



NEWS RELEASE

Cisco Report: Strategic Wireless Investments are Driving Higher ROI for Enterprises in the AI Era

2026-04-02

News summary:

- **Wi-Fi Investment Momentum:** Driven by the rise of AI, IoT, and high-bandwidth applications, four out of five organizations increased wireless investment in the past five years, with a similar number forecasting continued budget increases.
- **The Multiplier Effect:** Strategic wireless investment drives business value, with more than two-thirds of organizations reporting positive revenue impacts, and three quarters experiencing enhanced customer engagements and seeing efficiency gains.
- **The Wireless AI Paradox:** Organizations that can successfully navigate challenges posed by AI (complexity, security and talent) are reaping the rewards with greater wireless ROI.
- **The Automation Imperative:** AI-driven operations can help reclaim 850+ hours per IT practitioner annually, shifting teams from reactive "ticket cycles" to high-value strategic initiatives.

SAN JOSE, Calif., April 2, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Cisco today released its inaugural [State of Wireless Report](#), revealing that Wi-Fi has evolved into a strategic growth engine capable of delivering a multiplier effect—where a single network investment drives compounding returns across employee productivity, customer engagement, and revenue. Based on a survey of over 6,000 global wireless professionals, the report underscores that as organizations reach an inflection point in connectivity demand, those who prioritize wireless strategically are achieving significantly higher business value than their peers.

This business value is governed by the "wireless AI paradox": while AI is a primary driver of wireless ROI, it may also fuel operational complexity and security risks. Whether this dynamic becomes a barrier or a competitive advantage depends on how organizations navigate it. The report provides a strategic roadmap—integrating AI-driven automation, modern security, and specialized expertise—to help address these potential challenges. By taking this holistic approach, the report suggests, organizations are four times more likely to achieve strong returns, turning their wireless infrastructure into a powerful competitive edge.

Modern wireless drives better outcomes for customers, operations, employees, and revenue

The rise of the Internet of Things, AI workloads, and high-bandwidth applications like 4K/8K streaming and AR/VR are now the primary drivers for wireless modernization. As organizations adapt to these demands alongside shifting workplace trends like hot desking and BYOD, they are significantly increasing their wireless budgets:

- **80%** increased spending over the last five years
- **29%** increased budgets by 50% or more over those five years
- **82%** forecast continued budget increases over the next 4-5 years
- **35%** expect to increase budgets by 50% or more over this time

Those already modernizing are experiencing a multiplier effect—where an investment in wireless generates multiple positive business outcomes:

- **78%** report operational efficiency gains
- **75%** see employee productivity improvements
- **75%** observe enhanced customer engagement
- **68%** experience positive revenue impacts from wireless investments

"The enterprise workforce is evolving into blended teams of humans, AI agents, and automated systems, all operating together at machine speed. Wi-Fi is the foundation that makes that possible, connecting every endpoint, protecting every interaction, and unlocking the operational insights that drive smarter decisions across the business," said Anurag Dhingra, SVP & GM, Enterprise Connectivity & Collaboration, Cisco. "AI is both the biggest opportunity and the biggest test for enterprise networks right now."

The survey shows organizations are accelerating the refresh of wireless networks, with an increasing percentage of respondents planning to upgrade to the 6GHz spectrum. Nearly three in five organizations report plans to deploy Wi-Fi 6E or Wi-Fi 7 in the next year for modernized connectivity.

The Wireless AI Paradox

While AI drives innovation, it introduces three interconnected areas that—when successfully navigated—make organizations four times more likely to achieve wireless ROI (4:1 or higher). To harness this competitive advantage, organizations should consider prioritizing:

Reducing operational complexity: With nearly all organizations (98%) reporting rising wireless complexity, many teams are trapped in a reactive cycle that drains resources, diverts resources away from strategic work, and undermines AI initiatives. To manage this, more than four surveyed organizations prefer a fully or mostly automated wireless network powered by AI-driven operations. This approach is proven: 98% of those already using AI automation report substantial gains, saving an average of 3 hours and 20 minutes per person, per day.

Mitigating wireless security risks: AI-generated security incidents are a leading driver of increased wireless security risk. Over half of organizations report financial losses from wireless security incidents, with half of them exceeding US\$1 million annually. Over a third of affected organizations point to compromised Internet of Things (IoT) or Operational Technology (OT) devices as the culprits.

Addressing competition for wireless personnel: A significant personnel shortage is amplifying operational challenges. Nearly nine in ten wireless leaders are struggling to hire qualified professionals, citing increasing talent movement to roles in areas like AI and cybersecurity. This talent gap is costly: organizations facing more significant hiring difficulties are more likely to incur security incident costs that are 70% higher annually than those with no recruitment challenges.

About the Cisco State of Wireless Report

The Cisco State of Wireless Report is an inaugural global study based on interviews with 6,098 wireless decision-makers and technical specialists in organizations with at least 250 employees across 30 markets and a range of industries. Research was conducted by Sandpiper Research & Insights.

Additional Resources:

- Join Cisco on Thursday, April 2 at 9 a.m. PT for a [LinkedIn Live event](#) to learn more about the State of Wireless Report
- Download the [2026 State of Wireless Global Report](#)
- Visit the [Cisco State of Wireless Report Landing Page](#)
- Cisco's Executive Blog: [The Multiplier Effect: Solving the AI Paradox in 2026](#)
- Cisco's Networking Blog: [Breaking the wireless AI paradox: Turning challenges into competitive advantage](#)

About Cisco

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