person attendees to extend their educational experience long after the live event is over.

In 2006, we started adding virtual elements with an on-demand web portal where video recordings of the sessions could be viewed after the conclusion of the event. Access to this content was priced at \$199, in contrast to the \$1,800 fee for in-person attendees. There was no remote access to the live event.

Figure 3. In-Person Attendees at Cisco Live

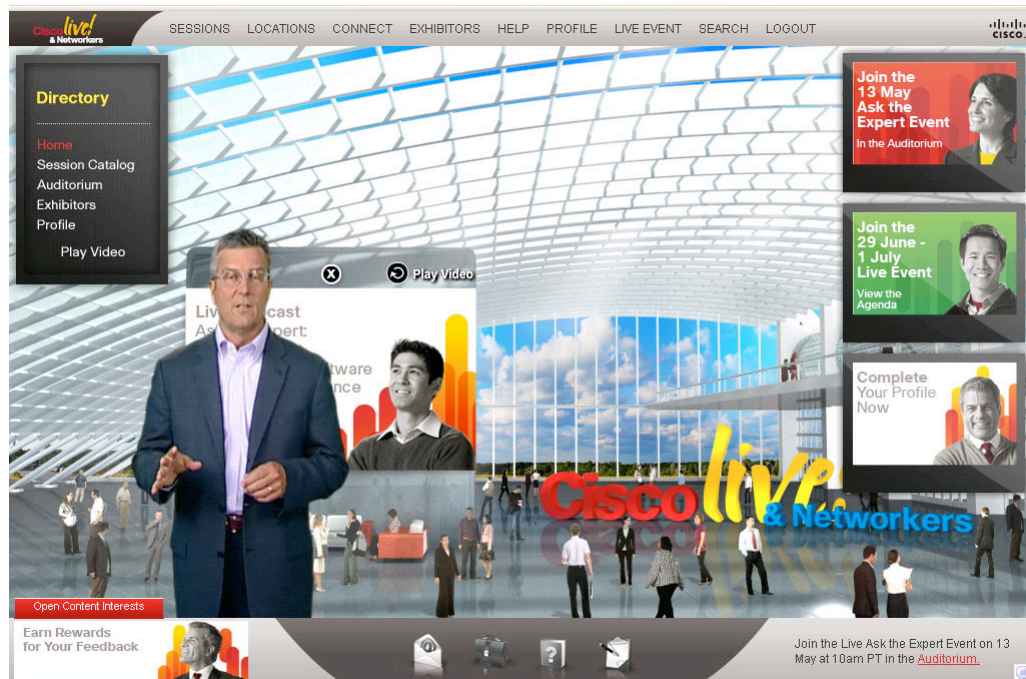


In 2008, we added Virtual On-Demand Booths in which remote attendees could download collateral from Cisco business units but no live interaction was available. Access to the full set of videos and content was priced at \$250. A limited set of materials was made available on the web at no cost. Virtual access helped expand our total audience, with an additional 7,282 virtual participants accessing our virtual event platform from June 2008 through April 2009. Also, 6,144 of the in-person attendees at the U.S. event also accessed the virtual platform, for a total of 13,246 participants in the virtual environment.

In planning our June 2009 event, we recognized that the economic downturn would likely impact our customers' ability to travel and attend in person. Being proactive, we decided to significantly enhance our virtual offering:

- On the two main days of the five-day in-person event, Cisco broadcast live webcasts of the keynotes and primary sessions, and offered an additional 40 sessions, some live and some on demand.
- Exclusive opportunities were provided solely to virtual attendees, including:
  - A live Q&A chat with Cisco executives, which was one of the highest-rated elements of the event
  - An “Ask the Expert” chat where customers could meet with Cisco representatives from various technical fields to get help with hard-to-solve problems. This one-on-one troubleshooting and design consultation with some of the best-known experts in the field was also highly rated.
- Peer networking tools were provided to enable attendees to connect with each other and with Cisco personnel. Collaboration options included blogs, discussion forums, profile matching, “who’s here now?”, and buddy lists.
- Contests were conducted to encourage interaction with online content. Points could be earned by downloading documents, viewing videos, and participating in a virtual scavenger hunt. Attendees reaching a minimum point threshold were eligible for prize drawings.

