

EXPERT INSIGHTS:

# Growing Small Businesses

IN  
THE **Salesforce Economy**



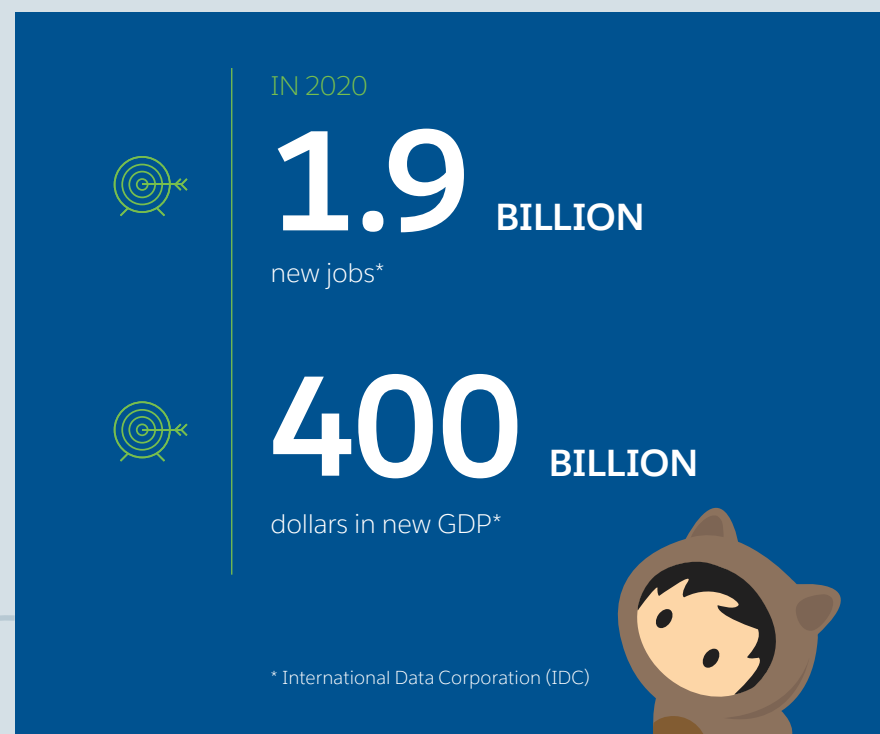


# Today's Landscape for High-Growth Businesses

Technology has made it possible for small businesses to reach more customers in new ways, resulting in some of the most high-growth businesses today. This new Age of the Customer brings a world of opportunities and a few challenges. You can reach more potential customers than ever before, but you also have more competition for their attention and dollars. And with so many businesses vying for the same audience, customers expect more, better, and faster.

The good news is that in this high-competition, high-reward environment, businesses that are part of the Salesforce ecosystem are at the center of this new economy. A recent [IDC report](#) estimates that Salesforce and app innovation partners, developers, and customers are going to drive nearly 1.9 million jobs and almost \$400 billion in new GDP growth by 2020, worldwide.

Put simply, as the world becomes more interconnected and customers raise their expectations, small businesses in the Salesforce ecosystem are prepared and positioned for high growth.



# The Road to (Customer) Success

What the most successful high-growth companies have in common is one simple principle: Put customers first. Make them happy from the moment you find them. Then, go beyond just meeting their needs – connect with them. Win them over. And when the sale closes, keep winning them over. Give customers every reason to come back to you, over and over again.

The best way to ensure your entire business is always driving toward customer happiness is to connect all aspects of your business together. Marketing, sales, service, and beyond – a fully connected business is a customer happiness machine.





*“Today’s modern buyers are different; the role they take, and the journey they go on, has become highly disruptive to the status quo. That’s due in part to technology, but also because of their increased expectations when it comes to service. Focusing on customer success must remain at the forefront of all business decisions.”*

**TIFFANI BOVA**

Global Customer Growth  
& Innovation Evangelist at Salesforce



# Expert Insights for Growing Businesses

Salesforce is only as successful as our customers. We also rely on our partners for their deep knowledge about growing a business. The team sat down with three partner executives to learn about their successes and challenges, and get words of advice for small-business leaders.





