

# Cisco Live! Melbourne 2011

NUUG Travel Grant



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## Preface

I'm a student of Information Technology at Bergen University College. My main field of interest is in computer networking, which is the reason as to why I wanted to attend a Cisco-conference. They have several, which are held all around the world. I ended up with Cisco Live!, which, in my case, was held in Melbourne, Australia, from Tuesday 29th of March, till Friday 1st of April. Previous years it was called Cisco Networkers, but they've rebranded it, since it now also includes programs for IT management and service providers.

## Getting there

I ordered the plane tickets through a travel agency called STA, as they turned out to be the cheapest (and they also fix the required VISA for you, which is kinda nice – not that it's hard to do by yourself, but sometimes it's okay to let other people do the paperwork (-: ).

The trip down required three flights, one with Lufthansa (Oslo–Frankfurt), and two with Etihad Airways (Frankfurt–Abu Dhabi–Melbourne), a total of around 28 hours from departing Oslo, till arriving in Melbourne (22 hours in-air).

## Arrival

My plane landed in Melbourne on Thursday 24th of March at around 19:00 in the evening. This was a few days before the conference started, but I wanted to have a few days extra days as a tourist in the city (and just to clarify; I of course had to pay the extra nights at the hotel myself – which, by the way, was well worth it).

I took the airport shuttle bus, that took me downtown to Southern Cross Station. From there it was a short 5-minute walk to my hotel, Pensione Hotel.

The very same weekend I arrived, Formula 1 Quantas Australian Grand Prix 2011 was held, which caused the city to be more lively than usual.

After the weekend, I went to MCEC, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, which is where the conference was going to take place. I got registered, and picked up my badge and accessories (like printed schedule for the entire conference, detailed maps of the conference-area, etc).



**Figure 1: MCEC** - The building where the conference was held.



**Figure 2: Registration** - Where I got my badge and accessories.

## Day 1 – Tuesday 29th of March

The conference consisted of two parts; the technical seminar, and the rest. Since I had a full conference pass, I also attended the technical seminar, which took place the day before the "official opening" of the conference (the majority of the people at the conference didn't attend the technical seminar).

The technical seminar lasted the whole day, from 09:00 in the morning, till 18:00 in the evening. There were many topics one could choose from, and I decided to attend the "CCIE Routing & Switching"-topic<sup>12</sup>, which covered all you needed to know about the Cisco-certification with the same name. It was held by Bruce Pinsky and Bruno van de Werve, and they went through all the topics of the exam, how to prepare for the exam, and things like that. They also used the opportunity to kill some myths regarding the exam – for example, during the practical exam, they don't mess around with the cables in your rack while you're eating lunch (which I actually believed up till this point).



**Figure 3: Technical seminar** - Where I attended the technical seminar.

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<sup>1</sup>"CCIE Routing & Switching"-slides without notes

<sup>2</sup>"CCIE Routing & Switching"-slides with notes



## Day 2 – Wednesday 30th of March

This was the first "normal" day of the conference, where all parts of the conference was open. It started of with a keynote, opened by Les Williamson (Vice President, Cisco Australia and New Zealand), and handed over to Padmasree Warrior (Chief Technology Officer, Cisco). She talked about the future of the next internet, and how Cisco sees themselves in that future.



**Figure 4: Keynote** - Opening keynote with Padmasree Warrior.

Throughout the conference, there was about 130 different breakout sessions to choose between. Before arriving, I had already chosen the different sessions I wanted to attend. You could change during the conference, but some of the sessions where pretty popular, and hence some of them was fully booked.

The first breakout session I attended, was "IP Multicast - Concepts, Design and Troubleshooting", a 120 minute introduction to multicasting. Topics of the session was fundamental multicast concepts, such as addressing, host-router signalling (IGMP), multicast routing protocols (such as PIM-SM), and interdomain multicast routing. It

was held by Cameron Dry, a Systems Engineer in Cisco.

The second breakout session, was "Cisco Switching Platforms - Deployment Case Studies", a 90 minute introduction to the fundamental functions of switches, and how they are applied in different networks (such as campuses and data centers). It was held by Simon King, a Systems Engineer in Cisco.