**Figure 4.** Virtual Environment for Cisco Live—Main Page and Directory



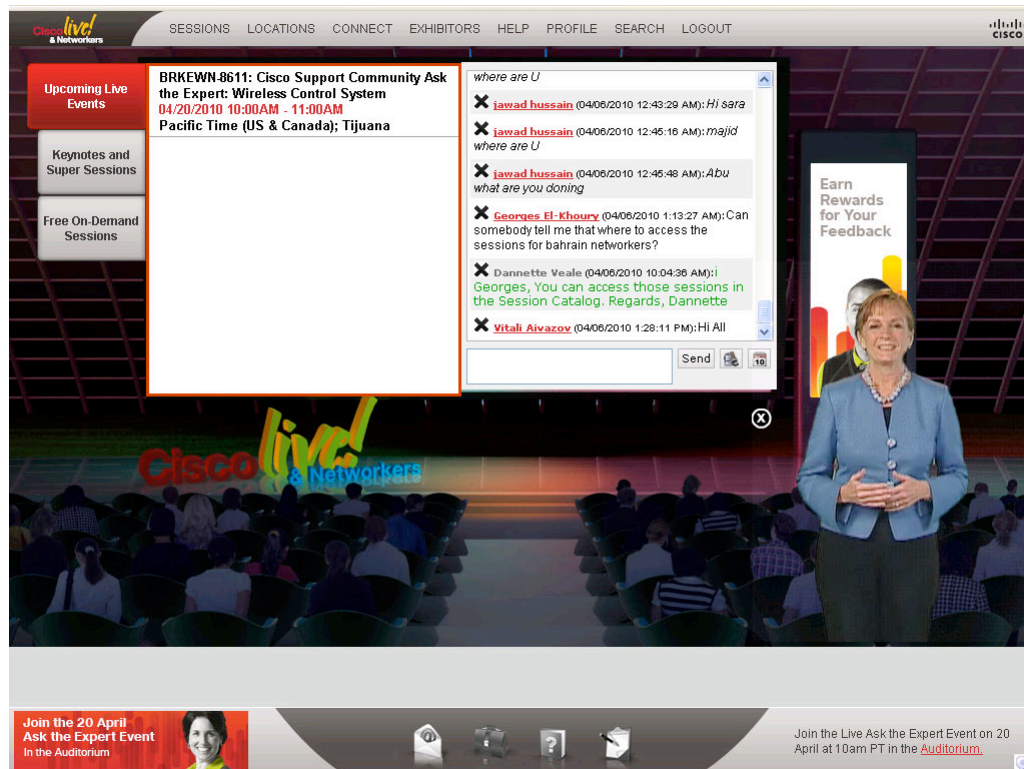
Premium web access to the 2009 virtual event was priced at \$395, with limited access again available at no charge. We continued to expand the content. The number of online sessions increased from 297 in 2008 to 479 in 2009, with 281 having a VoD replay with a PDF and 198 a PDF only.

## Results

This investment in adding virtual capabilities has really paid off. Despite the economic downturn, *in-person* attendance dropped only slightly from 10,411 in June 2008 to 9,058 in June 2009, when Cisco Live was held in San Francisco. More important, we boosted our live *virtual* attendance to 5,000 for a total live audience (virtual plus in-person) of 14,058 in 2009, a record number. The virtual attendees represented 28 countries.

We not only achieved record total attendance during the live portion of the June 2009 event, but also attracted many participants after the live event ended. From June 2009 through May 2010, a total of 19,736 unique visitors viewed the VoD replays, including virtual only, Cisco Live San Francisco 2009 attendees, Networkers Australia and New Zealand 2009 attendees, Networkers Mexico 2009 attendees, Networkers Chile 2009 attendees, Networkers at Cisco Live Barcelona 2010 attendees, and Networkers Bahrain 2010 attendees.

**Figure 5.** Virtual Environment for Cisco Live—Auditorium and Peer Chat



Some organizations might be concerned that making their event available online at lower cost could cannibalize the in-person audience. Our experience suggests otherwise. Surveys of attendees indicated that providing flexibility through virtual elements is actually more likely to increase attendance for the in-person elements by exposing more people to the value of the event. Key findings from the survey included:

- First-timers represented 37 percent of in-person attendees, but 55 percent of virtual attendees. The virtual event has proven to be a great marketing tool for making more people aware of Cisco Live.

- Thirty-four percent of the virtual attendees indicated they were extremely likely to attend the in-person event next year, while only 7 percent of in-person attendees said they would attend virtually next year.

