

COMMUNITIES: THE NEW KEY TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

HOW THE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY IS
RESHAPING THE WAY WE WORK



Introduction

The Key to Business Success

Some experts believe that in the future we may no longer be able to tell the difference between employees and customers.

At first glance, that idea might seem a little far-fetched, but consider the business model of a home-sharing service such as Airbnb. Homeowners use the service to list their property on the company's site and find customers looking for a short-term rental; travelers use the site to find lodging that may be cheaper or more convenient than a traditional hotel. The company relies on both sides of that equation — so who's a customer, and who's an employee?

In what is known as the “collaborative economy” or “sharing economy,” the lines between customers and employees are blurred. In businesses such as home-sharing (Airbnb) and ride-sharing (Lyft and Uber), a company's value lies in its ability to connect peers to one another — whether they're homeowners and renters, or drivers and passengers. More and more companies are learning the value of these peer-to-peer relationships — and building profitable businesses based on peer-to-peer sharing and collaboration.

In a 2014 cover story dedicated to rise of the sharing economy, Wired described it as an economic and cultural breakthrough. It is also a resounding affirmation of the importance of community. Far from dividing people, the Internet and the rise of mobile and smart devices have brought us much closer together than ever before. In this connected world, the demand for community and collaboration — in life and in business — is undeniable.

Even for businesses not founded on the principle of peer-to-peer sharing, the collaborative economy presents important opportunities. The lines between your customers, employees, and partners may already be blurring — and odds are, each of these groups is looking for closer ties and more opportunities for sharing and collaboration. So how can businesses take advantage of this opportunity?

In this e-book, we'll explore how the collaborative economy can change the way you do business. We'll start by taking a deeper dive into the rise of the collaborative economy and its implications for all types of businesses. Next, we'll explore how the idea of "community" fits into this new reality. Finally, we'll explain how solutions such as Salesforce Community Cloud can help you build a sense of community within your company, and can help you connect to your employees, partners, and customers in a whole new way.



A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and blue striped tie is shown from the chest up. He is holding a silver pen in his right hand and looking down at a document or tablet. The background is blurred, suggesting an office or conference setting.

Chapter 1

KEY MARKET FORCES IN THE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

In a session at Dreamforce '14, Jeremiah Owyang — founder of Crowd Companies, a brand council designed to connect leaders in the collaborative economy — outlined what he believes to be the key driving forces behind the collaborative economy: societal drivers, economic drivers, and technology enablers.

Societal Drivers: There's a social aspect to connecting with others over common interests, whether you're joining with peers to fund a project you're passionate about or renting a flat from a London local for a weekend getaway. The collaborative economy also taps into the premium many young people place on sustainability. Why own a car when you can share a ride? Why buy tools when you can rent them?

Economic Drivers: The collaborative economy allows owners to make a profit off of untapped idle resources, such as cars for city-dwellers or unused bedrooms in a vacation home — items that come with a high price tag. On the flip side, renters are able to save money on items that they don't need to buy themselves, or pay a fraction of the cost by splitting it (often among total strangers).

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Technology Enablers: Before the Internet, renting something from another consumer you didn't personally know was more trouble than it was worth. But now companies are going one step further by matching supply and demand. Smartphones are GPS-enabled so you can track your Uber driver's progress and anticipate arrival times; social networks allow you to check up on people with whom you're doing business and build a level of trust; online payments handle billing, sometimes without even requiring a credit card number after the initial installation.

Additionally, these companies in the collaborative economy were born within an increasingly mobile-first world, so mobility for their apps and websites were prioritized for a top-notch user experience.

Why Do Communities Matter?

So you may be thinking, "That's great, but I don't work for a company like these; I work for a standard B2C/B2B." The

collaborative economy has big implications for you, too. Researchers from the University of Michigan found that customers in communities spend 19 percent more than customers who are not engaged.

The collaborative economy is all about community. Customers inherently trust each other more than they trust you as a business. For companies based on sharing, that trust is critical to success, but traditional B2B or B2C companies can also leverage that trust, particularly when it comes to customer service.

Research has shown that people who are similar and can identify with one another are more likely to trust each other. They're already using peer connections when it comes to making purchasing decisions (think Yelp), but what happens to those peer connections once someone becomes a customer?

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Create a community of action.

Thanks to the cloud, companies can connect to their customers, partners, employees, and business processes like never before. With Community Cloud, companies of all sizes can create communities that add enormous value to their networks, and transform the way they do business.



Chapter 2

COMMUNITIES FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

You already know about the importance of building a relationship between your business and its customers, but what about customers building relationships with each other? By creating a central community platform, you can direct customers to a single location where they can share ideas and best practices, and help each other with the problems they're facing.

