

## Cisco Systems

Successful companies are constantly innovating. They focus on maintaining market share in competitive, rapidly growing markets or expanding in mature or changing business environments. To stay healthy and profitable, Cisco Systems, a Fortune 100 company, does both.

Since 1998, Next Step's seasoned marketing, sales, and management professionals have contributed to Cisco's growth. Their real-world experience in telecommunications, networking, and software has helped Cisco develop its people, expand its market coverage, increase revenues on a global basis, and improve customer satisfaction.

Next Step has supported Cisco in launching new products, developing and implementing channel marketing strategy, and increasing sales. Cisco's Marketing, Engineering, Customer Advocacy, and Worldwide Sales Enablement groups have worked with Next Step to enhance and implement sales training programs, develop go-to-market campaigns, and build operational marketing plans that have, in many cases, achieved a 30% improvement in sales and productivity.

### Launching New Product Lines

When Cisco was ready to launch its cable and later, its optical products lines, Next Step prepared a market assessment and product positioning plan. Working with the product marketing and business units, Next Step developed a go-to-market plan, a launch budget, and field marketing requirements that included the following:

- **Market Assessment and Segmentation**
  - Market assessment to understand trends, opportunity, size, and market needs
  - Analyst, media, and market-maker research to refine market opportunity
  - Competitive analysis and verification of the results of prospective customer research
  - Identification critical market segments and critical success factors
  - Definition of size, key characteristics, target customers, and buying motivators for primary and secondary target markets
  - Creation of a market roadmap for entry into each target market
- **Positioning, Pricing, and Packaging**
  - Positioning of solution against key competitors in each market segment
  - Validation of positioning with customers or prospects
  - Comparison of pricing and product packaging with competitive solutions
  - Definition of suggested list price and channel pricing models and levels
- **Marketing Communications Development**

As part of go-to-market planning for Cisco's successful product launch activities, the Next Step team identified and defined the necessary marketing communications collateral. In addition, Next Step defined the most effective lead generation tools for maximum sales results.

- **E-learning, Messaging, and Launches**

Given Next Step's extensive experience with Cisco culture and product/program launches, the team was chosen to work directly with the Integrated Solutions Learning Group (ISLG) to define initial messaging for the launch of Cisco's e-learning offerings. Through work with Marketing, ISLG, and

CEO John Chambers, Next Step specialists defined the initial messaging and presentation of “Cisco helps you to work, play and learn” to redefine e-learning as more than online PowerPoint presentations.

- **Positioning and Messaging Workshops**

For all Cisco personnel involved in product positioning and launch programs, Next Step developed and facilitated one-day, interactive positioning and messaging workshops. Delivered through Cisco University to marketing and engineering teams nationwide, this hands-on training helped employees to develop skills that they could apply immediately to their challenges at work.

***“This was the best workshop I have ever attended, a very relevant working session needed by all involved in new product release planning.”***  
Sam Duarte, Enterprise Marketing

## **Expanding the Customer Base**

Next Step has been instrumental in supporting Cisco’s expansion into global markets through its ability to develop, customize, and deliver comprehensive sales training initiatives. These initiatives cover a broad range of topics—from value selling to time management for sales professionals.

- **Channel Development and Sales Training**

From 1998 to 2000, Cisco expanded its sales strategy to a full channel model and confirmed its commitment to resellers. Cisco engaged Next Step to program manage and facilitate channel partner sales training for more than 3,000 channel sales representatives. Delivered through Cisco University, classes were conducted in cities throughout the world and covered topics ranging from general networking to security.

- **Sales Expansion into New Emerging Markets**

In 2001, John Chambers set a company goal to increase revenue from emerging technologies by 20%. To help achieve it, Chambers created *AM Accelerate*, a program designed to teach account managers value-selling techniques. Next Step beta tested and program managed the implementation of this initiative. These two-day courses on security and voice over IP (VoIP) were delivered by 16 facilitators to more than 2,000 field personnel worldwide within 12 months of program launch.

- **Global Expansion**

Continuing to build on the success of the channel sales program, Next Step adapted the *AM Accelerate* program for channel partners in the U.S., Canada, Latin America, and Australia.

***“The Sales Workshops delivered by Next Step’s team are the most effective sales classes that Cisco has ever offered – not death by PowerPoint!”***  
Bill Johnson, 10-year Cisco Sales Veteran

## Maximizing Profitability and Productivity

Next Step has found that strengthening customer loyalty and boosting employee productivity are critical to maximizing profitability in an established organization.

- **Customer Support Programs**

In the late 1990s, Cisco needed to expand its customer focus to be more effective in supporting end-users and channel partners. Next Step conducted assessments of customer-related processes within Cisco Customer Advocacy to determine areas for improvement.

