

Daniel Newman: Raviv Levi, welcome to the Six Five Summit. How are you doing today?

Raviv Levi: Thank you, Daniel. It's so great to be here. Calling in from San Francisco. The sun is shining, the summer seems to be starting. Real excited to be here today.

Daniel Newman: But I made you close the blinds because we're recording and all that sunshine tends to do crazy things with the camera. So, we love our hybrid work and we love-

Raviv Levi: Yes.

Daniel Newman: ... our collaboration tools, but the sun still has its way of impacting. All the technology in the world and we still can't figure out how to perfect that backlight.

Raviv Levi: Can't turn it off.

Daniel Newman: Anytime I turn the screen white, it flushes me out. I turn completely light, but yeah, I'm so excited to have you here. I'm hoping maybe next year, we will even be doing this in person.

Raviv Levi: Oh. Yes. I'd love nothing more.

Daniel Newman: So, I'm really excited about this conversation. One of the topics that has gotten a lot of headlines this year, Raviv, a lot of interest, a lot of both technically speaking and what I love to call marketecture has been SASE. It's as we're seeing edge scale, as we're seeing security getting more attention, we're hearing more and more about SASE and of course Cisco is very involved in this space. And so I have a few questions I want to take you through. I want to talk about some of the customer challenges. I want to talk about the impact of distributed work and why SASE is rising. But in fairness, we've had millions of viewers watch this event and the technical aptitudes vary at times. So, given that this is your space and you sort of lead this for Cisco, give us the quick 411 on SASE, 411 by the way, for all you younger people, that's what we used to dial when we needed information before we had super computers in our pocket.

Raviv Levi: Yeah.

Daniel Newman: Tell us a little bit about SASE and kind of what it is, what it stands for and just the quick background.

Raviv Levi: Absolutely. So, SASE stands for Secure Access Service Edge and the way I think it's easiest to understand what it really is, is by understanding the transitions that we had just over the last decade or so in the market. I would even go as far as talking about the compute and the storage industries and use cases and their transformation into the cloud. That triggered a chain of events. Applications going to the cloud, branch locations, offices, data centers need to connect to the

internet in order to access those business applications. Branches can't go through a centralized location because it created bottlenecks. And then, if your applications are going to the cloud, if your storage is in the cloud, then it makes sense that your security needs to be in the cloud as well. More so than ever, you need different and new technologies for security to address those cloud hosted or cloud delivered applications that you have. The next step after that was for the actual networking and connectivity to go up to the cloud as well. That's what we know as SD-WAN going to the cloud as well.

And here we are today with our applications in the cloud, our data in the cloud, everyone needing to go into the cloud directly and more so than ever before, we need agility. If we didn't need a global pandemic to show us that we see that we need agility, it's very hard to predict. There's an acute pressure on margins and the market demands a service. A service that would allow us to consume that security, that connectivity from the cloud and this is really what SASE is all about. You have your secure access to your service edge, which is in the cloud and you want to be able to ideally consume that as a service. Security and networking bring together in the cloud edge available as a service.

Daniel Newman:

Which seems to tick a lot of boxes for what companies are looking for these days. We're seeing all these things can kind of concurrently scale. And so being in this space, addressing both the consumption elements, the network and security, which has always been sort of in the DNA of your company for a long time, even before, as a service and consumption where the way it was done. So, it's got to be a pretty interesting time and I love the fact that you brought up the agility. If there was one theme that our entire event is probably enduring or that's been reoccurring in every conversation, doesn't matter if we're talking about edge or 5G, it doesn't matter if we're talking about infrastructure compute, cloud or AI. Every company realized throughout this pandemic that even those that thought they were fast and agile weren't fast enough or agile enough.

But I think a lot of companies are going to come out of this faster, stronger, better prepared, definitely flex those culture transformation muscles that were so required. Hey, so let's talk about that then a little bit more because in your world, the customer challenges and what they're facing. So, we address the challenges of the pandemic, but beyond that, right, we're sort of turning a corner out of that. There are a number of challenges that all your customers are facing and in SASE you kind of alluded to it, but I'd love to let you be a little more specific. What exact problems do you think you're addressing that they're facing?

