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This story appeared on Network World at
http://www.networkworld.com/news/2011/041911-cisco-prime.html

Cisco enterprise management tools take on new network realities

Cisco adds policy engine, central console for Catalyst switches and ISR and ASR routers

By Jim Duffy, Network World
April 19, 2011 06:04 AM ET

Cisco this week broadened the security and management capabilities of its enterprise products to help IT shops get a better grip on mobile devices, video and changing workforce habits.

To address user demand to work from anywhere on the device of their choice, Cisco introduced security and access-control software called the Identity Services Engine (ISE). To address the rise of embedded video and voice, Cisco introduced a management console called Prime for Enterprise that integrates troubleshooting of telepresence sessions, network applications, and wired and wireless networks. Both ISE and Prime work across the range of Catalyst switches, and ISR and ASR enterprise routers.

With ISE, administrators can use a central console to define policies on organization-owned devices and personal user devices; on networkwide access security and encryption; and on user, device, application and location logistics as they relate to business rules.

SCREENSHOTS: First look at Cisco's ISE

"This shifts control to the network without having to directly touch the endpoint," says Zeus Kerravala, an analyst at The Yankee Group. "It allows the control IT wants while (users are) using the devices they want."

ISE also integrates with Prime for Enterprise, which provides endpoint connectivity management for wired and wireless devices and Cisco TelePresence systems; performance troubleshooting for networked applications; and provisioning of services like Cisco's TrustSec, EnergyWise and Medianet for security, power management and video enablement,

respectively.

Prime for Enterprise is a workflow-based application that manages the interaction and dependencies between the physical infrastructure and the applications it supports. Kerravala says it fills a void in managing virtual environments.

"The shift to a virtual infrastructure has left a big network management gap," he says. "Current tools are not designed for this era of computing. Most are designed for static environments and haven't kept up with virtualization."

Cisco also added software to its switches and routers that allows them to perform fault management and network optimization for video and multimedia. The company's Media Services Interface and Media Services Proxy software are designed to enable networks and endpoints to exchange information to optimize configuration and performance.

Media Monitoring and Tracing Software provides real-time monitoring and fault identification and isolation of multimedia traffic on the network. And ISR G2 integrated video conferencing is designed to optimize the quality of ad-hoc video communications for branch offices by reducing WAN traffic for local branch-office video applications.

The ISE costs $9,900 and will be available later this month. Cisco Prime for Enterprise is scheduled to ship in June, with the primary piece costing $100,000 for a small network up to 1,000 devices plus 10 TelePresence codecs. Additional modules range from $1,500 to $66,000.

Video Conferencing on ISR G2 is part of ISR G2 video bundles and is available now. Bundle pricing starts at $2,695.

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