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Module 4: Technical Assistance

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Introduction

Welcome to **Module 4: Technical Assistance**. In this module you are going to:

- Discuss the technical assistance customers can receive through phone support and the TAC website.
- Explain the Follow the Sun model.
- Review the benefits and value proposition associated with technical assistance.

You are going to spend approximately 20 minutes reviewing this module. When you are ready to continue, please click the **Next** button at the top or bottom of this page.

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Introduction

At Cisco Systems, technical assistance is defined as a key service component that provides access to teams of technology experts who have the necessary knowledge and resources to rapidly diagnose, troubleshoot, and resolve hardware, software, and network problems.

This technical assistance is provided to customers who hold a valid service contract with Cisco or a qualified Cisco partner. Depending on the service program, this technical assistance can be delivered to Cisco customers through either the Cisco Technical Assistance Center (TAC) or a qualified Cisco partner's TAC.

This module discusses the technical assistance that customers can receive through the Cisco TAC.





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The Cisco Technical Assistance Center

The Cisco TAC provides entitled customers with around-the-clock, award-winning technical support services for Cisco products and technologies. Customers that hold a valid service contract with either Cisco or a qualified partner who offers access to the Cisco TAC as a component of their service offerings can receive assistance via the Web, e-mail, or telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

From the front-line support of the Customer Response Center (which fields all first-line calls) to the customer support engineers who provide technical support, the Cisco TAC is a world-class organization that provides customers with the support necessary to manage their Cisco-powered networks.

This support saves both customers and Cisco partners time and money.





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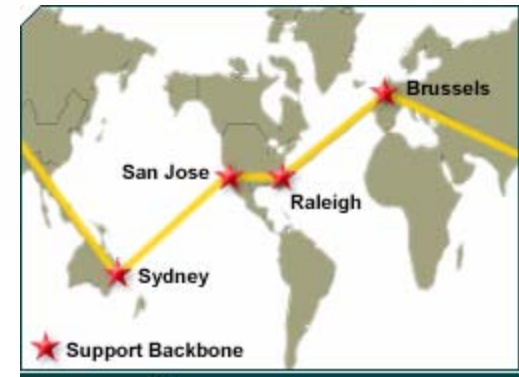
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Follow the Sun

There are four major TAC support centers throughout the world, in Brussels, Raleigh, Sydney, and San Jose. These four locations support all Cisco contracted networks - and cover over 140 languages.

Between these locations, there are over 1500 technical support services engineers, of which 350+ are Cisco Certified Internetwork Engineers (CCIEs), the highest lever of industry certification attainable.



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Follow the Sun

One of the reasons the Cisco TAC has been so successful is because it supports customers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Cisco TAC does this by using the "Follow the Sun" model. Under the "Follow the Sun" model, a Cisco TAC representative on shift treats customer cases at the time the customer's call is logged. It really doesn't matter when or where your customers are calling from - there will always be a world-class engineer available to help resolve and issues they may experience. This type of support substantially reduces down-time and creates a higher satisfaction rate for customers.





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Technical Assistance by Telephone

There are two primary ways that your customers can receive assistance from the Cisco TAC:

- By telephone.
- Via the Cisco TAC website.

The avenue that your customers choose to receive this technical assistance is dependant on the priority of the issue or problem they are experiencing.

When supported Cisco customers experience critical technical problems that are causing severe degradation on their network, or that are causing their network to go down, they must contact the Cisco TAC by telephone to open a **priority 1** or **priority 2** case.

Priority 1 and priority 2 cases are defined as follows:

Priority One (P1): An existing network is down or there is a critical impact to the customer business operations. The customer and Cisco will commit necessary resources “around the clock” to resolve the situation.

Priority Two (P2): Operation of an existing network is severely degraded, or significant aspects of the customer business operation are negatively impacted, by inadequate performance of Cisco products. The customer and Cisco will commit resources during normal business hours to resolve the situation.

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Technical Assistance by Telephone

When relaying priority 1 or priority 2 issues to the Cisco TAC Call Center Agent, make sure your customers will be able to do the following:

- Provide information about the status of their Cisco service contract with Cisco.
- Describe the problem in enough detail for Cisco to identify the correct Technical Response Team.
- Set the case priority for the internal queue.
- Obtain a case number.



Note: You will learn the steps specific to how to open a case online in Module 11: **Business Tools and Processes.**

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Technical Assistance by Telephone

After your customers have logged a priority 1 or priority 2 case with the Cisco TAC, progress on the case is closely monitored until it is resolved.

