

Analyzing the Benefits of Cisco Intersight

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Executive Summary

Operating and managing complex IT environments, particularly hybrid clouds, becomes time-consuming and costly in light of the multiple vendor-specific tools and interfaces that are typically present. Organizations must deal with disjointed data, inconsistent and repeatable manually driven workflows, and a lack of tool integration to understand what is happening at the physical, virtual, and public cloud layers of their hybrid cloud environments.

By conducting in-depth interviews with Cisco customers spanning multiple industries and diverse IT environments, ESG validated ways organizations are improving the time, effort, and costs spent on IT operations and management tasks using the hybrid cloud management platform. We uncovered those customers benefited from Cisco Intersight due to:

- Less tool complexity.
- The breadth and depth of visibility it presented to IT.
- Automation, orchestration, and optimization capabilities.

ESG then extracted data from our interviews to illustrate specific examples of how customers experienced those benefits. We also found that each benefit category can help organizations to save time, effort, and expenses spent on completing IT operations and management tasks such as IT resource configuration, identification and resolution of service-affecting issues, and right-sizing IT resources for supporting, scaling, or optimizing workloads.

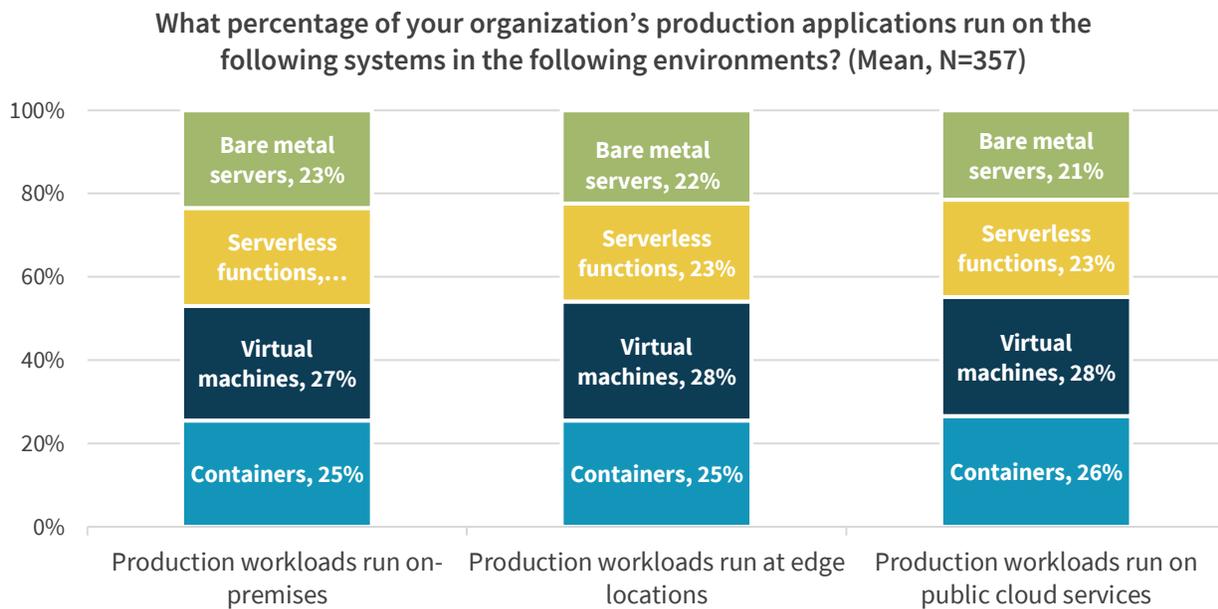
Introduction

This ESG Validation evaluated the qualitative benefits organizations can expect from using Cisco Intersight. We specifically examined how Cisco Intersight can help organizations increase business agility, decrease overall complexity, and reduce operational expenses.

