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Cisco uses AgenticOps and Cloud Control to bid for autonomous network operations

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The company used Cisco Live 2026 to announce Cisco Cloud Control and an expanded AgenticOps capability set, advancing its autonomous networking vision across campus, branch, data center and multicloud environments.

Introduction

Cisco Systems Inc. used Cisco Live 2026 to announce Cisco Cloud Control and an expanded AgenticOps portfolio, advancing its autonomous networking vision across campus, branch, data center and multicloud environments. Cloud Control, entering controlled availability in June 2026, functions as a unified operations platform, aggregating telemetry from Meraki, Catalyst Center, Nexus Dashboard, Security Cloud Control, and more with cross-domain AI troubleshooting, agentic remediation and a digital twin for change validation. Cisco also introduced Cisco Multicloud Fabric, a new service connecting enterprise sites and workloads across AWS, Azure and Google Cloud through Cisco-managed virtual points of presence.

THE TAKE

Cisco Cloud Control and the expanded AgenticOps portfolio represent a bid to expand into the AI operations era. It is taking advantage of its broad product set across observability, networking, compute, storage, cloud operations and security, which single-domain competitors cannot replicate. The strategy is both defensive and offensive — Cloud Control makes it harder for customers to unbundle Cisco products without losing operational capabilities they will have come to rely on. The digital twin and Multicloud Fabric capabilities are in early stages, but address real enterprise pain points around change risk and fragmented cloud connectivity. Cisco's main challenge is proving that its agentic capabilities deliver measurable operational improvements beyond familiar AI-assistant features already offered by HPE's Mist AI and Extreme Networks' Platform ONE.

Context

The Cisco Live 2026 announcements extend the AI-ready network architecture strategy it introduced at Cisco Live 2025, which organized around three pillars: simplified operations, security fused into the network, and scalable AI-ready devices. Cloud Control advances the first pillar by consolidating all Cisco domain management into a single portal. New security features extend Live Protect to campus Smart Switches and add post-quantum cryptography to SD-WAN. A hardware refresh introduces the C9550 fixed-core Smart Switch, expanded 8000 Series Secure Routers and premium outdoor Wi-Fi 7 access points.

Cisco's third-quarter revenue for fiscal year 2026 — $15.8 billion — is up 12% year over year and driven by a 35% surge in product orders. This success was anchored by wired and wireless networking refresh cycles, with campus orders growing 25% and wireless climbing 40%, largely fueled by rapid Wi-Fi 7 adoption. To sustain this networking momentum into the fourth quarter — which has revenue guidance of $16.7 billion to $16.9 billion — Cisco is capitalizing on enterprises modernizing their infrastructure to handle expected threefold increases in AI-driven traffic. Its ongoing growth strategy includes accelerating the rollout of next-generation Smart Switches, expanding Unified Edge compute deployments, and embedding AI-native capabilities and security directly into the network fabric. Beyond networking, Splunk's strategic shift toward cloud subscriptions caused a temporary revenue drag but remains on track to secure over 1,000 new logos this fiscal year. In network assurance, ThousandEyes achieved a 25% increase in annual order value and expanded its federal footprint via new FedRAMP compliance.

Strategy

Cisco's primary strategic aim is to enable simpler operations and more secure networking and to scale capacity faster through this new architecture, thereby making its ecosystem stickier by becoming the single operational layer through which customers manage their entire network, cloud and compute estates. Cloud Control unites existing Cisco management consoles into one platform rather than requiring customers to switch products. The approach reduces migration friction while expanding cross-domain value.

The AgenticOps road map frames autonomy as a spectrum, positioning agentic-recommended changes within ServiceNow and other ITSM approval workflows. This addresses enterprise IT concerns about agent-driven changes reaching production without oversight.

Cisco Multicloud Fabric targets enterprises managing AI workloads distributed across AWS, Azure, Google Cloud and other providers like neoclouds. Cisco cites the shift from asymmetric to symmetric traffic patterns driven by agentic AI as a key driver, noting that agentic traffic generates approximately 450% more WAN traffic volume compared with traditional application access patterns. Cisco framed Multicloud Fabric as a complement to existing Equinix Inc. and Megaport Ltd. underlays rather than a replacement.

Technology and products

Cisco Cloud Control is the centerpiece of the Cisco Live 2026 announcements, and it serves as a unified operations platform that integrates Meraki, Catalyst Center, Nexus Dashboard, Security Cloud Control and Splunk under a single login. Rather than replacing those domain controllers, Cloud Control surfaces their capabilities alongside cross-domain tools: unified asset inventory and topology, consolidated alerts, AI Assistant for natural language queries, and AI Canvas for multidomain investigation and execution of workflows, including those created and presented by generative AI execution. Entitlements are tied to existing Cisco product purchases — customers unlock more capability as they buy more Cisco products, with no additional license cost. Controlled availability launched in the US in June.

Originally announced in November 2025, Cisco IQ is Cisco's unified, AI-powered delivery engine for Cisco services. Designed to future-proof IT environments against emerging architectural threats, it provides customers with a real-time, benchmarked view of all Cisco assets and configurations within their infrastructure. The service has transitioned to general availability, with more than 3,000 customers already onboarded.