As a Cisco qualified partner or reseller, it is important for you to ensure your customers understand these priority definitions to receive assistance as quickly as possible. Emphasize to customers that this immediate access to the Cisco TAC via telephone for priority 1 and 2 cases allows customers to:

- Resolve serious network-related issues as quickly as possible.
- Minimize network downtime.
- Avoid time and materials charges they would otherwise incur if a service contract was not in place.



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Technical Assistance via the TAC Website

As mentioned in the Cisco.com Online Tools and Resources module, there are also online case management tools that customers can use to open cases and communicate with the TAC. These tools are used to open, manage, and track less critical cases that are not severely degrading the network or impacting business operations.

Issues and cases of this nature are considered by the Cisco TAC to be either priority 3 or priority 4 cases. These cases are defined as follows:

- Priority 3: Operational performance of the network is impaired while most business operations remain functional. The customer and Cisco are willing to commit resources during normal business hours to restore service to satisfactory levels.
- Priority 4: The customer requires information or assistance on Cisco product capabilities, installation, or configuration. There is clearly little or no impact to the customer business operations.

While your customers can also open these cases via the telephone as well, as a Cisco partner or reseller, you should emphasize that it is advantageous to your customers to open priority 3 and 4 cases online, using the Cisco TAC website. Not only does it provide them with a quick and easy means to access the Cisco TAC, but customers also receive a faster handling priority for their case than other priority 3 and 4 cases opened via telephone or e-mail.

The case management tools available through the Cisco TAC website allow your customers to quickly open, manage, and track the status of a case online, anytime.

Note: Cisco case management tools can be accessed at http://www.cisco.com/kobayashi/support/tac/tools_case_mgmt.shtml

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Customer Satisfaction Survey

Cisco TAC ensures it exceeds your customers' expectations by following a customer satisfaction survey process. This process begins when a case is closed. Every time a case is closed, a customer receives a (Bingo) survey. Bingo surveys are standard Cisco survey that enable customers to comment and rate Cisco services. A customer satisfaction rate is calculated with surveys sent back to Cisco.

When cases are closed, Cisco TAC engineers also fill out a Reverse Bingo Survey to evaluate customer or partner engineers. A summary of the Reverse Bingo including comments provided by Cisco TAC engineers is provided to the customer in the half-yearly reports. This process creates a system of checks and balances and helps all parties involved by:

- Providing them with areas of improvement.
- Providing them with positive feedback.



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Customer Sample Satisfaction Survey Template

Take a few minutes to review the example survey below to get an idea of the type of information that you can rate specific to each case:

Recently you placed a call to the Cisco TAC. We appreciate the opportunity to assist you and hope you found the Cisco TAC responsive to you. To help us ensure that we are providing the expert assistance you require, please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire. Thank you for letting us know how we are doing and giving us the opportunity to improve. We value the opinions as much as the business.

Sincerely,
Customer Advocacy-World-Wide Cisco TAC

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the Cisco TAC in each of the following areas in regards to the case listed above:

ENGINEER:

CASE ID:

DESCRIPTION: <title of the case>

- (Q1) Overall Handling of Case.....(1-5):
- (Q2) Ease of Access to help.....(1-5):
- (Q3) Timeliness of Problem Resolution.....(1-5):
- (Q4) Communication of Problem Status.....(1-5):
- (Q5) Effectiveness of Solution/Information.....(1-5):
- (Q6) Technical Expertise of Engineer.....(1-5):
- (Q7) Courteous Service.....(1-5):
- (Q8) Part Replacement - Delivery Timeliness.....(1-5):
- (Q9) Part Replacement - Accuracy of Part.....(1-5):
- (Q10) OVERALL satisfaction of Cisco Support.....(1-5):

CUSTOMER COMMENTS:



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Value of Technical Assistance

Having access to Cisco TAC is critical for your customers' success. Cisco TAC technical assistance provides rapid resolution of hardware and software problems that can impact network availability, your customers' business, and their end-user's satisfaction. There are many benefits to your customers of having a service solution that provides them with technical assistance via the Cisco TAC. These benefits include:

- Having direct or indirect access to the Cisco Global TAC organization, including 1500+ technical support service engineers (of which 350+ are CCIE certified).
- Having the ability to access teams of experts who already have a pre-established account and network topography information about your customers – which significantly reduces processing and diagnostic delays.
- Minimizing risks associated with network downtime.
- Avoiding time and materials charges customers would otherwise incur if they did not have a service solution in place.



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Value of Technical Assistance

Technical assistance provides you and your customers with direct and immediate access to teams of technology experts with resources to rapidly resolve your hardware and network problems.