Challenges

ESG research surveyed that 79% of respondents view their IT environments to be equally or more complex compared to two years ago.¹ This is no surprise, as current IT environments can span on-premises facilities, public clouds, and edge locations. Adding to this complexity is how organizations support production workloads. In another ESG survey, respondents revealed that they support workloads via multiple—bare-metal servers, virtual machines (VMs), containers, and serverless functions—whether they are located on-premises, in the public cloud, or at the edge (see Figure 1).²

Figure 1. Systems Supporting Production Workloads On-premises, in the Public Cloud, and at the Edge



Source: ESG, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

Organizations that manage hybrid clouds find that they must use multiple disjointed tools to configure the underlying infrastructure supporting workloads and manage these workloads on an ongoing basis. However, this leads to operational complexity. As service-affecting issues arise, IT operations teams have to gather and coordinate insights from multiple tools to pinpoint the root cause. This is especially true since separate tools are used to manage and monitor applications and the underlying infrastructure. Staff must resort to manual efforts to bridge events uncovered from both application and infrastructure perspectives. As a result, mean time to innocence (MTTI) and mean time to repair (MTTR) increase, preventing organizations from responding to business needs quickly and efficiently. More importantly, any time spent on identifying and resolving service-affecting issues leads to unwanted operational expense and potential business impact.

The Solution: Cisco Intersight

Cisco Intersight is a SaaS-based management platform that enables organizations to conduct IT operations, management, and administration tasks across hybrid cloud environments with one tool. Intersight has been designed to support the

¹ Source: ESG Complete Survey Results, [2022 Technology Spending Intentions Survey](#), November 2021.

² Source: ESG Complete Survey Results, [Observability from Code to Cloud](#), May 2022.

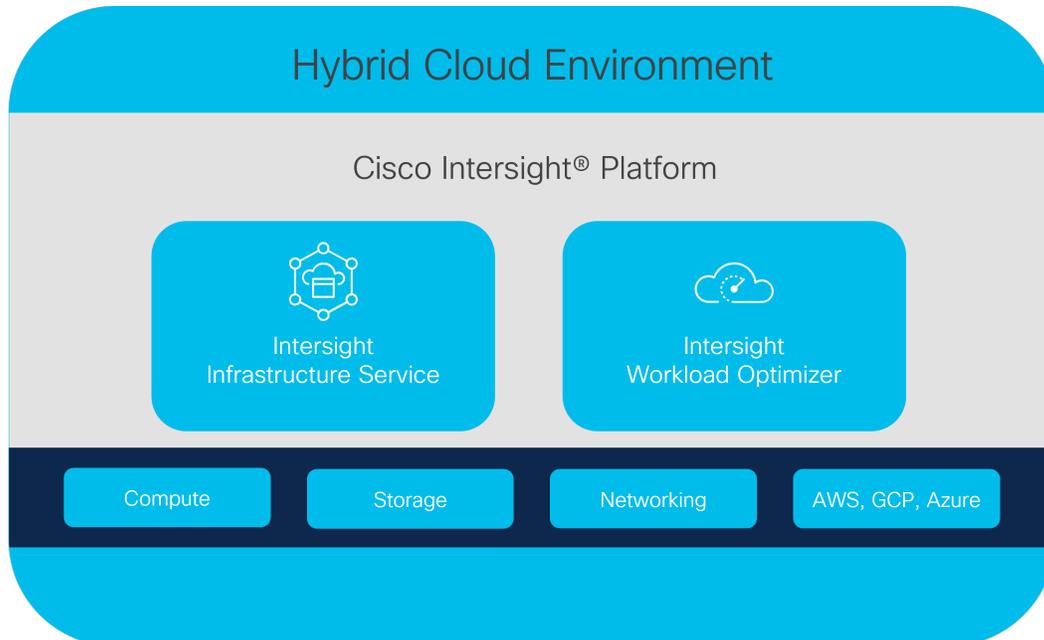
Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS), Cisco networking platforms, virtualization and container platforms, third-party servers and storage, public cloud platforms and services, and other integration endpoints. In addition, Intersight can simplify and automate tasks and workflows related to infrastructure configuration, deployment, upgrades, management, and visibility.

With Cisco Intersight, organizations can automatically provision servers, associated storage, and networking resources, regardless of form factor, using profiles and can consistently align policy, server personality, and workloads. These policies can be created once and used to simplify server deployments, resulting in improved productivity and compliance and a lower risk of failures due to inconsistent configuration or manual error. Cisco Intersight can also help organizations to automate lifecycle workflows (e.g., firmware and software upgrades) to reduce manual operations and decrease IT administration time while reducing the risk of mistakes.