At the end of the day, World of Solutions opened. In-between the keynotes, breakout sessions, and lunch/tea, this was the place to be. Cisco-partners had stands to present their company and products all over the place, and you could walk around and take a look at their hardware or software, try it out, or discuss things with their experts. Most of the stands also had lots of competitions, where you could win iPad 2's, etc, which made it even more interesting to spend time at different stands.



**Figure 5: World of Solutions** - A tiny part of the enormous World of Solutions-area.

## Day 3 – Thursday 31st of March

First session of the day was "WAN Architectures and Design Principles", a 120 minute study of best practices when it comes to WAN design and borderless network architec-

ture in mid-size and enterprise organizations. It was held by Stephen Lynn, a Consulting Systems Engineer in Cisco.

The second session of the day, was "Understanding and Preventing Layer 2 Attacks", a 120 minute study of network security issues surrounding layer 2. It was held by Troy Sherman, a technical leader in engineering at Cisco. He talked about different aspects of security issues at layer 2, and how to prevent, or at least mitigate, attacks at this layer in your network. ARP-spoofing, MAC flooding, VLAN hopping DHCP-attacks and STP-concerns was just some of the topics during this session. For each topic, he also came with suggestions as to how one should proceed to stop, or mitigate, the issues. Some of the solutions was very Cisco-specific, but other vendors has similar solutions or implementations. This was by far the most interesting session I attended during the conference – and not just because of the topic itself, but because Troy was an outstanding presenter, and kept it very lively throughout the two hours he spent on the topic.

The third, and last, session of the day, was "Multilayer Campus Architectures & Design Principles", a 120 minute study of best practice for deploying the "Cisco Multilayer Campus Model" with an emphasis on high availability. It was held by Rolando Salinas, a Technical Marketing Engineer in Cisco.

At the end of the day, in the evening, Cisco threw a huge party (they actually call it a "Customer Appreciation Event", but it's a party (-: ). It was free beer and drinks for everyone (and they didn't run out!). They even had a real bar with bartenders putting on a show (with fire!). Free food (all sort of food – burgers, pizza, sushi, noodles, fish, BBQ, etc). Free candy, ice, popcorn, chips, nuts, etc. They also had a lot of different things to do while eating and drinking; bumper cars, massage, pinball-machines, car-simulators on big screens, etc (all of which where free, of course). They rounded it all of with a live concert performed by the Hoodoo Gurus, a well-known, Australian rock band.





**Figure 6: Customer Appreciation Event** - Lots of people attended the event.



**Figure 7: Customer Appreciation Event** - The Hoodoo Gurus performing live.



## Day 4 – Friday 1st of May

The last day of the conference started of with a keynote held by Todd Sampson, the co-founder of Earth Hour. After the keynote, which was somewhat the official "goodbye, see you next year"-event, people found their way to the World of Solutions, where big prizes where to be handed out. During the entire conference, attendees had collected points by getting their badge scanned at the stands and breakout sessions, and if you had collected enough, you where eligible to win large prizes, including iPad2's, MacBook Air, etc. No prize for me, though.

Last session of the day was "Troubleshooting LAN Switches and Protocols", a 120 minute study of troubleshooting different switches and protocols – more specifically VTP, trunking, channeling, STP, and STP enhancements. It was held by Andrew Babakhan, a Cisco Support Engineer.

## Conclusion

This was my first time attending such a big conference, and I must say it was quite fun, and at the same time I learned a lot (which often doesn't come hand-in-hand). The conference gives a insight to a lot of new technology – both hardware and software, and gives people an overview of best practice in different fields of networking. Also, the conference gave a lot of useful knowledge, directly related to my studies, and at the same time, knowledge that is relevant to when I start working after my studies. The best experience throughout the conference was, by far, the breakout session about layer 2 security, held by Troy Sherman. If you ever have the opportunity to attend a session with him, don't hesitate! I also really enjoyed the multicast-session with Cameron Dry. Last, but definitely not least, I'd like to give a huge thanks to NUUG, which gave me the opportunity to attend this conference through their travel grant for students. I couldn't have done this without their support! Thanks!