

Quick Cisco SPA8800 SIP Gateway Review

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As someone who has used the Linksys SPA400 in a number of solutions I was curious to see how Cisco SPA8800 compared. Now there are some major differences here. First the SPA400 is just a 4 port FXO analog gateway. The SPA8800 is a 4 port FXO and 4 Port FXS. This means you can connect 4 analog lines and 4 analog phones to this device.

First lets focus on configuration. Cisco has really polished the Interface, everything has a modern looking and 'clean' appearance. The major functionality is still there that you find ranging back from the Sipura devices. If you can configure an SPA3000/3102 than the SPA8800 is not much different. It has most features you would expect - but I did not see anything obvious for FXO trunk group settings.

Lets look at the quality - this thing is solid and 'pro' looking. The device itself is metal with dark see through front black plastic with green LED's. It has some really good weight to it. It doesn't feel cheap like the other SPA devices.

It has a 'fan' - maybe this is because Cisco has had to warranty so many SPA9000/SPA400 being stacked. The fan makes some slight noise but as long as it keeps things running I don't mind. Rather have a warm gateway than a dead gateway!

The spec's don't mention what kind of echo canceler it has but from testing its really good - I didn't hear any echo. Note: Echo can be caused by other factors such as line quality and phones used. I tested a standard Meridian analog phone with the FXS port. The MWI light worked without an special configuration for voice mail. Call waiting features also worked out of the box - flash hook allowed you to swap calls. The caller id worked also without any special configuration - take that Grandstream!

The sound quality overall sounds better than the SPA400 for Analog lines and FXS sound good as well. It's hard to hear a difference here with the FXS port because the FXS devices from Linksys/Cisco have always sounded good.

The things I haven't tested at this point is:

- Reliability - I need to place this somewhere where I have a pretty good call volume and see how long it goes before it starts developing any problems.
- Interoperability - So far I just tested with a Polycom 330 VOIP phone Meridian Analog Phone. I have a few more phone but I think they should work just as well. I'm guessing that the SPA phones should work just fine since they are also Cisco products now. The item that I am most excited is too see Cisco release documentation on how to integrate this with an Asterisk server. Even though many of us use the Cisco SPA products in a number of Asterisk based solutions it has always been 'unsupported' in that Cisco would never really lets you know if things work with Asterisk or not - you had to try it for yourself.