Cisco Intersight also provides correlated visibility and management at both application and infrastructure layers, covering bare-metal servers, hypervisors, containers, serverless functions, and application components. By bridging insights uncovered at the application and infrastructure layers, organizations can manage their entire hybrid cloud environment via a single cloud-based or on-premises GUI that provides a consistent and common view of all occurring events. Organizations can then facilitate collaboration within and between teams with domain expertise—on-premises, cloud, storage, and applications. Both MTI and MTTR can decrease when service-affecting issues arise, thus helping to reduce operational expenses.

Cisco Intersight provides the following capabilities (see Figure 2):

Figure 2. Cisco Intersight



Source: ESG, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

- **Hybrid cloud infrastructure management with Intersight Infrastructure Service.** Aside from automatically provisioning servers, associated storage, and networking resources, organizations can manage and operate virtual machines (VMs) using consistent inventory and workflow frameworks. Customized workflows can be developed and automated using a low-code designer.

- **Workload and application optimization with Intersight Workload Optimizer.** Cisco Intersight enables organizations to understand the connections between application components and the underlying infrastructure—physical servers, hypervisors, Kubernetes clusters, and serverless component—on-premises, in the public cloud, or at the edge. Cisco has also designed Intersight with flexible, open capabilities so that organizations can natively integrate with third-party platforms and tools already deployed within an IT environment.

ESG Validation

ESG completed a qualitative analysis of Cisco Intersight via customer interviews. ESG's process is a proven method for understanding and validating the value propositions of a product or solution. The process leverages ESG's core competencies in market and industry analysis, forward-looking research, and technical/economic validation.

ESG spoke with end-users to better understand how Cisco Intersight has impacted their organizations, particularly in comparison with previously deployed and/or experienced solutions. Customers were operating Cisco-based IT environments—UCS converged infrastructure (CI) or hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI)—that varied in size and number of locations or sites managed. In some cases, customers also had workloads supported by third-party vendors or cloud service providers (CSPs).

Analysis Overview of Cisco Intersight

ESG's analysis revealed that Cisco Intersight provided its customers with significant savings and benefits in the following categories:

- **Less Tool Complexity** – Cisco Intersight customers reported no longer using multiple tools and reducing the tool-specific workflows required for deploying, managing, and monitoring their physical, virtual, and public cloud environments. Instead, they are using Cisco Intersight to leverage consistent IT operations and management workflows. Since Cisco Intersight is a SaaS-based system, organizations can gain access and visibility into new environments, eliminating the need to reference third-party management systems.
- **Correlated Visibility** – Cisco Intersight provides correlated visibility into the entire IT environment. Using the data collected and measured about IT components at the physical, virtual, and public cloud levels, organizations are uncovering, identifying, and resolving service-affecting issues with minimal manual intervention.
- **Automation and orchestration** – From the use of server profiles and policies for consistent hardware configuration to the creation and deployment of custom workflows for deploying workloads across hybrid cloud environments, Cisco Intersight helps organizations to automate and orchestrate operational and management tasks.

Based on customer interviews, ESG discovered that these features of Cisco Intersight helped organizations save time and reduce both capital and operational expenses.



Less Tool Complexity

ESG found that customers achieve time and costs savings by leveraging the consolidation of IT-related tasks into a single tool. Organizations can save both time and expenses related to daily IT operations based on the following factors:

- Decreased number of interfaces to access:** IT staff already knows the pain of dealing with multiple interfaces of tools for individual pieces of an organization’s IT architecture like hardware, VMs, containers, public cloud resources, etc. ESG found that accessing multiple tools to gather data for routine tasks, such as monitoring or issue resolution, wastes time and increases operational expenses unnecessarily. With Cisco Intersight, an organization can conduct its IT operations on multi-vendor environments in one place, as Cisco Intersight has been designed to consolidate multiple views of an organization’s infrastructure into a single view with data on IT infrastructure supplied by Cisco and third-party vendors (e.g., hypervisors, public cloud resources, container technology).

“A lot of times, you have to manually integrate APIs with different tools in order to see everything about the IT environment in one place. If you don’t get it right, you have to start over. I don’t need to worry about integration with Cisco Intersight.”

- Director of IT and Communications, regional medical center

“During those times that our company conducts mergers and acquisitions, we can quickly gain visibility into new IT environments via the cloud with Intersight. I can change our M&A process of onboarding these resources when required.”

