



Seizing Shared Parental Leave
With Both Hands



Living with Autism Spectrum
Disorder



From Feeling Helpless to Helping
an Entire Community



2021-June-17

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I'm a Silicon Valley Start-Up Guy: Why Did I Join Cisco?

BY JUSTIN BARNEY · VP OF GLOBAL SALES, INTENT-BASED NETWORKING · UNITED STATES



I'm a sales and go-to-market expert for entrepreneurs. A Silicon Valley start-up type to be specific.

For most of my adult life, I created, invested in, or worked at young tech companies with just a handful of workers, scaling them for significant top-line growth and profitability. And I did that multiple times. For more than 20 years.

All of which made my decision last year to work for Cisco, along with its 75,000 employees... well ... unexpected.

"Why the heck did you join Cisco?" came the collective cry from my industry colleagues.

Why join a company 1,000 times the size of any for which I had previously worked, they asked. Becoming part of a corporate culture that I had no hand in creating or cultivating would surely stifle my independent spirit.

And they wanted to know why, 15 months after taking the job, was I still there?

Both legitimate questions. So let me set the record straight.

In the fall of 2019, I considered offers from several start-ups and Cisco.

At first, the allure of jumping into another start-up was exciting and the natural path. After all, the scene was familiar. But I decided to join Cisco as its SD-WAN sales leader instead.

I'd been competing with some facet of Cisco for my entire career. I love the SD-WAN market and have been involved in it since its infancy.

The chance to join Cisco and lead global sales of its SD-WAN and traditional routing business was compelling.

My interest reflected Cisco's trajectory: the number one vendor in the market, two amazing SD-WAN platforms with Viptela and Meraki, and the evolution of SD-WAN as the underpinning of SASE — one of the largest technology transformations I've been involved with over my career.

That's a start-up like positioning that appeals to me: The opportunity to help a company reach the next level of performance on a massive scale!

Additionally, I have known and admired Viptela's architecture since it was founded, and Cisco's workplace reputation is well known in the industry. These clinched things for me, so I dove headfirst into Cisco.

Fifteen months later, I'm still here. And that's because I made the right decision.

Cisco's well-deserved reputation for workplace excellence

The people here are great — every day I get to work with wicked smart, witty, and energetic people who work tirelessly to steer our big ship down the right path. I'm so lucky to have inherited a group of brilliant people around the globe who drive the Cisco networking mission.

And my work with SD-WAN and routing is more fulfilling than I could have imagined. This is more apparent than ever with the COVID-19 crisis and the need for people to communicate and be networked in real time.



"Can you imagine if data and information were not able to be accessed 24x7 on a global basis right now?"

— Justin Barney

And the Cisco SD-WAN business is thriving. We're making tremendous progress, and we're poised for continued strong growth for many years to come.

It's like start-up growth only scaled for Cisco.

Over the past 15 months, I've been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to take on more responsibility. In August 2020, I became VP of Global Sales for Intent-Based Networking, which includes not just routing and SD-WAN but Catalyst switching and wireless as well.

Most recently, I'm thrilled to have the global ThousandEyes sales team join my sales organization.

I met Mohit Lad, the founder/CEO of ThousandEyes, 10 years ago in a coffee shop in San Francisco when he had just begun building his company. We've kept in touch over the years, and the opportunity to now drive the global sales team for ThousandEyes feels like coming back home.



Justin and his kids.

And finally, I can't say enough about Cisco's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chuck, Gerri, and the entire Executive Leadership Team have taken great care of our employees, customers, and partners as they've led us through these unprecedented times. This leadership inspires me to be my best when leading my own team.

So back to that nagging question that I've heard from my non-Cisco colleagues: Why, 15 months after taking the Cisco job, was I still here?

It's simple. I jump out of bed every morning, fully revved up to tackle the day and all the challenges that come with it, much as I did in start-up land.

Having the opportunity to help support and drive the next wave of growth at Cisco brings everything full circle. And I love that.

Hear more from me in a recent [Cisco Coffee and Conversations](#) podcast.

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JUN 21 2021 08:54AM



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