FAQ for Cisco Spark service

What is the Cisco Spark service?

Cisco Spark is a complete business collaboration service from the Cisco cloud that enables you to message, meet, or call anyone, anywhere, and anytime. Cisco Spark is hosted by Cisco and sold by Cisco Certified Partners.

What are the core components of the Cisco Spark service?

The service is a simple, secure, and complete communications and collaboration service.
It has three core capability sets:

Message: The Spark messaging application is central to the Cisco Spark service experience, providing an unmatched mobile-first experience. Unlimited business messaging lets you prepare, share, and iterate on content together, with teams. Enjoy 1:1 and group messaging in virtual rooms with persistent content and context for team interactions.

Meeting: Connect teams and meet customers easily with the added benefits of before, during, and after-meeting messaging and content sharing. It's easy to schedule or join a meeting at a main office, a branch office, at home, on the road, or from a room-based video system. Every meeting can have audio, web, and video conferencing capabilities. Users shouldn't have to think about what type of conferencing, they should just be able to meet.

Call: The service enables voice and video communications via mobile, desktop, and room-based devices. Simply connect your existing PSTN[1] services to Spark to enjoy one-touch directory dialing and join meetings from anywhere on any device. Mobile users get features such as single number reach, single voicemail service, video services, and the ability to seamlessly move between devices during a call.

1.The Cisco Spark service doesn't include PSTN services. Customers need to purchase PSTN services from a 3rd party provider. For the complete Spark service, Cisco preferred media provider ecosystem partners can provide PSTN local, long-distance, and direct-inward-dial services. Existing Cisco UC customers will use Spark Hybrid Services to connect on-premises call capabilities to Cisco Spark capabilities in the cloud.

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What is different about the Cisco Spark service?

The innovative cloud platform, app-centric design, and hybrid architecture of the Cisco Spark service create what we believe is a very powerful and differentiated offering in this space. Cisco has the unique advantage of having the most complete collaboration portfolio in the market spanning premise and cloud infrastructure as well as award winning clients, apps, and endpoints for virtually every end-user situation, or way people communicate. The Spark service leverages Cisco's extensive heritage, knowledge, and experience in network security, our market leadership in communications, and the cloud. We have built upon this, and believe three things will differentiate the Cisco Spark service in the market:

- It's Simple – Cisco Spark is delivered entirely from the Cisco cloud and each element has been designed to ensure the user and the administrator's experience is simple and intuitive. This makes the service easy to use and easy to manage. The service is provided on a simple subscription basis, allowing services to be added on demand.
- It's Secure – Security is integral to Cisco Spark. Cisco has used the extensive experience gained from securing the world's largest networks to build the service and combined this knowledge with the hardware and the software elements of our market leading enterprise communications and cloud services. This ensures the security and the reliability of the service.
- It's Complete – With Cisco Spark you get all the best Cisco collaboration services wrapped up in a complete service providing users a great experience regardless of location or device – enabling them to call, message, and meet with anyone, anywhere, anytime. Also because Cisco hosts the service in our cloud, all the services are always up to date with the latest market leading Cisco applications and services.

What does the Cisco Spark service help me do?

Cisco Spark simply enables better communication.
The top three areas of impact we see are:

- Personal productivity – Spark helps to unify all the ways people work together. The service can be used from any device, anywhere, with video everywhere. Being an app-centric service it is a delightful experience.
- Team agility – Spark has been designed to promote effective teamwork, with messaging, file sharing, and providing teams somewhere virtual to meet. It also makes meeting more productive with a complete meeting lifecycle approach, with tools for before, during, and after meetings.
- Business acceleration – The Spark service provides a platform for innovation and growth. It helps connect and engage employees, while helping control cost; without compromise.

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What are some of the unique experiences I will get with the Cisco Spark service?

