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Cisco's New CTO

Padmasree Warrior; Cisco; Chief Technology Officer

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Peter Shaplen: Welcome to this podcast series, an ongoing conversation about *Trends, Technology, and Business*. For Cisco, I'm Peter Shaplen.

Padmasree Warrior is Cisco's new Chief Technology Officer. She comes to the company after more than 20 years at Motorola, where she was an executive vice president and CTO, leading a team of 26,000 engineers and directing their labs.

I want to begin by asking why, after so much time there, was it time to make a change. Why did you come here?

Padmasree Warrior: I came to Cisco because I find Cisco to be a company that is great at execution. We deliver on our solutions. We're very customer-centric. It's a global company. These are things that are important to me as I looked for opportunities where I can contribute in the future. The things that draw me emotionally to come to Cisco are that people are very smart here, but they're also very realistic. There is a sense of pragmatism in the culture of -- about change and the desire to change that is very attractive to me, changes like business models. We have to look at new kinds of business models, shifting away from just developing products to thinking more about solutions and new kinds of approaches to globalization and developing solutions specifically targeted at emerging markets. I also find that Cisco is a very inclusive culture, and they really mean it when they say it's a family. So those are reasons that I came to Cisco.

Peter Shaplen: Give us a snapshot of who you are and what you want to accomplish.

Padmasree Warrior: I'm an engineer by training, a technologist at heart. I enjoy motivating people and influencing companies to extending to new opportunities. So sometimes I'm tactical. Sometimes I am operational, sometimes strategic, sometimes a visionary but often a collaborative leader of thought and people.

So when I came to Cisco, my first priority was to really learn the company. I spent the last 90 days -- it's been about three months since I've been here -- really understanding Cisco's customer base, our sales and channel processes, our development opportunities, etcetera.

In the simplest terms, my job as the CTO of Cisco is to be -- to helping the company make the right strategic choices for growth. You know, what are the areas we have to invest more in? What are the areas we have to deemphasize or offload from our portfolio?

The other area of focus for me is to look at technology disruptions and market transitions that will occur in the next three years to extend our technology leadership in areas.

The third area of focus for me will be to really communicate Cisco's capabilities as an innovator, as a technology leader, as a market leader outside of Cisco to the larger world and translate deep technical messages into simple terms that people can relate to and understand.

Peter Shaplen: We often hear words that I think are sometimes overused or poorly defined. The two that come to mind are *innovation* and *collaboration*, and I'm wondering what those words mean to you and what you see doing with those concepts here.

Padmasree Warrior: In the simplest sense, what innovation means to me is a new way to solve a common problem that we as users face today, right? So solve a relevant problem in a simple new way. That's what innovation means.

There are forces at play that will change the process of innovation in the next decade, things like globalization, as we evolve from single-economics powers of strength in the world to multiple [polars] of economic strength across the world geographically distributed, things like mobility and the Internet changing the connection points across the world.

So innovation itself is going to change in the future, where it will require companies not just to build their own solutions but to buy and partner and unify ideas from across the globe. That is what I think about when I think about collaborative innovation. That's what the world collaboration means to me is how do you unify these different aspects of innovation. That's the decade that Cisco will lead with innovation.

Peter Shaplen: You speak of opportunities, but now I want to ask what about hurdles. Speak to the technology disruptions that are particularly important to you, and what do you see going forward?

Padmasree Warrior: Figuring out what acquisition is, in terms of leveraging these disruptions to extend our market [inaudible], extend our technology leadership in areas, it's those kinds of things that I'll be participating and driving some of the discussion, helping John and the executive team make those kinds of decisions.

Peter Shaplen: I think I know three that are particularly of interest -- cloud computing, mobility, and changing service delivery models, which, of course, affect customers from start to finish.