Virtual elements also helped in achieving success with our public relations and analyst relations programs. Now standard for most Cisco marketing events, social media was employed to amplify the messaging from the event. Forty media personnel, analysts, and bloggers attended in person, an additional 75+ remote participants joined via Cisco WebEx™, and representatives from 21 countries participated via Cisco TelePresence™. There were more than 1,700 tweets related to Cisco Live on Twitter, and 4,291 video blogs posted to the Cisco Live site.

Overall, the hybrid June 2009 Cisco Live event was highly successful in achieving Cisco's business objectives, and the virtual elements were a key contributor to this success. Key business outcomes included:

- Product familiarity across all Cisco products increased by 17 percent after the event.
- Eighty-four percent of attendees were aware of Cisco's new programs (up from 45 percent the prior year).
- Eighty-one percent of attendees were "very likely" or "extremely likely" to purchase Cisco products as a result of attending.
- Overall attendee satisfaction was high: 4.36 out of 5 for in-person attendees, and 4.18 out of 5 for the virtual participants.

Cisco Live has also received extensive recognition within the events industry. *Corporate Event* magazine bestowed its "Best Customer Conference" award on the 2009 North American Cisco Live event. *Event Marketer* magazine, the leading publication covering the event marketing industry, recognized Cisco Live with two awards.<sup>3</sup> It won first place in the category of Best Hybrid (Live plus Virtual) Program. More impressively, Cisco Live won the overall Grand Ex Award for the best event among more than 600 submissions across all categories for the 2010 competition. In the past, all the grand-prize winners have been business-to-consumer companies. Cisco was the first company ever to win for a business-to-business marketing event. In honoring Cisco, *Event Marketer* praised "the powerful combination of on-site and online," recognized Cisco for "showing the power and ROI of this red hot hybrid trend," and observed that "it's a great example of how virtual plus live is not a trend, but a reality."<sup>3</sup>



Figure 6. Evolution of Cisco Live U.S. Event

	Traditional Event	Augmented Event	
One-Week Event – U.S. – Cisco Live User Conference			
Physical Event Date	June 2007	June 2008	June 2009
Duration of Physical Event	5 days	5 days	5 days
Duration of Virtual Event Live Elements	NA*	NA	2 days
Augmented Event Elements	VoD replays	VoD replays, on-demand virtual booths	VoD replays, live & on-demand virtual booths, live broadcasts, show prizes/contests, peer networking
Number of Breakout Sessions	238	297	479 (281 available virtually with VoD & PDF, 198 w/ PDF only)
Number of Attendees: - In person - Remote - Total Live Event	10,000 NA 10,000	10,411 NA 10,411	9,058 4,500 13,558
Attendee Satisfaction: - In person - Remote	4.38 NA	4.45 4.16	4.36 4.18
Price of Attendance: - In person - Remote—premium - Remote—limited	\$1,800 \$199 Not offered	\$2,000 \$250 \$0	\$2,100 \$395 \$0
Yearlong Interactions – Global – Cisco Live Virtual Platform			
Virtual Event Platform Reporting Period	June 2007 – May 2008	June 2008 – April 2009	May 2009 – May 2010
Virtual Event Platform Duration	365 days	365 days	365 days (with 2 days of live programming for U.S. event and additional live days for global user conference events)
Number of Unique Visitors to Virtual Platform	NA	13,426	19,736
VoD Session Views	24,500	35,000	48,903
*NA = Not Applicable			

Source: Cisco IBSG, 2010

## References

1. "Cisco's Experience with Next-Generation Events: Enhancing Meetings and Events with Collaboration Capabilities To Improve Business Impact and Reduce Costs," Cisco IBSG, July 2010; series of additional white papers and case studies will be available under the "Featured Content" and "Experience" sections of <http://www.cisco.com/web/about/ac79/innov/index.html>
2. Overview of products and services offered by Cisco Collaboration for Events experience, [www.cisco.com/go/collaboration4events](http://www.cisco.com/go/collaboration4events)
3. *Event Marketer Awards*, May 2010, <http://www.eventmarketer.com/article/ex-award-winners-announced>

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to recognize the invaluable contributions of Cisco's Dannette Veale in making this chronicle of Cisco's next-generation event experiences a reality.

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### More Information

Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), the company's global consultancy, helps CXOs from the world's largest public and private organizations solve critical business challenges. By connecting strategy, process, and technology, Cisco IBSG industry experts enable customers to turn visionary ideas into value.

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