Raviv Levi:

Well, there's a multitude of problems here really when you think about that. If you think about the security needs of our customers, the world has changed so significantly. In the old days, we used to have all our users in a single or a finite number of locations, we used to have all our applications within our data center. Now users are everywhere, applications are everywhere and how do you even think about your security perimeter? Our CEO, Chuck said it best, there is no

security perimeter anymore and we need to work differently. We need to think about how we engage with those different SAS or IaaS Infrastructure as a Service platforms, in order to deliver that level of security to our customers.

That creates a lot of complexity. How do you even go about doing that? You have employees around the world, you have applications all over the place. You need to make sure that everyone can connect to their data, to the resources from everywhere, anytime with any application. It's a really heavy lift to be able to do all of those things on your own. I mean, sure, there's many companies, maybe even 100s around the world that can take this on, but even them, wouldn't they prefer for a vendor that can take all those components, put them together in a cloud edge, make that accessible as a service and allow them to consume that. Allowing them to focus on things that they're passionate about, their business, their difference that they're driving in the world.

And similarly, although very interesting, we're seeing that happening on the connectivity side as well. In the past, we used to have very nice SD-WAN topologies, hub and spoke and regional hub and full mesh and auto created tunnels between different locations for voice over IP calls and all of that. But now it's not just about one site connecting to another. It's about a multitude of users connecting to different applications all over the place.

It gets so complex that it is difficult for humans to comprehend. We need someone, we need a technology that is going to help us bridge that gap. And let's not forget that if our applications are going to the cloud and the connectivity is going to the cloud, essentially what we're saying here is that the entire WAN, Wide Area Network is going to the cloud and just like before, we need visibility into that. We need to understand what's going on there. We need to be able to tell if there's an issue with Office 365, before we get that angry call from the CFO that can't connect to SharePoint, right? So, how do we tie all of that together? The observability, the security, the connectivity and how do we allow our customers to consume all of that? That's really at the forefront of what I'm seeing our customers ask us to do and obviously the focus that we have on what we're building to address that.

Daniel Newman:

Yeah, I liked that you mentioned all those pieces kind of coming together. It complements the portfolio. Of course, things like observability is something not directly in the purview of what you're doing, but you guys have applications App-D and different tools now for managing the integrity of apps. I think I read somewhere that there's on average, 200 SAS applications being used across the average enterprise. Now, again, I'm guessing that could probably be as few as 50 or 60 and probably as many as several 100 beyond that 200. A lot of complexity, a lot of observability and application performance management required is why we've seen an onslaught of acquisitions across the industry of observability and ITOps, SecOps tools because every company realized it's going to become table stakes. The applications have to run, have to run well and have to run all the time.

You know what? You started talking about something though, that I want to dig into a little bit more. You talked about sort of the topology and the changes that went on throughout the pandemic and in the beginning of the pandemic, I think most people thought if he went to home for a day for work, you could go VPN. Sorry, within a few weeks you realized, the VPN wasn't enough. And SD-WAN got a lot of attention. We saw a lot of companies move to that as a vehicle to connect remote workers, add layers of security, but it sounds to me like what you're basically saying is SASE is that next step in the ladder of now you've the Software Defined WAN is important, but now securing it and connecting it and adding the network at scale, even there was an opportunity. So, talk about SASE and how the distributed workforce that came out of the pandemic sort of did move together.

Raviv Levi: Absolutely. I would start out, Daniel, by just saying that you called out a very interesting point. Since the internet is now our WAN, there's spectrum of services that we need to be able to deliver on from the access side to the application side and there are key components that Cisco specifically, but the industry is delivering across those. On the application side, we have the workload security, the cloud native firewall components that we have App-D, on the access side for observability, for example, we have ThousandEyes, relatively recent acquisition that Cisco made in order to really provide that level of visibility across the internet.

One of the key interesting point that I like the most about SASE is that we have to be outcome driven. This is really at the end of the day, what our customers are asking of us, whether you have branches deployed all over the place, user working remotely and more recently during the pandemic, you have lab stations popping up vaccination sites. How do you manage all of those? How do you make sure that all of those are connected as they should be to the resource that they're trying to get to. Well, the answer that I like the most is that, for the customer, they shouldn't care.

Daniel Newman: Right.