Without technical assistance, your company and/or your customer's company are responsible for the resolution of all equipment and network issues that may arise. Both companies would also be responsible for the cost associated with resolving each issue.

Without access to technical assistance, your customers can expect to:

- Resolve issues related to network performance and downtime, without any support from Cisco.
- Pay for any time and material charges associated with resolving issues on a per-incident basis if they call the Cisco TAC.
- Depend on their own internal resources to resolve all issues.
- Wait longer in the Cisco TAC calling queue than customers who have a registered service contract with Cisco.

Note: Remember - Cisco qualified partners can also incorporate Cisco TAC technical assistance into their own partner-branded service offerings to customers as well. This is discussed in greater detail in subsequent modules within this curriculum.



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Value of Technical Assistance

When talking to customers about the value of technical assistance, ask them the following questions:

- How would you handle a situation when the network is down?
- Do you have internal resources available to help, in case your network goes down?
- On average, how much time does it take you to resolve issues related to your network?

Based on their answers to these questions, make sure your customers understand the risks associated with not having a service solution that provides them with technical assistance.

Is not having technical assistance a risk your customers are willing to take?



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Overcoming Objections

In this section you are going to review some common objections that customers may raise when you are speaking with them about the value of technical assistance provided through the Cisco TAC. You should note that customer objections are always good opportunities to receive feedback from the customer and create a sense of trust with them. Furthermore, objections are always great opportunities to unveil other service solutions for the customer.

Objection

Your customer tells you that they do not see the value of technical assistance.

Response

A good way to handle this objection is to begin by asking your customer a series of questions related to how they would resolve realistic, example issues that they could experience involving their network. For example:

- How would you handle a situation when your network is down?
- How would you address any issues or problems that could arise with a piece of Cisco equipment?
- Do you have a resource available internally who can help you if your network goes down?
- How do they determine the prioritization of their issues?

Emphasize to your customers that time is money. Every hour their network is down impacts potential revenue that they could be receiving from their customers. Also emphasize that if any issue they experience becomes so critical that they need to call the Cisco TAC anyway, they will need to pay time and materials charges, per incident, to resolve the issue.

Conclude by adding up all of these potential costs and risks - and compare them to the annual flat fee they would pay for technical assistance. Chances are, the cost and peace-of-mind they would receive with a service solution that provides them with technical assistance will be much lower than these other costs.

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Overcoming Objections

Objection

Your customer is watching their budget, and feels that there is not enough value associated with technical assistance to justify the cost of a service solution that provides them with technical assistance as a component of an overall service solution.

Response

As previously mentioned, a good way to address any concerns your customer may have related to cost is to do a comparison of what they could spend supporting their network without technical assistance to the annual, "one-time" flat fee they incur with a service solution that provides them with technical assistance. Make sure to touch on key points such as:

- How quickly the time and materials costs they will pay per incident by calling the Cisco TAC on a case-by-case basis will add up.
- The amount of revenue lost per hour in their industry as a result of network down-time.

Conclude your cost discussion by telling your customers that the annual cost they incur by paying a fixed fee for a service contract that provides them with technical assistance as a key component of an overall services solution is ***in most cases substantially lower*** than the costs they would pay otherwise.

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Case Study

Now that you have learned more information about Cisco TAC, it's time to take a look at a real-life example of a success story involving the Cisco TAC. The case study on the following two pages contains a success story which encompasses the account name, background, initiative, solution and success associated with an actual client who used Cisco TAC. An initiative explains the customer's desired improvement or need. Subsequently, a solution was developed to adhere to the customer's initiative. Finally, the Result depicts how the solution was achieved.



Background

Sonera is known as a pioneer in research and development; the company introduced the first Frame Relay service in Europe and launched the first public service based on Asynchronous Transfer Mode technology, called DataNet ATM. With the help of Cisco Systems, Sonera set up the world's first public local-area network interconnection service in 1989.

Initiative

When Sonera contemplated expanding services to include Internet, intranet, and extranet capabilities for DataNet ATM's corporate customers, the company was determined to maintain a high level of service, support, and reliability during this potentially risky transition.

To be able to accomplish all of these goals, Sonera needed a solution that would:

- Guarantee maximum network uptime.
- Ensure dependable services for a growing customer base.
- Provide vital backup for Sonera's in-house support.

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Case Study

Solution

Since Sonera had a solid history with Cisco technology for more than a decade, they looked to us as a strategic partner for more service and support options. Sonera would cover first-line service and support, and Cisco would be the vital backup during the service expansion. The Cisco Technical Assistance Center (Cisco TAC) was made available to solve problems that in-house support could not remedy. This also created opportunity for sales of additional services.

