How to get most out of your support contracts

(Because you've paid for it...)

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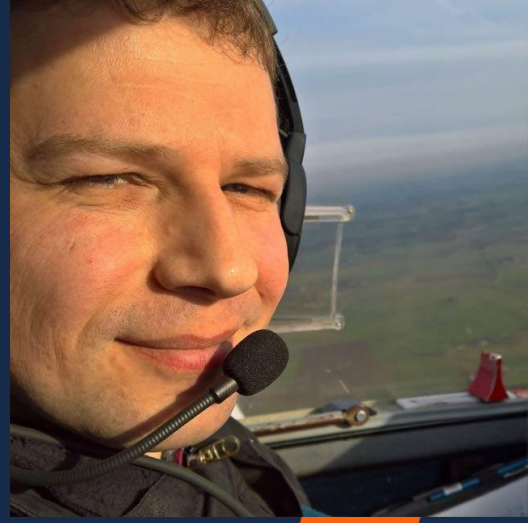
Introduction

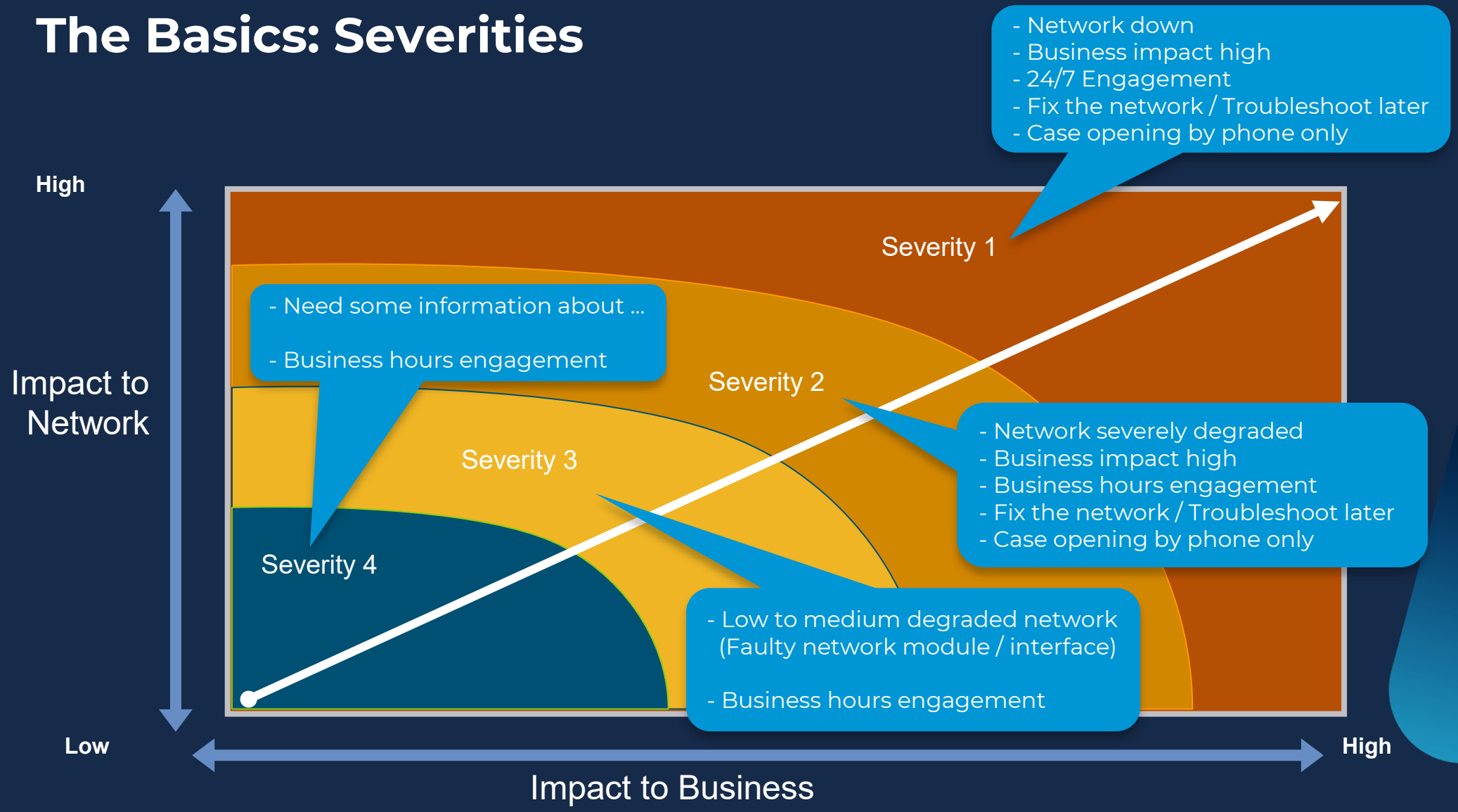


- Technical Solution Architect - Benelux @ Comstor
- 20 Years experience working on network designs and architecture roadmaps
- Supporting Cisco Partners (from freelancers up to Cisco Global Gold Partners & ISPs)
- Training instructor
- Aviation / Space Geek (Private Pilot - PPL)

Disclaimer

- 20 Years experience working with Cisco
  (My point of view)
- Other vendors too (Riverbed, Packeteer, NetAsq, Panduit, APC)
- Most is applicable to other vendors too (Pick your favorite)
  - HPE / Aruba / Juniper
  - Arista
  - Extreme
  - Dell
  - Etc.
- Opinion is that of my **own**

The Basics: Severities



Cisco TAC Resource Guide:

https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/support/web/tac/technical-services-resource-guide.html