Next Step reviewed all aspects of the following areas:

- Customer Service
- Product returns
- Channel partner issue resolution and follow-up
- Communications processes

Based on research results, Next Step developed new operating procedures for these areas, including role refinement and escalation path planning and implementation. The results included improved productivity and increased customer satisfaction scores.

- **Employee Competency Assessments**

During the same time period, Next Step also created competency skill assessments for Cisco employees. When these assessments were complete, Next Step developed tools, such as job aids, to help support Cisco sales and marketing employees in the field.

## Sustaining Market Leadership through Employee Development

As Cisco seeks new ways to maintain market leadership through sales and employee excellence, its strategic relationship with Next Step has deepened. During each phase of the company's growth, Next Step sales, skill, and professional development programs have helped employees work more professionally and effectively to support Cisco's continued success.

Next Step is Cisco's go-to partner for cost-effective, targeted consulting services and programs that provide remote and classroom learning to established employees, new hires, and recent graduates.

***"Next Step's team really understands putting the customer first – they are easy to work with and dedicated to delivering real results – even with the many changes in schedule and scope that are required to work within the Cisco environment."***

Megan Polemus, Customer Advocacy

As the programs indicate, Next Step consultants and facilitators apply real-world technology experience and practical approaches to knowledge transfer to meet the needs of Cisco's fast-paced environment:

- **Creating Job Aids for Improved Productivity**

Next Step defined and developed job aids to facilitate the learning of new technologies by engineers, field staff, and other employees of Cisco Customer Advocacy.

- **Defining Unique Value Proposition Workshops for Inside Sales**

Nationwide, Cisco's inside sales teams attended Next Step's *Defining your Value Proposition* workshop. Considered highly successful by all stakeholders, this program was part of the *Unique Value Proposition* incentive promotion designed to maximize year-end revenues.

- **Building Tomorrow's Sales Team: Business Etiquette for Sales Associates**

Recognizing that building and supporting effective teamwork throughout an organization often requires new management approaches, accountabilities, and improved employee engagement, Next Step works with companies at all stages of growth to help them build the foundation they need for effective teamwork.

***"Next Step's team demonstrated real accountability for our results and gave us a clear path to our next steps of growth."***

Suzanne McLaren, Director WW Sales Force Development

As Cisco saw the need to expand its sales team, the company implemented the *Sales Associates Program* to develop college graduates into sales representatives and systems engineers. During a period of 10 years, the Next Step team was instrumental in creating and enhancing the design of this highly successful program. Many of our sales and professional development workshops were integrated into the curriculum including *Business Etiquette*, *Developing a Global Workforce*, *Selling Value*, and *Sales Time Management*.

- **Developing and Delivering Cisco Choice for Recent Engineering Graduates**

Cisco continually seeks to integrate new ideas by hiring top college graduates into its engineering organization. The Cisco Development Organization (CDO) requested that Next Step customize its *Business Etiquette* workshop for the *Engineering College Graduate New Hire* program. Within the first week of new-hire training, Next Step's program introduced new Cisco engineers to the basics of business etiquette and its importance to them as company representatives.

- **Addressing the Multigenerational Workplace Challenge**

Next Step has long recognized the challenges presented by the multigenerational workplace. Given Cisco's need to prevent attrition among new hires—especially recent college graduates—Next Step facilitated focus groups that validated our research and techniques we have developed to address the issues.

For Cisco, Next Step defined and created a range of development tools designed to help younger employees enhance their interpersonal and professional skills. We also conducted a series of workshops that brought different generational groups together to help them improve their ability to communicate effectively with each other.

- **Building the My Learning Network**

With more than 70 separate employee training organizations, Cisco wanted to consolidate information about learning and online training courses in one location for greater efficiency and cost savings. Next Step instructional designers and process consultants defined the underlying business processes involved in this effort as well as rules of engagement and the structure of a learning-related portal.



LAUNCH | SCALE | MAXIMIZE  
Success Story

Our efforts during the planning stages bore fruit in the successful launch of the *My Learning Network* portal.

***"Next Step has always delivered real results to us - on time and budget."***

Patricia Dragovic, Cisco Systems

## About Next Step

Next Step, a global consultancy, has delivered revenue and digital business growth since 1998. Their 40 team members' hands-on commercial, digitalization and leadership expertise achieves real business results for Adobe, Autodesk, Avinor, Cisco, Google, LiveNation, Nevion, Opera Software, PaloAlto Networks, ShoreTel and Wilson Sonsini. For more information, visit Next Step at [www.nextstepgrowth.com](http://www.nextstepgrowth.com) or call 1 650 361 1902 or (47) 902 30 982.



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