Result

The Cisco TAC allowed Sonera to reach its goals of dependable service during an important growth period. Sonera praised the Cisco TAC, saying, "Cisco TAC support is highly effective, and the response times are always very fast."

The Cisco solution:

- Maximized network uptime.
- Ensured dependable services for a growing customer base.
- Provided vital backup for Sonera's in-house support.
- Freed up Sonera staff to focus more on research and development and less on system maintenance.

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In conclusion, Sonera's Department Director had the following to say about Cisco TAC:

"Cisco support capabilities are strategically very important to Sonera in helping to ensure that our network delivers excellent performance and availability."

—Markku Jarvinen, Department Director, Sonera

By relying on Cisco TAC as a support partner during its expansion, Sonera was able to make the seamless transition that allowed the company to meet its goal of satisfying DataNet ATM's corporate customers.

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Interactive Exercise

Now that you have had the opportunity to learn about the value of technical assistance it is time to apply the information you have learned to a real-life situation.

The example beginning on the next page will describe a real-life scenario that you could encounter with a customer as an employee of your company. Once you have read the scenario, you are going to be asked to make a selection from a list of possible ways that you could react to this situation.

Each option leads to a different outcome. In some outcomes, your customer could be very satisfied with the information you supply them with. However, depending on how you handle the situation, you could end up with an dissatisfied customer on your hands as well.

The objective of this exercise is to use your knowledge of technical assistance and the Cisco TAC to keep your customer satisfied.

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Interactive Exercise

You arrive for a meeting with Alberto Cerdas, the IT Director of the PDVA Company. In the past, Alberto has been very reluctant to purchase a technical support service contract from you. However, your point of contact at Cisco has made you aware of the fact that Alberto's company called into the Cisco TAC eight times last year on a case-by-case basis – without a service contract.

Your goal with Alberto today is to convince him that a technical support service contract that includes technical assistance as a key component is a good solution for him.

After you exchange pleasantries, you begin to provide Alberto with an overview of the key service components that are offered within many Cisco service programs.

As you begin talking about the value of technical assistance provided by the Cisco TAC, Alberto politely interrupts you and says:

“I have two internal engineers who resolve all of our issues related to network downtime. While I appreciate the value of Cisco TAC, and because I have my own internal experts, I just don't think that PDVA would ever use Cisco TAC. “

How should you respond?

- A** “I'm glad that you appreciate the value of Cisco TAC – Cisco Call Center Agents and team of worldwide engineers are instrumental in helping our customers resolve network and hardware-related issues. Are you aware that your company actually called the Cisco TAC on eight separate occasions last year for support?”
- B** “Alberto, I'm sure your internal engineers do an excellent job of resolving Priority 3 and 4 issues – but I'm sure there must be times when they would need to rely on Cisco TAC for resolution of Priority 1 and 2 issues.”



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Interactive Exercise

Alberto thinks for a minute and says:

“Now that I think about it, I do remember one of my engineers asking me to sign off on some invoices from Cisco that had something to do with technical assistance. I really didn’t think too much about it at the time.”

You explain to Alberto that:

- His engineers are paying for each individual call on a time and materials basis.
- You emphasize that each hour of technical assistance is typically around \$200 an hour.
- You reiterate that the average call tends to cost \$800.

What should you say next?

- “Alberto, your company spent approximately \$15,000 in technical assistance with Cisco last year. Did you know that in most cases, the annual cost of Cisco TAC technical assistance that is included as a component of many service contracts is substantially lower than the total costs you end up paying for individual technical assistance on a case-by-case basis?”
- “Alberto, let me tell you about some of the other benefits of having technical assistance that provides you with access to Cisco TAC. Did you know that if you have technical assistance, your engineers won’t have to wait so long in the calling queue the next time they call?”



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Interactive Exercise

Alberto seems surprised. He asks you to provide him with an estimate of the total cost of technical assistance for his company. Before giving him the estimate, you ask him some additional questions about his company's networking environment.

You then provide him with an estimate based on some scenarios you reviewed with your Cisco point of contact. The estimate you identify is lower than the \$15,000 he paid for technical assistance last year.

Alberto thinks for a minute and then says:

“Our budget is tight right now, and we should be watching every dollar we spend. I really appreciate the information you have shared with me today – it sounds like having technical assistance is going to reduce our expenses moving forward. Let's proceed with next steps.”

Great job! You're thrilled. You have demonstrated that you have an excellent understanding of the value that technical assistance can provide your customers.





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Review Questions

Your customer has just purchased a Cisco service contract, but they are confused about what steps they should take should a situation arise where they need technical assistance. Specifically, they are unsure when they should call the Cisco TAC or when they should use the Cisco TAC website.

