

# Cisco Delivers Investment Protection for the Data Center

## What You Will Learn

Cisco® solutions bring the advantages of investment protection to customers in the data center environment, including savings in capital expenditures (CapEx) and operating expenses (OpEx), during both standard technological evolutions in the industry and times of broad technological change. This document provides an overview of investment protection and its advantages. It also discusses the value propositions of continuous feature addition and existing product change:

- Investment protection requires a partner with a long-term roadmap
- Value must be derived over the long term
- Transitional management during times of extensive technological change is crucial
- New features for older platforms provide ongoing value

## What Is Investment Protection?

Cisco's focus on providing long-term value to customers, often referred to as investment protection, gives customers better value for their money and also reduces OpEx and the need for expensive equipment replacement operations.

Chief information officers (CIOs) have the difficult task of trying to ensure that the technological decisions they make in the data center not only provide efficiency and initial CapEx savings, but also have the longevity necessary to support the needs of the business and IT into the future. One of the most important questions that CIOs must address in selecting a vendor or a specific technology as the long-term choice for their data center is the capability of the vendor partner to continuously adapt. Complicating the decision, different technologies in the data center age at different rates. For instance, server technology generally has a lifespan of three to five years depending on the specific application that the server is running. Networking technology generally has a longer lifespan: both storage networking and general data networking equipment typically remains deployed for four to seven years. Storage (disk and enclosures) equipment has a lifespan of three to six years. In addition, some organizations get much more useful life, and others, such as organizations engaged in high-performance computing, much less.

Another factor influencing investment protection is the speed of change in the industry. Gradual change is normal and is generally easy for customers and vendors to predict. Radical change, however - industry transformation or evolutionary leap - is more difficult for CIOs to manage. Examples of such changes are the original personal computer revolution, the rise of LANs, client-server computing, widespread Internet access, and most recently, data center virtualization and cloud computing. Fundamental changes in the way that both IT staff and business users relate to IT are generally the hallmarks of radical technological change. CIOs need their vendor partners to be ready for these changes. This readiness means more than new products and services; existing systems need to be adapted and the change has to be managed smoothly. Customers rarely have the time or resources or desire to completely replace existing systems, and they need to provide service to the business quickly. Good investment protection protects customers during gradual change and provides clear paths and the capability to repurpose resources during radical technological change.

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The CIO needs to select vendor partners that have both long roadmaps and the engineering capabilities required to navigate market transitions. Vendor partners cannot suddenly replace their core products, regardless of the technology (servers, networking, etc.), to meet a new need or because of their own market shortsightedness. Vendors that quickly create and abandon product lines deprive customers of the very important value that investment protection brings.

True investment protection consists of two easy-to-understand concepts:

- Continuous feature and flaw updates
- Transition planning

Updates enable smooth transition during gradual change. Updates may be as simple as software updates. Some consist of new add-on hardware for the system, such as new line cards or supervisors in the case of networking, or new interface cards and higher-capacity drives in the case of storage. Flaw updates, or bug fixes, help ensure a stable, mature platform that is ready for technological change.

Planning for transitions is also important. Product lines eventually reach the end of their active technological life, and the way that a vendor handles that transition is a differentiator. Vendors that provide upgrade paths that reduce disruption are preferred. Disruption can take several forms. Knowledge disruption requires time and effort to retrain staff about equipment management and operation. Operational disruption can occur when new equipment is added to the data center, risking the smooth operation of the data center and therefore the business itself. A good vendor partner provides products that readily interoperate and services to assist in difficult migrations and consolidations. A good vendor partner also provides a plan for gradual switchover that allows time for IT staff to become accustomed to the new equipment and reduces the downtime associated with updates.

## Business Benefits of Investment Protection

So what are the main benefits of investment protection? Should initial costs and performance matter more? Certainly, acquisition costs and performance are important. However, with true investment protection, those costs are spread out over time. The longer the useful lifetime of the product, the further invested money goes. As for performance, a vendor partner that is providing investment protection can handle your growing performance needs with timely upgrades that do not require a complete system replacement.

Most important, investment protection means having a steady partner in the business whose activities are directly related to providing value to you. Features, fixes, and dedication to effective engineering on the part of the your vendor partner ultimately mean less time spent on administration on a day-to-day basis and less time spent evaluating upgrades.

## Everybody Claims to Protect Investment but Cisco Delivers It

Everybody talks about investment protection, and conventional wisdom can lead customers to believe that every company has the same level of investment protection and that any differences are some sort of statistical trick. In reality, most vendors do not spend the time and effort necessary to provide long-term investment protection. They may be too tied to a merchant silicon provider; they may have lacked engineering foresight when they designed the current platform; or they may simply want the money generated from purchases, services, and support when core platforms change with every new generation. The reason does not really matter, however; what matters is finding a vendor whose equipment you can install once, train on once, and count on for years to be up-to-date with little fuss.

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Cisco's commitment to investment protection is characterized by the Cisco Catalyst® 6500 Series, whose very long lifetime has spanned numerous major and minor technological changes. With each change, the Cisco Catalyst family has provided customers with the tools necessary to serve the business. Similarly, the original Cisco MDS 9500 Series directors shipped in 2002 can still be upgraded in place to run new hardware and software released almost a decade later. The more recent Cisco Nexus® products are designed with the same investment protection in mind.

## Why Cisco?

Cisco's long roadmaps, commitment to engineering, and technology leadership give CIOs peace of mind. Partnering with Cisco for data center solutions means smoother transitions spaced farther apart. At Cisco, we understand investment protection and provide the best in the industry. We use our years of engineering expertise to extend the life of your existing products and help you with transitions to new product lines. At Cisco, we believe that investment protection represents a vendor's loyalty to its customers, and it is an important part of our overall value proposition, which includes:

- Strong roadmaps
- Superior engineering for the future
- Commitment to customer investment protection
- Technological leadership

## For More Information

Check out Cisco's full line of data center products and learn how Cisco can save you money and time in the long term at <http://www.cisco.com/go/datacenter>; <http://www.cisco.com/en/US/netsol/ns340/ns394/ns224/index.html>.



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