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STAR Awards

2026

2026 TSIA STAR Awards
Featured Application

The Smart Automation Excellence Award

Cisco IQ: Putting Proactive AI-powered IT Operations in Every Customer's Hands

Digitizing AI-powered intelligence and human expertise to move enterprise IT from reactive to proactive, predictive, and preventative

Award Category: The Smart Automation Excellence Award

Results at-a-glance: 5,000+ customers onboarded within weeks of General availability · Continuous automated analysis across millions of devices · Asset aggregation cut from days to minutes · A single vulnerability assessment went from 2.5 hours to near-instant results · 112% YoY rise in positive analyst coverage for Cisco Customer Experience.

Overview

Cisco's Customer Experience (CX) organization built **Cisco IQ** to solve a problem every enterprise IT team faces: skilled engineers spend too much time on high-volume, routine operational work. Operators must manually reconcile asset inventory, triage security advisories, check configurations against best practices, and stitch together fragmented, architecture-specific tools. This leaves little time for the strategic work that transforms technology into exceptional value for their users and customers. CX set out to flip this model by shifting customers from **reactive firefighting to proactive prevention**, and making enterprise-grade, digitally intelligent operations **universally accessible** for everyone with a Cisco Support contract.

The hard part was **trust and data**: enterprises will not act on AI they cannot trust, and every customer's infrastructure is bespoke. CX overcame this by grounding Cisco IQ in **patent-pending, deterministic, hallucination-resistant reasoning** over a proprietary data fabric that digitizes decades of Cisco services knowledge and best practices.

The result is a unified, AI-powered platform that puts a proactive operating model directly in operators' hands for reducing risk of IT infrastructure operations. Cisco IQ's automation and AI continuously absorbs the routine, high-volume analysis across the entire install base, while the human operator stays firmly **in the loop** to decide and act. These digital outcomes are delivered from Cisco IQ as self-service capability, and IQ included in every Cisco Support contract **at no additional cost** to customers.

What have we solved for?

- **Too much expert time on routine work?** Cisco IQ automatically and continuously evaluates every onboarded device against Cisco Security Advisories, Device Security Hardening Guides, Configuration Best Practices, and Field Notices, accelerating work customers previously performed manually and device by device, across disconnected tools.
- **No unified intelligence layer?** AI-powered Asset Management keeps an up-to-date inventory of every device, software version, and contract, and uses machine-learning categorization of a device's role in network and importance to predict each device's business impact and criticality, so the most consequential risks get visibility and remediation first.
- **Reactive instead of preventive operations?** Cisco IQ continuously re-assesses the install base for exposure, prioritizing action by severity and business criticality instead of waiting for failures.
- **Governed, human-in-the-loop orchestration:** The **AI Assistant** delivers agentic, multi-step guidance from decades of Cisco expertise as a *controlled* experience. A semantic router directs each question to one of many specialized agents. Every response is screened by Cisco AI Defense guardrails, and when AI reaches its limits, the operator escalates seamlessly to a Cisco support engineer with the full context.
- **Available to all:** Any customer with Cisco devices on a valid support contract benefits from Cisco IQ, with additional intelligence such as remediation recommendations unlocked for premium-services subscribers.

Customer Impact

Customer needs sat at the core of the design. Before general availability, Cisco IQ was improved through a two-phase Early Field Trial with **84 design-partner customers across 14 industries** (160 feedback submissions were collected and actioned), and an in-product feedback button is still available for any user to provide their input straight to Cisco Product Management for Cisco IQ opportunities.

- **Workforce accelerator:** By absorbing routine analysis and being able to analyze for contextual configuration applicability beyond just a version exposure match, Cisco IQ assessments free experts for strategic work. *"Cisco IQ doesn't just enhance our operational maturity, it elevates it. Automated asset reporting, real-time intelligence, and predictive analytics mean our team spends less time managing and more time leading."* — Bruce Waldon, CIO, Data#3 (Australia). The before/after is concrete: at Insight Direct UK a single security exposure assessment

dropped **from 2.5 hours to near-instant**, and GlobalFoundries cut asset aggregation **from days to minutes** — time redirected to strategic remediation and lifecycle planning.