- Cloud registered devices – The new Spark Phone and Room OS (Operating Systems) allow for phones and room video endpoints to be easily registered to the Cisco cloud. All you need to do is enter a simple activation code or scan a QR code and the device is registered and ready to use; in a matter of minutes.
- Simple escalations – The integrated messaging, meeting, and calling service enables simple click to call and click to meet capabilities from multiple points within the Cisco Spark messaging app. A WebEx meeting or setting up a virtual meeting room is also just a click away.
- Easy device and phone pairing and control – Initiate, answer or transfer calls between the Cisco Spark application and your desktop phone or video unit. Amplify team collaboration across physical and virtual spaces by pairing the app with the video unit to share content in conference rooms.
- App-centric service – Cisco has uniquely positioned the messaging app as the central way to access the service. This ensures a unified solution for both team and personal communications across any message, meeting, or call.

Is Cisco Spark for me, now?

The service is particularly attractive to customers who are at one of three communications crossroads:

- Collaboration ready – Anyone who is looking for the benefits of agile and collaborative working and has existing Call Control from Cisco (e.g. Cisco Unified Communications Manager, Cisco Business Edition, or Cisco Powered HCS service), can add Message & Meeting capabilities to enable their teams and individuals to work smarter, together.
- Key system or PBX replacement – When replacing a legacy communication system the Cisco Spark service helps to replace disjointed experiences and scalability challenges. It could also be your last ever upgrade!
- Ad-hoc Voice Solution – For anyone starting to outgrow their 'best effort / DIY' communications, the Cisco Spark service provides all of the tools needed, simply and securely from the cloud.

I am considering an on – premise Business Edition/Unified Communications Manager deployment – What about me?

We believe in customer choice. You may prefer to host and manage the call control capabilities of the service yourself. We provide this flexibility through the Spark Hybrid Services. The complete Cisco Spark service (including the calling capabilities has been designed for organizations that are looking for the flexibility of cloud for management and scale and who prefer a per-user, per-month subscription model to an upfront capital investment in infrastructure). Cisco Spark is a stronger fit where a customer's IT resources may already be stretched, or have enough time to manage a UC infrastructure.

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What are the Hybrid capabilities – How does this help me as an existing customer?

If you have purchased or are considering purchasing one of Cisco's Unified Communications platforms, you have the benefit of using the technologies that have been designed into our Cisco Collaboration Cloud. Our Hybrid Services are a set of services that connect on premise capabilities to Cisco Spark capabilities in the cloud. These Hybrid Services today include Call Services, Calendar Service, and Directory Service—with additional Hybrid Services planned in future releases.

What about the existing Cisco Spark app I have seen already/use?

Cisco is extending our app-centric, mobile-first thinking and expanding Cisco Spark from a team collaboration app to Cisco Spark – a far more complete, integrated service offering that encompasses messaging, meetings, and calling all from the Cisco Collaboration Cloud... simply known as Cisco Spark. The free Cisco Spark team collaboration app will continue to be available. Additionally, for ease of use, the user experience has also been extended and will be the primary interface for the newly added call and meeting functionality of the Cisco Spark service.

Which Cisco phone endpoints work with the Cisco Spark service?

At launch, this cloud offering will support calling from within the Cisco Spark application as well as Cisco 7800 and 8800 series desk phones*. These endpoints will all be equipped with the latest Spark Phone OS software to enable simple cloud registration of endpoints. * 8831 support coming soon

Which Cisco video endpoints work with the Spark meeting service?

Cisco video meeting rooms as a service currently work with Cisco TelePresence SX10. Additional endpoints will be equipped with Spark Phone and Room OS (Operating System) cloud registration functionality soon. Spark meeting functionality delivered by WebEx support any SIP or H323-based video endpoint including Cisco DX, MX, SX, IX, 7800, 8800, Cisco Jabber, or any 3rd party SIP or H.323 capable endpoint including Lync interop.

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When is the Cisco Spark service available?

Cisco announced the intent to deliver a complete Collaboration as a Service (CaaS) offering. The new service, Cisco Spark, will deliver unified messaging, meeting, and calling capabilities that are hosted in the Cisco Collaboration Cloud and delivered by Cisco Certified Partners. Cisco has not yet announced general availability, orderability, or any specific dates associated with the service. Stay tuned for more updates.....

Download the latest version of the Free Cisco Spark App, and start seeing the benefits today

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