Imagine this: A customer has some questions about pricing. Rather than picking up the phone and making a call to one of your customer service agents (especially since calling costs can add up), they go to your community using their smartphone, laptop, or tablet. They can look at knowledge base articles, FAQs, or previous discussions that may answer their question. If they can't find the answer, they can ask the question right in the community, where anybody can provide an answer — whether that's your staff, a partner, or even one of their peers.

A robust community produces a constant stream of feedback and data that you can harness to update and improve your product or service. By monitoring the community, your customer service team gains valuable insight into common complaints, questions, or confusion and can tweak their strategy accordingly.

Community Cloud is a crucial resource to keep your service in line with customers' expectations. It can also be leveraged for seamless collaboration between your employees and partners. Community Cloud allows you to take action — such as submitting a lead, sharing files, tracking payments, and more — in the central feed. Plus, custom privacy settings ensure that employees, partners, and customers have access to everything they need to see, and nothing that they don't.





Chapter 3

LEVERAGING COMMUNITY CLOUD

Salesforce Community Cloud taps into the power and driving force of the collaborative economy — the importance of community — and applies it to traditional business models. Customer service has long been dominated by call centers, but now customers demand the same level of personal service without having to pick up the phone and call.

Community Cloud allows you to customize your community to fit with your brand and streamline your business processes. Community Cloud keeps all your customer case data in one place, regardless of how customers contact you. Finally, Community Cloud leverages the peer relationships that dominate the collaborative economy, helping you solve customers' problems quickly and providing your business with valuable data in the process.

Community Cloud has multiple features that allow it to seamlessly integrate with your business — and take it to the next level.

Customize: The Community Management Console one-stop setup enables you to build your community on a secure, reliable, and scalable platform without sacrificing your brand identity. Community Cloud makes customization easy, so the community remains consistent with your already-established social networks, your website, and your other online properties. Plus, Community Cloud makes set-up fast; you can

incorporate third-party and custom apps and integrate your data rather than start from scratch.

Share Files: When the customer is on the phone and the clock is ticking, quick access to critical files for the case is crucial. Rather than digging in your hard drive for the right file, Community Cloud allows you to access and share your files within the cloud. Smart file storage means that everything is available when and where you need it — no digging required. Plus, the Salesforce Files Sync folder means that by just dragging and dropping your files in the folder, all of your devices are updated in real-time, but still secure.

Communities are often associated with social networks such as Facebook, but Community Cloud has made them so much more than that, optimizing communities for business. A community can be a seamless extension of your brand presence — a constant stream of feedback between your business and your customers. It's a place for you to learn more about your customers, and where they can learn more about you and the products they already use. A community is where you can transform customers into brand advocates. It's where the lines between employee and customer are blurred, where personal relationships can be beneficial for even the most traditional businesses.

Chapter 4

COMMUNITY CLOUD FOR CUSTOMERS, PARTNERS, AND EMPLOYEES

Because Community Cloud is designed for businesses, it's also optimized for three of your most important stakeholder groups: customers, partners, and employees.

Customer Communities: By providing a community designed with your customers in mind, your company can empower clients to share information seamlessly, help each other find answers, and solve problems faster. It's a perfect example of the collaborative business model, made possible by Community Cloud's easy-to-use, mobile-optimized customer platform. Community Cloud also keeps customers more closely connected to your business, opening new lines of communication and ensuring that you're staying close to your users' needs.

Partner Communities: Partner communities enable productive online collaboration that integrates tightly with your sales processes. Community Cloud optimizes your partner network with partner recruiting, onboarding, training and support — all within the cloud. Sell

more effectively with partner lead management, deal registration, and joint selling capabilities. Just like the employee community, partners have the same access to the experts and resources they need to close deals onsite — driving progress from any mobile device with the Salesforce1 Mobile App.

Employee Communities: With Community Cloud, employees have access to documents, people, groups, metrics — anything they need to be successful. Rather than being siloed on hard drives, everything is located in Community Cloud for fast access. Plus, with the Salesforce1 Mobile App, employees can access the community from anywhere. Community Cloud uses insights from each user's activities and interests to suggest relevant people, files, and information to follow, and employees can tailor their settings for each group, follow topics of interest, and find the experts they need. In short, Community Cloud connects your employees to the content, people, and apps they need to get the job done anywhere, from any device, at any time.





CONCLUSION

Customer service is increasingly becoming a major differentiator between companies. In order to rise to the top, companies must adopt a service-first strategy that embodies personal, fast, and smart customer service. Community Cloud taps into all three of these pillars of great service, fostering a relationship between your brand and its consumers, and opening up the possibilities that come from peers helping peers.

START CREATING A COMMUNITY OF ACTION WITH SALESFORCE.

With Community Cloud, you can open new lines of communication, from customer to customer as well as with your brand. You'll empower employees to innovate faster and collaborate more efficiently. It's all possible with the right tools. Want to learn more? Click below to see a free demo.



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THE CUSTOMER SUCCESS PLATFORM