10 Ways Community Cloud Transforms Business

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Table of Contents

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The way we interact is changing.

The way we work is changing. So are the ways customers interact with companies, as well as the ways companies interact with their partners. This sea change requires a new type of engagement platform: the Community Cloud. Communities are becoming even more critical for business success and are versatile in the many different roles they can serve within a company.

For customers, employees, and partners, an online community keeps you dialed in to the pulse of your company, fosters relationships, and helps you solve problems — fast! If you're not already convinced about the transformative power of communities, we've produced this e-book with 10 different reasons to become a believer.

Chapter 1

Customer Community

According to research from the University of Michigan, customers in communities spend 19 percent more than customers who are not engaged. That alone is a great reason to start building an online community for your customers (if you don't have one yet). Community Cloud can be transformative across a range of business functions, from generating ideas, to winning new customers and building deeper customer relationships. Here are just 10 ways Community Cloud can transform your business.

1.   Cultivate customer loyalty through lasting relationships.

Relationship-building in traditional channels, particularly in person, takes time. A community helps you scale your relationship-building with your customers, without losing authenticity. By creating an infrastructure that connects customers to your brand — as well as to each other — you can ensure the level of intimacy that makes customers want to advocate for your company and your products.

Centralizing customer feedback in a single location also enables businesses to use that feedback in more effective ways. Users are sharing ideas, best practices, and venting frustration — it's a constant stream of input that you can harness to update and improve your product. When customers see that you're listening, they will be more loyal to your company.

2. Connect your customers to each other.

Community Cloud isn't just about building relationships between companies and their customers; it is also a highly effective way to get customers talking to each other. Community Cloud brings customers together where they spend time, fostering collaboration based on shared values, shared purpose, and shared ownership. Empowering customers to communicate directly with their peers benefits both the customer and the business. Often, the organic knowledge-sharing that occurs in community forums can spark new ideas or product improvements that would not have emerged otherwise. At the same time, customers can connect with each other and serve as a "tier 1" support team, answering each other's questions and sharing tips and tools. Delivering this added value to your customer base ensures that your business realizes the modern ideal of a true "customer company"—and, according to research by salesforce.com, engaged customers are twice as likely to buy your product.

3. Reduce customer service costs.

When customers are seeking advice from their peers within your self-service communities, that's cutting back on the inbound calls to your business over expensive channels. According to research by call-center.net, it costs about $1 per minute for the average call center to assist a customer—and customer research by salesforce.com shows that implementing Community Cloud led to 37 percent faster case resolution.

Monitoring the community also increases your awareness of common questions, confusion, or complaints about different products or processes. Then it's time to be proactive and set up a strong FAQ section where you answer these in detail (visuals help). With these tools in place, customers don't even need to seek out advice from their peers—they can help themselves using the material you've provided in your community.

"In an ecosystem where competition is fierce, gaining brand recognition is a key component to getting a leg up on competitors."

4. Connect business processes with people.

Few social platforms today are truly business-oriented, which can make it difficult to build business value. Community Cloud has built-in capabilities to support core sales, customer service, and marketing business processes. By keeping all your business data in one place and optimizing collaboration, Community Cloud helps you stay on top of your business with analytics and dashboards, or dig deep with reports. Activity Management allows task support, combined with the ability to restrict visibility. By combining collaboration and business processes, Community Cloud offers a new model for truly customer-driven service.

5. Extend your brand experience.

With Community Cloud, you can engage directly with customers, driving conversion and deepening your brand experience and reach. By observing customer behavior, your marketing team can develop targeted campaigns tailored to each segment's needs — and then collaborate with agencies and vendors to streamline the creative process. Use Community Cloud to align your product teams, work on a launch, discuss new product ideas, and coordinate customer relationships By creating a creative and collaborative ecosystem, you can realize results like 41 percent faster time to market.
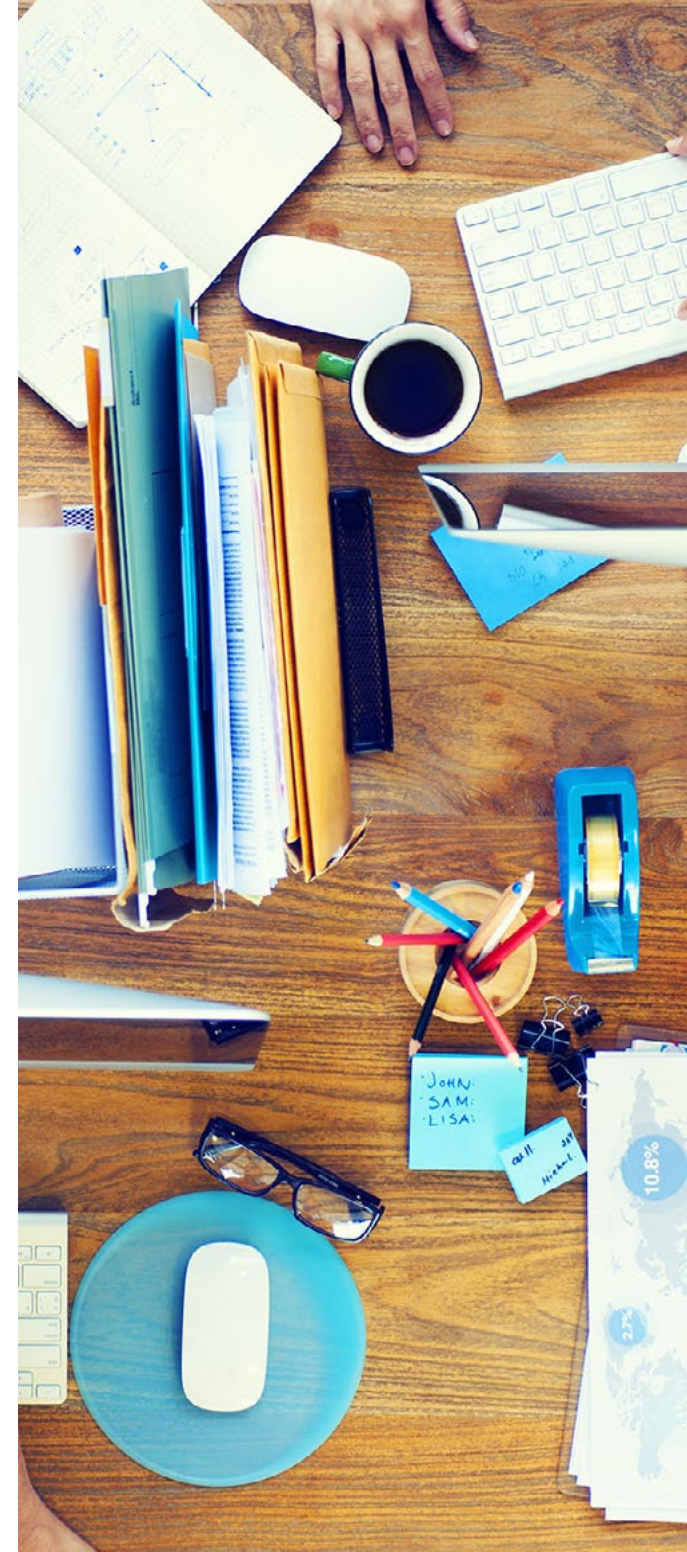
Chapter 2

