Are you smarter than SMARTnet?
A recent court settlement suggests you probably are.

January 25, 2011

Keep an eye out for typos.
Details at the bottom of this newsletter's content.

Cisco SMARTnet more optional than ever

A settlement was recently reached between networking technology giant Cisco and a third party services provider, Multiven, based in Redwood City, California. Multiven had contended that Cisco was suppressing competition by withholding bug fixes and patches, and that forcing customers to rely on SMARTnet as the only source of support was an unfair business practice. With the bullying stance of other major tech space companies like Oracle in mind, one might have expected Cisco to respond more or less in agreement with the accusation, and instead focus on arguing whether or not it was really unfair. Instead, Cisco's response was decidedly encouraging, though the suit still took two years to settle out of court. "Cisco customers are in no way required to purchase services from Cisco," the Cisco spokesperson said in a release responding to the case filing in 2008. "There are thousands of partners who offer service programs for Cisco products, including bug fixes."

For obvious reasons, Cisco doesn't go around promoting this fact; nevertheless it's critical that Cisco customers realize that when it comes to maintenance and support, they have a legally-upheld variety of options to choose from, of which SMARTnet is only one. The inadequacy of Cisco's own product support is suggested by the fact that so many alternatives exist at all. For most users Cisco SMARTnet is also unlikely to be the most cost-effective option, even with its more limited feature set compared to some third party options.

Support - or a marketing program?

Cisco rightly promotes the continuous availability of SMARTnet, but the real question isn't "When can I access updates?" The practical question is simply "How often do I actually install updates?"

Paying for continuous access to a service that you won't use more than once a year or so is wasting IT budget you'd rather be spending elsewhere. At that rate it's far less costly to forego SMARTnet for a more feature-rich maintenance program from a third party, and to purchase the occasional one-off patch only when and if it's needed. Businesses that are constantly updating and upgrading firmware with optional patches are likely to come out ahead with SMARTnet, but few IT teams do this because critical faults in the networking IOS are generally quite rare. SMARTnet also lacks key features that active network administrators will still have to go elsewhere to find. For instance, the ability to perform configuration saves and restores, arguably the most useful network support feature of all, is absent from SMARTnet, as are reporting features for management and visibility.

As Cisco pointed out, thousands of partners offer service and bug fixes for Cisco hardware. TERiX stands out as a support alternative that not only provides superior proprietary tools like 'golden image' configuration saves and detailed reporting, but also supports legacy Cisco products in addition to new models. Quite often a support fix from Cisco is simply 'get the new hardware,' which isn't covered by SMARTnet. With TERiX you avoid the expense of new hardware unless you really need it, and you don't have to pay the overhead of SMARTnet either. In the end, TERiX puts control

of network architecture back in your hands, where it belongs. We think you'll find this is a smarter network solution than SMARTnet.

Find Out More

If this seems relevant to your specific circumstances, or if you just want to find out more about third party hardware maintenance in general, please click through to our **general information** area on our website. A quick response form is available at the bottom of that page if you're looking for the answer to a specific question regarding covered product models SLAs or geographic areas.

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