- Global Director of Computing and Communications, US technology and engineering firm
- Consistent and repeatable workflows** – When dealing with multiple management tools, IT staff must learn different sets of workflows, then coordinate tasks between those workflows to accomplish tasks such as deploying or modifying IT resources for new workloads. It is also possible that coordinating tasks completed with multiple tools can lead to errors. With consistent and repeatable workflows offered by Cisco Intersight, IT teams can save time and decrease operational costs. Subsequently, organizations can accomplish business objectives with minimal delay.

“We used to have a 24 – 48-hour SLA with DevOps for deploying [compute] capacity. They had to open a case, and we had to go in there and use UCS Manager to bring the capacity up. With Intersight, we just turn over that task to DevOps. Time to deploy can be as short as eight minutes.”

- Distinguished Engineer, global technology conglomerate



Correlated Visibility

IT staff knows the pain of accessing multiple interfaces to gain full and comprehensive visibility into their IT environments. Yet, organizations also know that the time and effort spent on understanding, analyzing, and correlating data collected from every single management tool only delays how quickly IT staff can resolve any service-affecting issues. ESG found that Cisco Intersight customers experience time and cost savings by leveraging the platform’s correlated visibility into IT environments. Based on our interviews, ESG found that Cisco Intersight provides a breadth and depth of visibility that helps organizations in the following areas:

“Intersight allowed us to quickly find a problem that would have taken us months to troubleshoot without the visibility that Intersight provides.”

- Director of IT and Communications, regional medical center

- Allows for smarter allocation and purchase of IT resources needed to satisfy business needs** – When lines of business request IT resources to support new workloads or refresh existing resources to accommodate a change in business requirements, customers cited that they may not have the right information to make an educated request. From the IT staff’s point of view, any new request for additional resources always translates into additional expenses. With Cisco Intersight, IT staff can view current consumption of resources for each workload and determine if the requests are valid. Customers cited that this is especially important as supply chain issues persist and the risk of further inflation continues, leading to higher prices. For organizations today, it is critical to monitor what is exactly being consumed so that capital expenses (or operational expenses in the case of public cloud resources) are controlled.

“End-users would ask for CPU, memory, or storage based on the hardware manufacturer or software company they are dealing with. Cisco Intersight has enabled us to view the actual consumption and educate our end-users on what is actually needed to support their workloads.”

 - Global Director of Computing and Communications, American technology and engineering firm
- Provides a common understanding to all IT staff** – When service-affecting issues arise, obtaining a common view of exactly what is actually occurring requires time. This is especially true when separate groups are responsible for distinct parts of the physical and virtual IT infrastructure. Time is spent on drilling down to the actual issue based on disparate data obtained from separate tools associated with individual components of the underlying IT environment. Cisco Intersight provides a level of correlated visibility that can enable IT staff to understand where actual issues have arisen so that the right actions are taken. Mean time to innocence and mean time to repair decrease, which directly translate into less downtime.

“With Cisco Intersight, I can now see information that I did not have before. It is one of the first places that we go to when we have performance issues or if a tech upgrade is requested.”

 - Director of IT, state governmental agency

“Intersight gave us a topology of the environment in which an issue arose. After pulling in multiple different teams—server, storage, networking, database—we pinpointed the cause. Intersight acts as our Rosetta Stone to facilitate communication between different groups.”

 - Global Director of Computing and Communications, US technology and engineering firm



Automation and Orchestration

Conducting routine IT tasks, such as configuration and deployment of IT resources and ongoing monitoring, can consume time and resources that organizations would rather spend on other work that adds value to the business. By leveraging the automation and orchestration capabilities of Cisco Intersight, organizations can drive more efficiency into IT operations and management tasks. IT staff can focus more time on work that helps to achieve business objectives apart from decreasing management and administration time and expenses. Based on ESG’s interviews, we found that Cisco’s automation and orchestration capabilities help the organization’s bottom line by:

- Helping IT staff to be more proactive** – While ESG found that customers could decrease the time to solve service-affecting issues, they also mentioned that the level of automation plays a role in detecting potential problems before they affect end-users. Many cited that Cisco Intersight automatically monitors the ongoing health of deployed hardware and alerts IT staff when reaching a critical level. Because this monitoring activity was automated, organizations can proactively submit a trouble ticket to the Cisco Technical Assistance Center (TAC) so that support engineers can access log files and other information to recommend next steps. IT staff can catch any potential trouble before creating any downtime for end-users. Other customers cited the automation and orchestration for rightsizing VM-based workloads. They found that they could be proactive in maximizing IT resource utilization, thus helping to minimize capital expenses.