Employee Community

Salesforce.com data have found that employees connected to an online community can access information 43 percent faster than those without a community. It's an impressive figure, but there are also less quantifiable — and just as value-creating — benefits to establishing a community for your workforce: employee productivity and satisfaction.

6. Turn action into impact.

In addition to fostering social interaction, Community Cloud connects employees to the content, people, and apps they may need to be successful anywhere, at any time, from any device. In a business context, Community Cloud helps members access expense guidelines and performance metrics, book travel, or find experts across the company.

Community Cloud also links your employees to distributors, resellers, and suppliers instantaneously — and in doing so, helps drive more sales. Each of these groups can access crucial data and connect with key stakeholders in real time, using their mobile devices. By streamlining business processes and giving you easy, instantaneous access to the information you need, Community Cloud allows you to save time for the things that really matter: selling your product and growing your business.

> "Making information more relevant and timely makes your employees more productive and happier."

7. Increase employee productivity and happiness.

"The secret to happiness through work is earned success," American Enterprise Institute President Arthur C. Brooks wrote in the New York Times in December 2013. "This is not conjecture; it is driven by the data. Americans who feel they are successful at work are twice as likely to say they are very happy overall as people who don't feel that way. And these differences persist after controlling for income and other demographics."

Using insights gleaned from a user's activity and interests, Community Cloud can identify and suggest relevant people, files, and information for employees and managers to follow, thereby keeping them apprised of any important developments. In addition, users can tailor their settings to search for and track topics of interest, which aids in finding information and identifying experts.

Community Cloud connects employees to work efficiently across functional areas to collaborate on sales opportunities, campaigns, projects, and service cases. Making information more relevant and timely makes your employees more productive and happier — and happy employees make happy managers and customers.

Chapter 3

Partner Community

According to salesforce.com data, harnessing the power of communities generates a 29 percent greater partner win rate by connecting you directly to your partners and increasing sales volume. Partner Community enables rich online collaboration with partners while integrating them tightly into your sales processes. Built on the secure and flexible Salesforce1 Platform, Partner Community makes your partners more productive with customizable actions, integrations and apps — and it's designed to make your partners as effective from any mobile device as they are in the office.

8. Optimize your partner network.

With Community Cloud, you can build and empower your partner network with partner recruitment, onboarding, training, and support. In addition, Community Cloud helps increase partner engagement by fostering more effective co-marketing campaigns and fund management. Using tools customized to your business needs, you can evaluate coverage and ensure that your channel is structured and equipped to meet your strategic goals.

9. Close more business, more quickly.

Community Cloud enables you to sell more effectively with efficient partner lead management, deal registration, and joint selling capabilities. Whether partners need technical product information, quote assistance, or deal

"Community Cloud ensures that your partners have the information and support they need."

support, they can connect with the experts and resources they need to close business quickly. Identify your most effective partners and ensure they are getting the support they need, suggest expert partners to your customers, and enable partners to work together to provide the complete solution that your customers want.

10. Make partners mobile.

Community Cloud ensures that your partners have the information and support they need to sell your products and services anywhere. With

Partner Community, you empower your partners to drive progress from any mobile device: register a deal, update an opportunity, or request funding or assistance. Partners can post questions and access critical resources from anywhere, all on an easy-to-use secure and branded mobile app. And with the Salesforce1 Platform, any custom actions you add to your community are immediately available everywhere, on any mobile device.

Community Cloud is the future.

When it comes to strengthening all of the relationships that are essential for your company, Community Cloud is a necessity. Company-to-customer, employee-to-employee, and partner-to-partner interactions all become simpler and more productive when you center them around an online community that's cloud-based and completely mobile-friendly. With Community Cloud, you can create a true community of action.

To learn more about implementing Community Cloud in your business, visit the new Community Cloud at salesforce.com.

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