



## Cisco OnPlus: IT Infrastructure Advisory and Management Services Solution For Small Businesses

Last month, Cisco introduced a new IT Infrastructure advisory and management service solution designed for VARs to provide to small businesses with less than 100 employees. Delivered via Cisco's value-added reseller (VAR) channel, Cisco OnPlus enables VARs to offload the mundane, time consuming tasks of managing a network environment from small businesses, and provide them with higher value advisory services. In addition to monitoring and managing network infrastructure devices, such as switches, wireless access points and routers, OnPlus also monitors devices that are connected to the network (including smartphones and tablets). VARs can deploy a small OnPlus Network Agent appliance at the customer site, and remotely monitor and manage it through the cloud via a secure web portal or mobile application..

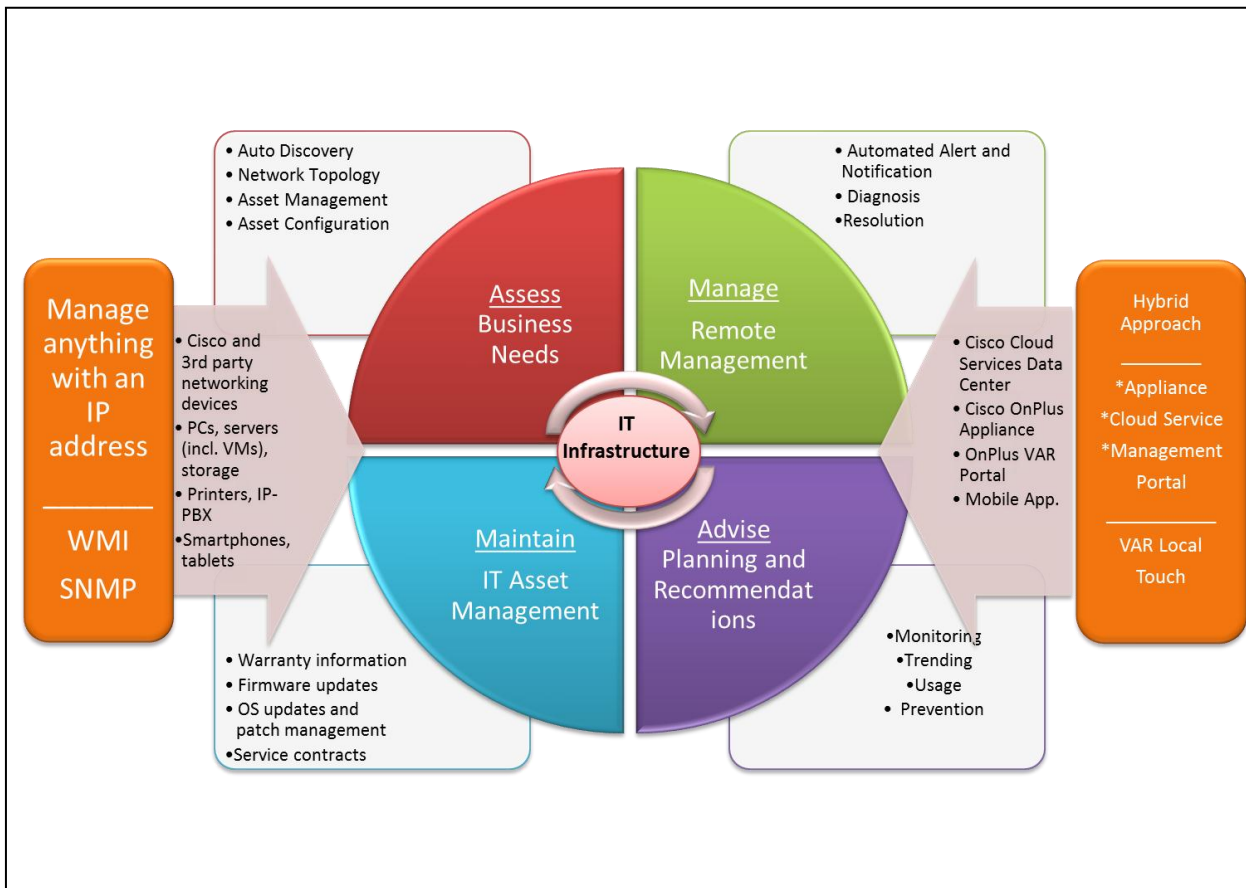
### PERSPECTIVE

Cisco's OnPlus IT infrastructure advisory and management service solution is designed to meet the needs of small businesses. SMB Group's [2011 SMB Routes to Market study](#) indicates that small businesses' top technology related challenges include: Gaining 'peace of mind' that IT is under control (40%), Containing IT costs (38%), Finding/hiring qualified IT staff(35%), Upgrading IT infrastructure(34%), Protecting business from IT related failures(32%), Getting more done with fewer/flat IT resources (26%). As illustrated in Figure 1, Cisco's OnPlus with Assess, Manage, Advise, Maintain features helps directly address several of these technology challenges.

Several IT infrastructure monitoring and management solutions are available for small and medium businesses (SMBs) , but they are often cost-prohibitive for many small businesses. Cisco's hybrid solution, consisting of an agent embedded in a small network appliance and a secure cloud service, is aimed squarely at VARs that provide managed services to small businesses. These companies often lack dedicated IT staff and tend to depend on part-time IT people or external contractors to manage IT. With scarce resources typically stretched thin, small businesses are often unable to keep up with the demands of routine technology management--let alone support growth goals with new technology solutions.