“You know that you are being proactive when an engineer replaces a hard drive that was displaying anomalies before it fails and causes problems downstream.”

 - **Distinguished Engineer, global technology conglomerate**
- Prioritizing value-added work** – Because Cisco Intersight automates and orchestrates routine IT tasks, customers cited that they could focus more on those activities that add value directly to end-users, such as developing and installing applications to help in running the business or improving the level of service that organizations provide. According to the customers interviewed, we found that Cisco’s automation and orchestration of routine IT tasks, such as ongoing infrastructure monitoring, helped in drastically reducing time spent on those tasks, which can lead to decreased operational expenses. Some customer feedback also suggested that the automation and orchestration helped in retaining IT employees and promoting job satisfaction. While IT staff knows all too well the typical break-fix tasks that arise, no one wants their job to focus on that type of work.

“Technologies such as Intersight have reduced the weight of the routine deployment and monitoring tasks so that we can focus on the work that helps our business.”

“I believe that Intersight gives our employees a higher level of satisfaction from their job and helps us with our employee retention.”

 - **Director of IT and Communications, regional medical center**



Why This Matters

IT organizations are used to dealing with multiple tools and interfaces when managing and monitoring their hybrid cloud environments. However, the lack of integration does not provide a level of observability that can minimize time for IT operations and management tasks such as configuration of IT resources, problem resolution, and workload optimization.

ESG validated via customer interviews that Cisco Intersight can help organizations decrease the time and effort spent on routine IT tasks, resulting in reduced capital and operational expenses. Because Cisco Intersight provided less tool complexity, customers spent less time on switching between multiple tools to gather data from the application and infrastructure layers of their environments. The breadth and depth of visibility supplied by Cisco Intersight helped customers make smarter decisions about the IT environment, such as when IT resource purchases are warranted or how to proceed with resolving service-affecting issues. We also found that the automation and orchestration capabilities of Cisco Intersight helped in saving time and expenses when conducting routine IT operations and management tasks.

The Bigger Truth

As organizations' IT environments remain complex, management tools must facilitate overall observability to ensure maximum uptime so that business objectives are continually met. Organizations want observability and monitoring strategies that provide insights into application and/or infrastructure environments to ensure that service-level agreements and performance commitments are met (48%); application and/or infrastructure environments to assist with tracing, accelerated fault isolation, root cause analysis, and resolution (48%); application and/or infrastructure environments to automate operations (35%); and resource cost attribution and cost optimization (34%).³ However, the number of tools typically used are disjointed, providing only one perspective of current IT events. Coordinating data collected from multiple tools to perform IT operations and management tasks wastes time and can incur capital and operations expenses unnecessarily.

With Cisco Intersight, ESG validated that organizations can save time and costs related to IT operations and management tasks by leveraging the platform's simplicity, the breadth and depth of the visibility into hybrid cloud environments, and the automation and orchestration capabilities used for completing routine IT tasks. With Cisco Intersight's single interface, ESG uncovered that organizations can reference one set of views and data at multiple levels of the IT infrastructure to obtain correlated visibility into the IT environment. The correlated visibility can help organizations detect and resolve service-affecting issues while minimizing downtime. In some cases, we learned that organizations can be proactive and resolve potential service-affecting issues without incurring any unnecessary downtime. ESG also uncovered that Cisco Intersight could automate and orchestrate tasks and workflows so that more value-add work could be completed. Dealing with IT-related issues on a daily basis was no longer a bottleneck. With Cisco Intersight, customers reported that they all reduced time spent on operating and managing their hybrid cloud infrastructure.

Based on customer interviews, spanning a variety of verticals, ESG believes that Cisco Intersight can help organizations improve their management and monitoring of hybrid cloud environments, thus reducing overall expenses. With that in mind, organizations that seek to drive efficiencies with IT operations and management should consider Cisco Intersight.

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