Raviv Levi: Whether we're using SD-WAN or VPN remote access, there's several different ways to address remote access capabilities whether through, in a reverse proxy or a VPN tunnel or if you have an appliance, you have multiple tunnels doing optimization through SD-WAN. Once you make all of that available as a service, you shouldn't care. The only thing that you should care about is the ability to get to that resource, the ability to understand what's going on through observability and the peace of mind knowing that you're protected and secure.

Daniel Newman: Yeah, I like what you were saying there and by the way, that was a good call out on ThousandEyes, because that was the other half of the equation. One thing I'd love for you to dig into a little bit more though is, with the security and networking, right, there's a convergence that is the underpinnings of SASE. And you kind of started talking about it earlier, but I think for everybody out there really understanding that, because I'm always, people tend to have historically, I

mean even think about like the role of a CISO, IT is over here and security is over here. So, it was like networking was over here and security was over here. But whether it's been the Colonial Pipeline or SolarWinds or any... I just think attention at the Board level has been drawn to IT and it doesn't mean you don't need leadership focused on security, but we're seeing that convergence come together and SASE is a great example of taking two things that historically had been sort of managed in isolation and really kind of taking them together. Talk about that convergence that SASE is sort of helping lead.

Raviv Levi: Yes, absolutely. And I don't want to underestimate the importance of each team that we see in those organizations and probably for some companies that convergence may take a very long time. I do want to appreciate that, but-

Daniel Newman: Yeah, absolutely.

Raviv Levi: ...at the same time, I do want to call out that CIOs and CISOs that we've been talking to, do see value in that convergence, do see value in consuming a certain outcome as part of that service. If you go back about five years from now, we have transitioned from Unified Threat Management [inaudible] UTM into a secure SD-WAN. That was to me the first iteration or the first example of security and networking coming together. At the end of the day, what our customers are asking of us is that secure connectivity and security and my first role in security was somewhere in 2006, so I totally get the 411 piece. What I'm trying to say here is that security isn't just this magic dust that you sprinkle on top of your solution. I'm sure that security teams other can appreciate that. It has to be part of the system. It has to be part of the entire solution, the entire service. And by assisting that convergence, we can make sure that this is happening in the way that is most efficient, most performant and most secure for our customers.

Daniel Newman: Yeah, absolutely. By the way, I appreciate that. You know, I just turned 40 during the process of filming for this event and like I said, people could be watching this during the June 14 week when we go live, which we're super excited about or this could be this get watched for months after. Let's just say, I'm a lot older now. So, some of these jokes that I used to think I was young, I'm not, it's just, unfortunately I've hit the end of being young. And so, now I tell dad jokes. But I think a lot of people out there, Raviv, really want to understand the selection criteria. Okay. So, we've kind of talked about the fundamentals, we've talked about sort of the organization, we've talked about the convergence of the architectures. We've seen compute, storage and networking come together for hyper-converged and I think, SASE, we're starting to bring security into that layer and really hyper-converged including security now.

But selection is hard. I can think of a dozen just if I just sat here, I just started naming vendors, I could think of a dozen right off the top of my head, they are all really hard marketing, as I call it marketecture around SASE. And I think a lot of them are very credible, very capable. And so I'm certainly not asking you to give me the Cisco commercial, but I kind of would love to know what you're talking

to these CIOs and CISOs about when they're thinking about the criteria, because you guys are obviously putting a lot of thought into, how you're developing your products, how you're going to market with them, what are you talking to these execs about? What are they supposed to be thinking about when they're basically saying this is the right SASE solution for our organization?

Raviv Levi: Yeah. And this space is so hot right now from different segments, different markets, everyone is really coming at SASE and there's a list of 30 or more vendors that if you go and ask to each and every one of them individually, they have invented SASE. So, it's yeah, I get it. It's really confusing. It's really difficult to understand what should be our next step here from the customer side.

I have two pieces of advice that I usually give our customers. And here at Cisco, we're really obsessed with our customers and their success. So, you will not find me mention or advertise Cisco as part of those two pieces of advice. The first one is, understand where you're at now and what your needs are. Maybe you don't need to go fully into the cloud right now, if you're not comfortable with that. Maybe it would be best for you to transition your remote workforce to cloud solution, because then you have a worldwide cloud edge and you can connect very easily, everyone can connect very easily, but your more complicated campus deployment that would take a couple more years. So, have a very good understanding of what you're comfortable with right now. Don't let vendors push you completely outside of your comfort zone. A little bit is okay. This is a transition, we have to acknowledge that, but not too much. We still have to deliver on the business.

