Cisco Systems: Unsurpassed Productivity Gains

Introduction

Technological skills are best learned through hands-on experience. Toolwire provides companies with experiential learning products and services, including hands-on labs. This case study is an example of how Toolwire delivers tangible, measurable business benefits.

Cisco Systems – The Worldwide Leader in Networking

Cisco Systems, Inc. is the worldwide leader in networking for the Internet. Today, networks are an essential part of business, education, government and home communications, and Cisco Internet Protocol-based (IP) networking solutions are the foundation of these networks. Since the company's inception, Cisco has relied on field engineers and channel partners for the deployment of internet infrastructure. Cisco has more than 40,000 channel partners worldwide and 433,000 systems engineers generating and supporting billions of dollars in revenue.

Cisco relies on its channel for more than 92 percent of its annual revenue; therefore, the company takes the development of its ecosystem workforce very seriously. To this end, Cisco has created the Partner E-Learning Connection (PEC).

The Challenge –
Maximizing the Productivity of the Cisco Ecosystem

The Partner e-Learning Connection was created specifically to increase Cisco ecosystem productivity and revenue generation, with tools that enhance skills and promote better, faster service worldwide. Cisco relies on partner training organizations to author and deliver authorized Cisco training for the PEC.

Cisco soon discovered that technological skills are acquired most effectively through hands-on experience. Learners had several requirements supporting their need to engage with real Cisco equipment as part of their learning experience:

- The *variety and complexity* of Cisco devices meant there was no substitute for real-world scenarios and live, hands-on access to real equipment. The stakes were too high to risk learning only on the job, with production equipment, or in simulations.

- With *rapidly changing technology*, the key success factor was to keep the nearly half million professionals up to date on the latest developments and ensure excellent retention.

- Every hour in a learning environment had to return substantial *productivity gains* since time out of the field was costly.

- A *globally distributed* audience meant the learning had to be scalable, easy to access, and easy to consume.

Organization
- Cisco Systems

Business
- Networking Equipment

Challenge
- Increase revenue generation capabilites of globally distributed partner ecosystem

Results
- Greater field readiness at lower cost with LiveLabs from Toolwire

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" I've seen a lot of lab vendors. Toolwire is one of the lab vendors at the top of the list, providing some of the best online lab capabilities in terms of usability. The user interface is fantastic. "

Leslee Mesick
Channel and Partner
Readiness Manager
Cisco Systems, Inc.

TOOLWIRE
... because experience matters.

The Innovation – Hands-on Labs

Cisco identified hands-on labs as an ideal means of delivering experiential learning quickly and efficiently. Labs allow remote hands-on access to Cisco routers and switches, coupled with real-world challenges.

Labs are most appropriate for Cisco technical training because networking professionals typically have some experience but are looking to build new skills through practice with live equipment. From simple mastering of Cisco IOS commands to troubleshooting complex routing configurations, live equipment became a requirement because it is virtually impossible to replicate the millions of possible real-world outcomes in simulations.

The Decision – LiveLabs from Toolwire

Cisco used several criteria for selecting live, hands-on labs for its Partner e-Learning Connection, including:

- •Usability – user interface design and intuitive navigation
- •Quality and quantity of labs available
- •Bulletproof operations – 24/7 remote hands-on access to Cisco routers and switches
- •Vendor stability and shared vision

Cisco selected Toolwire based on its high marks on all criteria. Ease of use stood out due to simple navigation, from lab guides, to the telnet window for controlling real equipment, to the network topology diagrams.

This "three-pane GUI" allowed trainees to keep all relevant training elements on-screen simultaneously. Other vendors' products typically require the user to shuffle through multiple telnet windows and documentation screens, making the process far more cumbersome and less user-friendly. Other Toolwire features, such as the ability to save/restore and email configurations, were viewed as key enhancements to the learning experience.
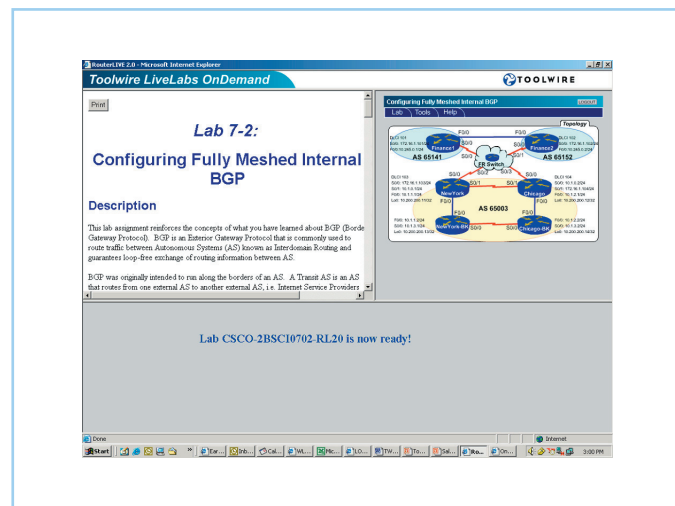
The Results – Unsurpassed Productivity Gains for the Ecosystem

Since its inception almost four years ago, Cisco's Partner e-Learning Connection has delivered to the Cisco ecosystem more than 100,000 Toolwire LiveLabs in more than 100 countries. As a result, more than 5,000 systems engineers have been certified, and the revenue generation capabilities of the field have increased by $168,000 per person per year. Equally important, Cisco has consistently improved its customer-satisfaction metric (CSAT) due to better prepared engineers and more effective implementations. Over the past four years, Cisco's CSAT has increased from 3.78 to 4.34 on a scale of 5.

Beyond better top-line results, the lab-enabled Partner e-Learning Connection has saved more than 120 hours of training time per person per year. This translates to a cost savings of more than $7,000 per person per month for Cisco's ecosystem workforce.

The results are clear: engineers are more productive, and better prepared, which means more revenue, lower costs, and higher customer satisfaction: a win-win-win for Cisco, its partners, and its customers.

To experience the Toolwire difference visit www.toolwire.com or just call toll free at 866.935.8665