Padmasree Warrior: Sure, you know, we can be all day here talking about those disruptions, but if you think about cloud computing, essentially what it means is it's a different way to compute how storage is provided and how services get delivered. But if you think about the enterprise needs in terms of cloud computing, Cisco has a lot of strengths in understanding what the enterprise needs are, in making sure that we can deliver that model into the enterprise space, and that I see is a huge opportunity for Cisco.

Now, associated with data, related to data are opportunities, such as IT as a service, software as a service, desktop virtualization. All of these become related. So there are disruptions, but there are also great opportunities for Cisco because we truly understand enterprise requirements, how to manage privacy and security of data and provide personalization and cost-effective solutions that people are looking for. So that's where our strengths lie. So I look at them as big opportunities.

Peter Shaplen: One of the words that has been used to describe you I know was attributed to John Chambers. That was the word *evangelist*. What gave Chambers the reason to use the word *evangelist*?

Padmasree Warrior: I think in this context what it means to me is to champion Cisco's vision

and its capabilities to the rest of the world -- to our customers, to the media, to the analysts, to the employees, to our shareholders, all of the constituencies that are important to Cisco to spread the message of our innovation, our leadership, our ability, our track record of the things that we've delivered. So that is, I think, what he means by that.

Peter Shaplen: You've said it's not necessary that every good technologist become a visionary; the turning point is in visualizing what a technology can do rather than explaining what it is.

Padmasree Warrior: When we talk about video as the next opportunity, it's not just video as a technology or as a solution but what does video allow us to do. Innovations like TelePresence, for instance, are not just to conduct meetings differently, but it's actually a way to enable collaboration. It can totally change the way we do business today to discuss things, to have brainstorming sessions with teams that are globally distributed.

Mobility -- now, [I've] always been a passionate advocate of mobility, and truly what mobility means to me going forward is [three] things -- Internet mobility, how do you make the fixed Internet world today mobile, how do you make sure content can move across any device, any platform; broadband mobility -- how can we with WiMAX and other technologies like that provide that new access technology to enable mobility. So it's basically taking that kind of a technology message and translating it into what it means to the customer.

Peter Shaplen: As the CTO, how would you like customers to see Cisco, and how will your vision transform the company? What should customers and analysts, what should they be looking for to see your fingerprints?

Padmasree Warrior: Customers will see Cisco as a company that puts the extra effort to understand what their needs are. So my fingerprint they will hopefully see as not just providing products based on their needs today but really sitting down with customers and together figuring out what the future will be like. My desire is customers will see us as a trusted partner, where we can build a vision together, and then they will rely on Cisco to deliver the right solutions.

I'm a big believer that nobody knows all the answers, especially because I'm a technologist. By the time you think you know all the answers, there's new questions that somebody is posing. So I think that lends a certain amount of humility. Especially in the technology space, where everything is changing so quickly, you have to be able to build a vision starting all the way from a solution -- from the infrastructure to the application. So you have to think vertically. But in order to deliver that solution, you have to work horizontally across the organization. So it might sound like an oxymoron. We're asking people to do unnatural things. But that, I think, is going to be where we have to learn to work differently inside the company. John calls this shifting from command and control to collaboration, how do we work across the organization's structure. Internally, I think that will be the biggest challenge for us.

Peter Shaplen: Do you subscribe to that shift of command and control? How would you phrase it differently if you were to put it to your own words?

Padmasree Warrior: I think in my own words, it's going to be more about influence and teaming and pulling in diverse skill sets, right? Because to me, command and control means everybody thinks like you and you know all the answers. So to me, shifting away from command and control means essentially being able to absorb people with different diverse skill

sets into the team, and the output from the team is going to be better that way than if you had people that all thought the same way.

Peter Shaplen: It's been real exciting to speak with you. Thank you.

Padmasree Warrior: Thank you.

Peter Shaplen: Padmasree Warrior, the new CTO at Cisco. And thank you for listening. An archive of this, other podcasts as well, both audio and video, can be found online at newsroom.cisco.com. I'm Peter Shaplen for Cisco.