

# Cisco CEO Chambers to step down, Robbins named successor

May 4 2015, by Brandon Bailey

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In this Jan. 7, 2014 file photo, Cisco chairman and CEO John Chambers speaks during a keynote address at the International Consumer Electronics Show, in Las Vegas. Chambers plans to step down after more than 20 years as the CEO of Cisco Systems Inc., the company announced Monday, May 4, 2015. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson, File)

Veteran tech executive John Chambers plans to step down after more than 20 years as CEO of Cisco Systems Inc., a major supplier of

computer networking gear that makes the Internet work.

Cisco said its board has selected longtime company executive Chuck Robbins to succeed Chambers in July, bypassing some of Chambers' better-known lieutenants.

Chambers, who was one of Silicon Valley's longest-serving CEOs, will move to the role of Cisco's executive board chairman. During his tenure, the company grew from \$1.2 billion in annual revenue in 1995, the year he became CEO, to \$48 billion in sales last year.

Despite a few missteps, such as a short-lived push into selling consumer tech products a few years ago, the 65-year-old Chambers has been a respected corporate leader in Silicon Valley and on Wall Street. He's also been a prominent advocate for U.S. tax code changes and other policy issues that are important to the tech industry, serving on advisory panels for both Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Chambers was an advisor to presidential candidate John McCain in 2008.

Chambers said Wednesday he will continue to spend at least half his time as board chairman, and hopes to pursue philanthropic projects. He added that he will probably support candidates and issues, but doesn't intend to enter politics himself.

During a conference call with reporters, Chambers praised Robbins and said he emerged from a 16-month selection process as the strongest candidate to lead Cisco in a new era.



In this Friday, May 1, 2015 photo provided by Cisco Systems Inc., newly named CEO Chuck Robbins poses for a photo in San Jose, Calif. Current CEO John Chambers plans to step down after more than 20 years as CEO, the company announced Monday, May 4, 2015. Robbins will take over the post on July 26. (AP Photo/Cisco Systems Inc., Paul Sakuma)

The 49-year-old Robbins, who has worked at Cisco for 17 years, most recently served as Cisco's senior vice president of worldwide operations. While he is well-regarded at the company, his selection came as a surprise to some outsiders who viewed Cisco president Robert Lloyd as a likely successor.

In brief remarks to reporters, Robbins signaled he plans some changes but suggested they won't be abrupt. "I believe our strategy is working,

but there are areas within our strategy that we can accelerate," he said. Robbins mentioned data analytics and network security as opportunities for Cisco to expand.

Cisco sells computer network routing and switching gear to big businesses and telecommunications companies that operate segments of the Internet. While it has long been the dominant company in that market, Cisco has recently faced a challenge from rivals selling systems using new software, rather than traditional hardware, to perform those functions.

Chambers meanwhile has pushed the company into new areas of business, including wireless networking, video and security products that guard against unwanted network intrusions. He said Monday that he views what he calls the "Internet of Everything," in which all kinds of machines and appliances are connected to the Internet, as a business opportunity that rivals the initial growth of the Internet 15 years ago.

The San Jose, California-based company's stock rose 17 cents to \$29.30 in afternoon trading Monday. Cisco Systems shares are up more than 27 percent over the past year.

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Citation: Cisco CEO Chambers to step down, Robbins named successor (2015, May 4) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-05-cisco-ceo-chambers-robbins-successor.html>

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