Introduction

QoS is a maturing technology, one that many networking professionals, to a greater or lesser extent, are already familiar with. This is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because more administrators are enabling QoS on their networks, which allows for the convergence of voice, video, and data onto a single IP network, among other business advantages. It is a curse because almost every individual with whom I've ever discussed QoS designs has a slightly different opinion on how QoS should be enabled.

The result often has led to confusing babble from the customer's perspective, especially for customers seeking QoS design guidance for non-VoIP applications. For example, a customer might ask the local Cisco Systems engineer how best to enable QoS for networks and receive one answer. Later, the customer might attend an Executive Briefing session in San Jose and receive a different answer (even receiving multiple different answers within the same day from different presenters). Later, while attending a Networkers conference, the customer might be told something else entirely. Finally, when the customer gets home and picks up a Cisco Press book, he or she might get still another story. Confused and frustrated, many customers decide to enable minimal QoS, if any, despite the touted benefits that they were sold on. Therefore, in my opinion, presenting such inconsistent recommendations is a major disservice to our customers and a considerable barrier to the widespread deployment of QoS.

The Cisco Technology Baseline committees were created to remedy the situation and help unify various technologies across Cisco products and platforms. To this end, a series of Technology Baselines were developed internally by our leading experts (many of whom likewise developed the related IETF RFCs and other standards) to which all Cisco products and features must conform. Additionally, these documents provide uniform, strategic recommendations (that can be shared with customers) to help ensure that QoS recommendations are unified and consistent, for both enterprises and service providers. Specific to QoS, the QoS Baseline strictly defines the Cisco strategic direction in QoS technologies from