At the same time, many VARs are looking for ways to quickly and efficiently offer remote management services to their small business customers, and the ability to provide more proactive guidance and management advice.

**Figure 1: Cisco OnPlus – Comprehensive IT Infrastructure Management for Small Businesses**

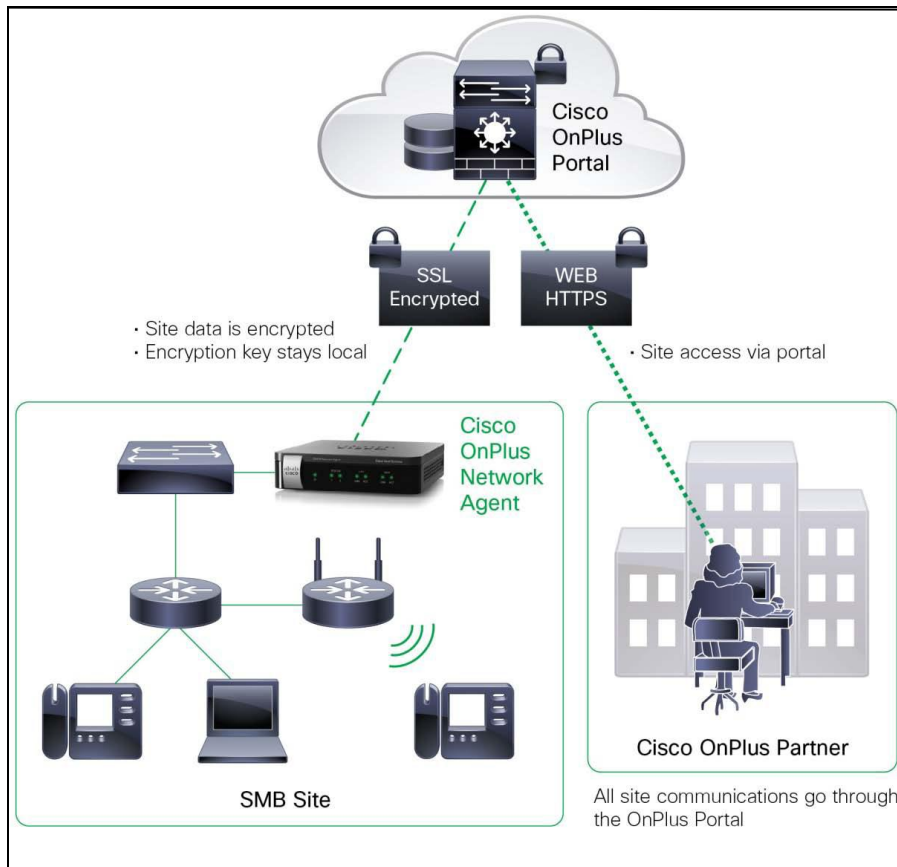


Source: SMB Group, January 2012

Cisco OnPlus gives VARs an efficient way to expand their managed service offerings through remote management and visibility into the customer network and the devices attached to the network. VARs simply plug the OnPlus Network Agent appliance into a switch or router on the customer's network, and the OnPlus Agent then transmits information about the customer's network and all connected devices to a secure data center for access by the VAR (see figure 2). Native apps for Apple and Android mobile devices are available for free from those companies' app stores. The VARs have the flexibility to define their own business model for using OnPlus. Some will add additional fees based on their coverage and response times. Others will use OnPlus to enhance their service capabilities without additional charges to

their customers. In addition, VARs can use OnPlus as a tool to accelerate pre-sale assessments with prospective customers.

**Figure 2: Cisco OnPlus Solution Service Data and Communications Flow**



Source: Cisco, 2011

Cisco OnPlus appliance discovers Cisco and third-party devices with an IP address connected to the network and displays them in topology and inventory views. Partners can access a real-time view of customer networks from anywhere, through a highly secure portal using a PC, tablet, or mobile device. VARs work with small businesses to define and customize alert thresholds. Through OnPlus, VARs can also provide small businesses with automated reports of all the activity and tasks performed on the network.

Pricing is \$250 (approx. \$7 per month, after typical discounts), which includes a three-year OnPlus subscription and the network agent appliance that is installed at the customer site. The OnPlus service

from Cisco is available now in U.S. and Canada, with a rollout in Europe and Asia planned for 2012.

## QUICK TAKE

Cisco OnPlus delivers cost-efficient scalable IT management and peace of mind that small businesses need without sacrificing the local VAR that many SMBs want to do business with. On the VAR side, it provides a fast, efficient way to onboard customers into a managed service practice, provide more proactive services, and provide more efficient service to more small businesses customers. With the advantages, Cisco OnPlus should be very attractive to Cisco VARs and enable Cisco to make significant inroads in the small business segment.

That said, Cisco OnPlus can significantly strengthen its story by:

- Offering additional functionality in the areas of IT asset utilization and management (both hardware and software) to support compliance
- Providing additional performance management solutions
- Making it an extensible solution so that VARs can easily add additional value-added solutions like remote backup, Infrastructure on-demand, and business continuity services
- Help VARs position and demonstrate the value of OnPlus as a comprehensive IT infrastructure management solutions vs. a network management solution
- Demand generation marketing to educate small businesses about the benefits of managed services

However, Cisco continues to invest in and develop solutions for small business, and OnPlus provides strong evidence that Cisco understands both small business pain points and how to create solutions that provide clear benefits to its partners. Cisco's OnPlus should be a big step forward in helping Cisco VARs to move beyond the role of network product suppliers to become more strategic managed service providers.



## SMB GROUP, INC.

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