You tell them:

 *Select the best answer from the choices below.*

- A. It makes no difference whether they call the Cisco TAC or log in to the Cisco TAC website. It depends solely on their preference.
- B. They should call the Cisco TAC for any situation in which their network is not properly functioning. The Cisco TAC website should only be used to obtain information regarding product capabilities, installation, or configuration.
- C. They should log in to the Cisco TAC website to report any network problems if they want the quickest response. By calling the Cisco TAC, they will wait in a queue and extend response time to their issue.
- D. If their network is down or severely degraded, such that there is a significant negative impact on their business operations, they should call the Cisco TAC. If however, most business operations remain functional, they should use the Cisco TAC website.

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Review Questions

You are speaking with your customer about the benefits of the Cisco TAC when they tell you, "We already have an IT staff that is capable of handling our issues. Besides, if there is a problem, we can always call the Cisco TAC and receive the same assistance as if we had a service contract."

You respond by saying:

 *Select the best answer from the choices below.*

- A. "If you are prepared to incur the time and materials charges associated with each call to the Cisco TAC, then you could just call on an as needed basis to receive the same technical assistance."
- B. "When you call the Cisco TAC without a service contract, not only do you incur time and materials charges, but you also are given a lower priority in the queue, leading to longer response times. Can you afford extended network downtime?"
- C. "I completely understand your position. If there does come a time when you need technical assistance, you could just use the Cisco TAC website."
- D. "Without a service contract, you are unable to receive any assistance from the Cisco TAC. You must have a service contract to call the Cisco TAC or use the Cisco TAC website."

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Review Questions

You are discussing the Cisco TAC with your customer, when he/she becomes irritated, saying, "Every experience I've had with technical support hotlines has been terrible. I wait on hold forever because they're always understaffed and when I do receive assistance, it's from a junior employee who never knows what they are talking about. Why should Cisco technical assistance be any different?"

You respond by saying:

 *Select the best answer from the choices below.*

- A. "Wow. I'm sorry to hear about your bad experiences. I can tell you Cisco service would be better, but it's ultimately up to you. We can do whatever will make you happy."
- B. "I see you are pretty upset regarding your experiences with technical assistance. We can discuss at a later time if you'd like?"
- C. "The Cisco TAC includes over 350 CCIEs and 1500+ engineers, so you'll have access to Cisco experts without long delays. Additionally, for less critical cases, you can access the Cisco TAC website to receive a quick response."
- D. "Some companies do place junior employees on their technical assistance lines. While Cisco does use junior, less-experienced employees on less critical cases through the Cisco TAC website, calling the Cisco TAC gives you access to the highest qualified engineers."

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Module 4: Technical Assistance

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Congratulations. You have completed Module 4: Technical Assistance. In this lesson you:

- Discussed the technical assistance customers can receive through phone support and the TAC website.
- Explained the Follow the Sun model.
- Reviewed the benefits and value proposition associated with technical assistance.

Click the **Next** button to view some additional Cisco TAC support links. Otherwise, click Module 5: **Software Support** within the **Navigation Bar** to continue to the next module.

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Cisco TAC Support Links

Open Q&A Forum Tool

Helps you find answers to common technical questions. You can search the Open Forum Question and Answer database or submit a question directly to the forum.

<http://www.cisco.com/cgi-bin/ofdispatch?AppName=OpenForum&ForumName=Cisco TAC&Action=OpenForum>

Troubleshooting Assistant

Simulates the steps a Cisco TAC engineer takes to diagnose problems, and provides a technical solution or recommendation.

http://www.cisco.com/kobayashi/support/tac/tsa/launch_tsa.html

Case Query Tool*

Helps you query and review the history and status of a case that you currently have open with the Cisco Technical Assistance Center.

http://www.cisco.com/kobayashi/support/case_query.shtml

Case Open Tool*

Allows you to open a case with the Cisco Technical Assistance Center (Cisco TAC) directly via the Cisco TAC.

http://www.cisco.com/cgi-bin/front.x/case_tools/caseOpen.pl

Case Update Tool*

Enables you to update and modify the information in a case that you currently have open with the Cisco Technical Assistance Center .

http://www.cisco.com/kobayashi/support/case_updt.shtml

Cisco Live*

Allows you to open a Web collaboration session (Cisco Live) with a Cisco TAC representative who will then guide you to the appropriate information or open a case for you.

<http://www.cisco.com/tac/ciscolive>

* Available only to partners with Support Agreements and to customers with Cisco Brand Resale Service Contracts.

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