The second thing is, understand where do you want to get to? So, where we're at now and where do you want to get to in three years, in four years and craft your partnership and choose your vendor according to their ability and their vision when it comes to debt points. Because once you go in SASE, you don't really want to switch different vendor, different service every other year. You want to build towards something. You want to partner with someone that sees the evolution in a way that is similar to your seeing that and you want to grow with them.

Daniel Newman: So, it's a little bit like a control plane kind of, right? You're not going to want to just keep switching it around.

Raviv Levi: Exactly.

Daniel Newman: So, you kind of hit it from the start and these are really probably good advisory notes for anybody, Raviv, that's investing in tech, right? Kind of understanding the current landscape, what they're trying to accomplish, finding the partner that understands that, don't get overridden or don't let your eyes get bigger than your stomach proverbially. Grow... you want something scalable. You actually had some great notes, I reviewed some of your notes and looked at some of the things you said and you kind of had a top five tips. So, to kind of wrap this up, I'm going to read these off, I'm just say, do you agree still with this?

But you said one, look for a complete integrated SASE architecture. I'm guessing with 30 vendors, not all are created equal, not all are necessarily as holistic in terms of the offering. Two, looking for flex consumption, I think I'm guessing you were alluding to that because of all the demand for cloud, I've seen your firm and of course many others are moving towards pay for use even for prem and cloud, it's becoming more popular. So, look for companies offering that. In that case three, know that not all clouds are created equal. So, just being in the cloud isn't the same. So, kind of understanding where workloads are going to reside and how each of these companies treat their offerings.

For efficacy, you specifically called out to point to the security efficacy. So, not just does it offer security, everything does, but does it offer the highest possible efficacy, meaning lowest breaches and highest tolerance for threat attempts, which are continually growing as you know, mostly because of us as users being very accessible because we're all doing things remotely.

Raviv Levi: Exactly.

Daniel Newman: And then I liked this one, Raviv, you put number five, you said, do SASE your way. You should almost spell that S-A-S-S-Y you know, be sassy, but that there's no one size fits all approach and I think that whether you're talking about digital transformation, cloud, application development, SASE and security, I think that's a pretty great piece of advice for every leader in IT and business that's making investments in making their company more innovative, technologically rich and agile.

Raviv Levi: Exactly. And thank you for listing those out, Daniel. It's been here at Cisco, I feel like I personally have been working on SASE for the last three and a half years, but even before the term was coined and I probably talked to 100s of customers about that. It's really about point A, point B and how do you get from point A to B.

Daniel Newman: Absolutely. And you know what? It seems like it would be an easy thing, but with so much tech and everything moving so quickly, that's how we filled up five days, Raviv and almost 50 sessions and Q&As on all these topics and because legitimately, we just kept expanding because there are so many topics and as companies are looking to transform their businesses, there's just a massive consideration.

But listen, I really appreciate you spending some time with me here at the Six Five Summit. Thanks giving us the information, not the 411, the information that everybody needed on SASE. We'll have to have you back. We'll have to be talking more. We're excited to continue to watch sort of how SASE develops. And of course, what solutions that Cisco roll out in this space. But thanks so much for joining me here at the Six Five Summit.

Raviv Levi: Absolutely. Thank you so much, Daniel. We're super excited about SASE. Hope to speak again soon. The team has a lot of exciting stuff coming up, so you won't be disappointed.

Daniel Newman: Hey, maybe next year I'll bring you back to drop news at our event. That would be a lot of-

Raviv Levi: Yeah.

Daniel Newman: ... fun. Absolutely. So, listen everybody, thanks so much for tuning into this session. We really enjoyed having you here. Check out the rest of the day. You got a lot more sessions. We've got the rest of the week. If you haven't caught sessions on the days before, the days after, these will be available on demand. But for this time, for this session, for now, I've got to go say goodbye. Tune into the rest of the event, I'll see you later. Bye.