Support Case Escalation

- Even a TAC support engineer can have an off-day
- **Call** Cisco TAC and ask for the **Duty Manager** to escalate your case

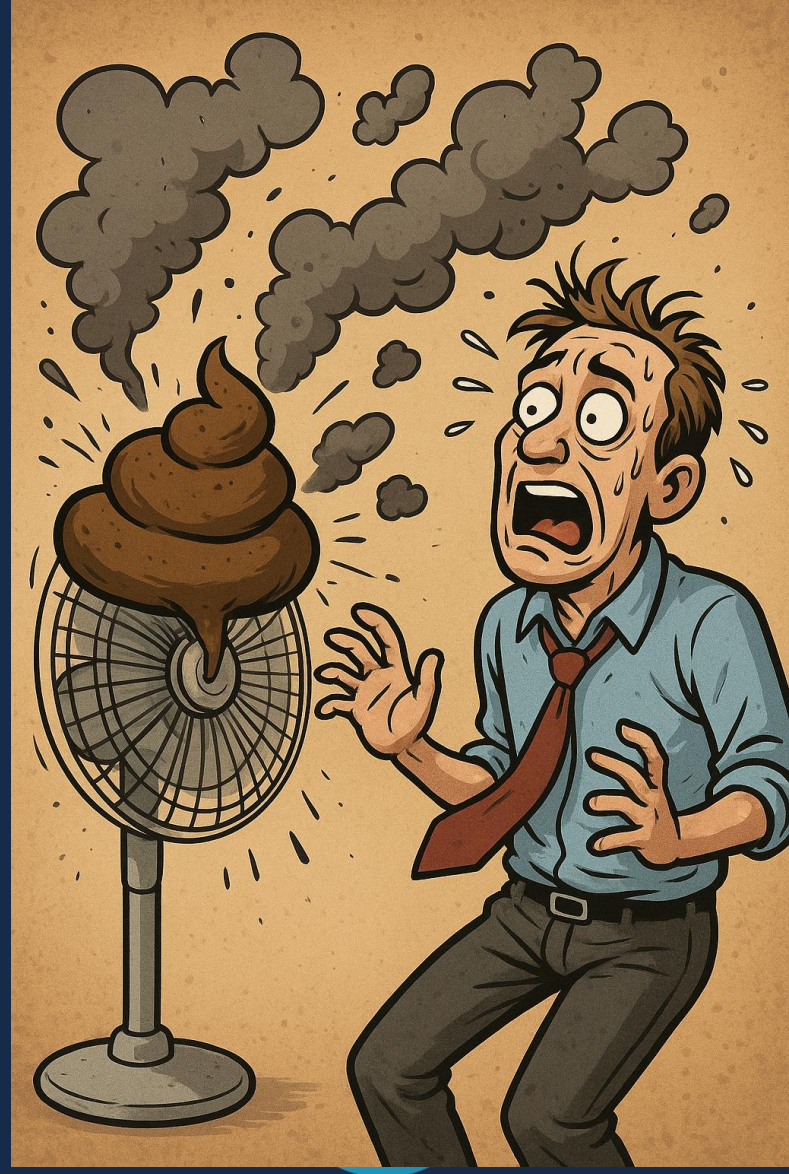
Proactive Support Case

- Open a case with Severity **4**:
  - Service Contract Number
  - Product Serial Number
  - Product Model / hardware configuration
  - Physical location of the product

  - Network topology (network diagram) and explanation
  - Software/firmware versions
  - Config you want to use
  - Other relevant context

- During implementation / service window:

  When ***Sh*t hits the fan*** → Only **Raise** the Severity to **1 or 2**



Email Thread Galore…

- Support case escalating in a 20/50/100/10.000 emails mail tread

- Ask for a WebEx/Teams/Zoom Call

- **2** Engineers looking at the **same** problem (Screen Sharing)

Support Cases

- **Most** support cases (90%) are **not** hardware related

- Have to do with
  - Configuration issues
  - Software bugs
  - Wrong topology
  - Bad network design
  - Scalability issues
  - Not know how to… ? (Knowledge gap)
  - Other human errors / Layer 8

- If hardware: Probably Power Supply / Cabling issues

Hardware Replacement Options

	Do nothing	Hardware on a shelf (Preconfigured)	Support Contract	Redundant Hardware + Support Contract
Replacement Speed	Best effort (Standard warranty)	Depends on engineer (usually Business Hours)	2H/4H/NBD*	2H/4H/NBD*
Cost	+	++	+++	++++
Issues solved	HW Only	HW Only	HW + SW / Config	HW + SW / Config

* Depends on Networking Vendor, Product & Install location

Cost of Downtime

Risk = Probability x Impact

- **What does downtime cost?**
  - Money, Reputation, Human Lives **?**
  - Type of business
  - Time of day/week/year

Support Contract Best Practices

	Support Contract?
Access Points / Access Switches	Nope
Access Switches in Hospitals	Probably Yes (High impact)
Core Switches	Yes
Your Networking Vendors opinion	Yes

Support Contract Best Practices

- Support contracts on “Smart” network devices (Configuration “Heavy”)
  - Wireless LAN Controllers
  - AAA Servers (Cisco ISE / Aruba Clearpass)
  - Firewalls (Security solution without updates ≠ Security solution)
  - Other SDN controllers

- Means to escalate **configuration** issues (90%)

Personality Traits of Engineers

- We like to **solve** things**!**
  - We take great **pride** in that
  - No matter what**!**

- Could be a pitfall:
  - Spending **days** / **weeks** solving an issue
  - Holds back the business
    (Colleagues / customers / customers of your customers)

- Open a support case / ask a colleague
  - Could resolve the issue **faster**

Q & A