The AgenticOps capability set introduces an agentic loop — a five-stage workflow of sense, diagnose, remediate, validate and deploy. Agentic Actions for Networking, entering beta in June 2026, surfaces recommended remediations with confidence scores and risk ratings for one-click execution. Deep Reasoning correlates telemetry across domains to identify root causes for complex issues. Enhanced Experience Metrics, also in beta, can collapse thousands of infrastructure signals into a unified user-experience view across wired, wireless and WAN. A digital twin capability enters alpha in July 2026, emulating device configuration, operating systems and connectivity so changes can be validated before production deployment — starting with Cisco devices, with non-Cisco device support under architectural evaluation.

Among the functionalities introduced with these capabilities was the expansion of Live Protect, which shields vulnerabilities in runtime without the need to interrupt availability. Cisco called out the emergence of models such as Anthropic's Mythos, which significantly multiplies the volume of discovered vulnerabilities, in highlighting the need for such capability. A participant in Anthropic's Project Glasswing and OpenAI's Daybreak, Cisco also open-sourced its Foundry Security Spec to inform AI-enabled security evaluations.

Cisco Multicloud Fabric entered beta in June 2026, deploying Cisco-operated virtual points of presence across all AWS, Azure and Google Cloud regions to connect enterprise branches and cloud-to-cloud workloads. Each connection definition includes built-in security policy enforced through Cisco's cloud firewall, zero-trust routing by default, and end-to-end visibility through ThousandEyes and Splunk. Cilium integration extends workload-level visibility into Kubernetes environments.

The hardware refresh adds the C9550 fixed-core Smart Switch, orderable in May 2026, with up to 6.4 terabits per second of switching capacity and 3.9 billion packets per second, post-quantum cryptography, and EVPN-based campus fabric support. New devices also include the C9350 Smart Switches, premium outdoor Wi-Fi 7 access points, the IR1000 Series industrial compact routers and expanded 8600 Series Secure Routers.

Beyond enterprise campus and multicloud environments, Cisco is extending its autonomous operations and hardware innovation directly to the OT edge. Complementing the new ultra-low-power IR1000 industrial routers and 5G RedCap connectivity modules, Cisco introduced AI-driven troubleshooting tools designed specifically for on-site maintenance technicians. This empowers first-line workers to diagnose hardware faults and network misconfigurations via natural language, reducing reliance on remote IT escalation. Furthermore, to secure these distributed edge assets without risking production downtime, Cisco Cyber Vision now features zero-risk segmentation simulation, enabling industrial operators to test auto-generated security policies against live traffic before moving to full hardware-level enforcement.

Competition

In campus and branch network management, Cisco's Cloud Control and AgenticOps compete most directly with HPE's Aruba Central and Mist AI cloud management platforms. Mist AI's Marvis virtual network assistant has offered AI-driven troubleshooting and natural language interaction for several years, giving HPE a well-established AI operations story. Extreme Networks Inc. competes with its Extreme Platform ONE unified cloud management system, which provides management across wired, wireless and fabric alongside AI-driven radio resource management. Arista Networks Inc.'s CloudVision platform competes in both campus and data center, although Arista's campus presence remains smaller than Cisco's or HPE's.

Cisco's digital twin capability competes with Forward Networks' Forward Enterprise platform, which creates a mathematically accurate multivendor digital twin that supports environments with more than 50,000 devices. Cisco's digital twin starts with Cisco devices only, contrasting with Forward Networks' multivendor approach. HPE's Apstra provides intent-based automation and validation for multivendor data center fabrics. Network automation vendors Itential and Gluware offer multivendor workflow automation, while Cisco's AgenticOps relies on deterministic Cisco-defined workflows.

For Cisco Multicloud Fabric, competition comes from Equinix Inc. and Megaport, as well as Fortinet and Palo Alto Networks Inc., which offer cloud-native connectivity with integrated security. Cisco's differentiation rests on end-to-end observability through ThousandEyes and Splunk, as well as the ability to tie multicloud connectivity into the same Cloud Control operational plane as campus and data center.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Cisco's installed base across campus, data center, WAN and security gives Cloud Control a broad telemetry foundation that single-domain competitors cannot replicate. The decision to deliver Cloud Control at no additional license cost lowers adoption friction while deepening dependency on the Cisco ecosystem, and its 20,000-plus AgenticOps customers and 41 million monthly AI Assistant queries demonstrate meaningful early commercial traction.	The digital twin capability launches in alpha, targeting Cisco devices only, limiting its appeal in multivendor environments where competitors like Forward Networks already operate at scale. The agentic workflow model relies on deterministic Cisco-authored workflows, which constrains the flexibility available to customers who want to build their own automation pipelines across mixed-vendor estates.
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
Agentic AI traffic patterns create near-term demand for the network modernization and management unification enabled by Cloud Control. The Multicloud Fabric service addresses a fragmented and underserved enterprise pain point as AI workloads spread across AWS, Azure and Google Cloud, and the Cilium integration points toward deeper workload-level visibility that few networking vendors currently offer.	HPE's portfolio now spans campus, branch and data center with a mature AI operations story that predates Cisco's AgenticOps push. Itential, Gluware and Forward Networks offer capabilities in workflow automation and network verification that serve customers dissatisfied with Cisco-centric approaches. Customer skepticism about agentic systems making autonomous network changes without human oversight could slow adoption of Cisco's most differentiated AgenticOps features.

Source: 451 Research.

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