- **Validated across industries:** *"Continuous visibility, proactive assessment, and AI-driven intelligence throughout the entire technology lifecycle within a single digital interface."* — Scott Gibbons, GlobalFoundries (semiconductor). *"Every minute matters in healthcare … Cisco IQ … helps ensure our hospitals stay up and running."* — Kevin Haz, AdventHealth. *"Visibility, lifecycle intelligence, and security awareness … every hour of every day."* — Scott Malone, VP IT Infrastructure, GEODIS (Cisco customer-advisory-board member). Nestlé uses Cisco IQ to go *"fact-based to the finance community"* on lifecycle decisions.
- **Operational proof & external recognition:** At GEODIS, Cisco IQ helped identify **1,700+ end-of-life assets across 91 sites** (Cisco Live 2026 keynote). Cisco EVP & Chief Sales Officer **Oliver Tuszik** calls Cisco IQ *"a massive competitive advantage"* that *"cuts resolution times from hours to minutes"*; analyst firm **Techaisle**: *"Cisco shipped working capability while much of the field is still announcing intentions"* — it *"now runs an intelligence business."*

Business Impact

Cisco IQ is proving the digital-plus-human orchestration model at massive, global scale:

- **Scale in weeks, not years:** Within weeks of its April 2026 general availability, Cisco IQ onboarded **5,000+ customers** with 10,000+ active users across Americas, EMEA, and APJC, currently managing 6+ million devices customers previously tracked by hand.
- **A stickier services engine (renewal & expansion):** By unifying lifecycle, security, and asset intelligence, Cisco IQ raises the value of every Cisco Support contract by strengthening renewals and retention, and opens a clear upsell path from included capabilities to more premium services and outcomes. With Cisco services representing ~25% of Cisco revenue, this is durable, recurring value, not a one-time gain. Industry analysts see the upside: GlobalData calls Cisco IQ's unified approach *"a huge opportunity for Cisco in terms of monetization of its services structure."*
- **Improving service quality:** Automation CSAT in CX services exceeded its FY26 penetration target, and AI Assistant satisfaction rose across every support tier after the Cisco IQ launch, as the volume of routine tasks shifts to automation and experts focus on strategic work.
- **Recognized impact:** A **112% year-over-year increase in positive CX analyst coverage**, plus a Cisco Live 2026 keynote (with Liz Centoni) featuring GEODIS and GlobalFoundries on stage. Analysts echo this sentiment: theCUBE's Bob Laliberte reports that *"[Cisco's] AI isn't replacing expertise, it's helping organizations scale it."*
- **Scalable & flexible by design:** Cisco IQ is a modular, cloud-native SaaS architecture scales globally without adding customer-side labor; supports on-premise air-gapped deployments to extend reach to data-sovereign and regulated environments.

Lessons Learned

- **Digitized knowledge is the differentiator for AI accuracy:** Lead with deterministic AI, falling back to generative LLMs only when needed, for accurate, expert-led, domain-specific insights.
- **Keep agents narrow:** Specialized agents are powerful, but definitions must stay focused so semantic routers don't misroute and provide the wrong answer.
- **Design for deployment flexibility from day one:** Anticipate data-sovereignty, on-premise, and isolated-environment needs early.
- **Tighten customer and development feedback loops:** Standing cross-functional team office hours, key-customer touchpoints, and a low-friction in-product feedback path (built into Cisco IQ itself) kept development aligned to real needs.

Supporting Links

1. Cisco IQ product (access approval required): https://iq.cisco.com | guided product demo (no access needed): https://cxdemos.cisco.com/s/t27sjs | Customer enablement walkthrough videos for Cisco IQ on Youtube
2. What's New (Apr 2026): https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/support/docs/cx/cisco-iq/onboarding-guide/cx225783-cisco-iq-what-s-new.html
3. GlobalFoundries case study: https://www.cisco.com/site/us/en/about/case-studies-customer-stories/globalfoundries.html | Scott Gibbons LinkedIn article: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/factory-floor-has-changed-your-strategy-scott-gibbons-5njgc/
4. Cisco Live US 2026 keynote — customer testimonials (GEODIS at 7:34, GlobalFoundries at 15:54): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjO1JxAGWmA
5. From Vision to Reality: Intelligence in Action with Cisco IQ — CX blog: https://blogs.cisco.com/customerexperience/from-vision-to-reality-intelligence-in-action-with-cisco-iq/
6. Cisco IQ launch — Cisco Newsroom: https://newsroom.cisco.com/c/r/newsroom/en/us/a/y2025/m11/cisco-launches-cisco-iq-the-unified-ai-powered-experience-that-connects-the-entire-customer-journey.html


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