*“Transform the customer experience.”*

– Cynthia Ashworth

Cynthia Ashworth, VP of Brand at DocuSign, shares how small businesses can get ahead and how investing in the right digital tools can pay back quickly.

**What have been some of your biggest challenges and victories?**

“It’s been a challenge to educate small-to-medium-sized businesses about the transformational impact of digital technologies within their reach. There are so many tools on the market that only require small investments (either one time upfront or monthly), but can have a massive impact on growth. In addition, it’s then difficult to get the same business to recognize the benefits of taking signature and transaction management processes digital and into the cloud. At DocuSign, we’re vested in the world of moving signatures from paper to the cloud.

“Our focus is to show emerging businesses that they can easily save time from opportunity, to agreement, to payment. It’s a victory to break down barriers and help companies understand the value with the right digital tools.”

**What have you learned from your customers?**

“Learning is a combination of interaction and walking in customers’ shoes. One of the biggest lessons for me is recognizing just how personal

a business can be. For growing businesses, the decisions on where to invest hard-earned revenue or seed funding, what technologies to adopt, and with which companies to partner are huge. DocuSign started as a small business a decade ago so we know this, but it’s something I always try to remember when evaluating any customer experience.”

**Why are small businesses so important to DocuSign?**

“Small and mid-sized businesses make up the lion’s share of the global economy. These leaders want to innovate. Growing companies understand that technology can give them new capabilities and help them disrupt a market before some of their larger competitors.”

**Why are some challenges unique to small businesses?**

“Speed and agility are absolutely critical to any company, but particularly for small companies. Going digital removes the friction and complexity of doing business manually and frees up resources, people, and money. You have to

simplify business processes to focus on what matters, which is ultimately your customers and their success.

“Small companies sometimes tend to wait too long to invest. However, with many SaaS products, you don’t need IT staff to get up and running at a low cost. Have a road map of small wins to drive big improvements – those are changes that propel a business forward. Small businesses can see immediate benefits even from smaller-scale deployments and require less internal selling and vetting.”

**Any insights for our small-business readers?**

“Transform the customer experience. Start with a customer-facing process. Identify and automate areas to make it easier for customers to do business with you. A seemingly small initiative, like eliminating printed contracts and wet signatures, can confer a big competitive advantage. If customers finalize a transaction quickly, easily, and with fewer steps, they leave pleased and inclined to return.”





*“Have a road map of small wins to drive big improvements – those are changes that propel a business forward. Small businesses can see immediate benefits even from smaller-scale deployments and require less internal selling and vetting.”*

**CYNTHIA ASHWORTH**  
DocuSign







## “It’s all about the customer!”

– Santiago Solanas

Santiago Solanas is the CMO of Sage, which provides small and mid-sized organizations a range of easy-to-use business management software and services including accounting, payroll, resource planning, and payments. As a leader at a large multinational company that serves small businesses, Santiago offers a qualified and valuable perspective.

### What have been some of your biggest challenges and victories?

“When I joined Sage it was as Managing Director of the Entrepreneurs and Small Business Division in Spain. My focus at the start was building the team pride, spirit, and culture. We had hundreds of thousands of customers in Spain, but my colleagues felt they were not as well-known as some of our competitors. We had to make everyone believe we were better than some of the best companies in the market ... and we managed to do it!

“I’m proud of the transformation and growth of our teams. The most recent example has been the complete change in how brand, product, and digital marketing is now done at Sage: We’ve gone from fragmented to winning awards. I am also very proud of having led Sage Spain through the worst economic crisis since 1939 and coming out with higher market share, a stronger team, improved colleague engagement, and higher margins.”

### What have you learned from your customers?

“From talking to customers, I’ve learned they want solutions for their needs that are relevant and as

easy to use as possible. And at Sage, we make that happen every day. The marketing and product teams see customers as true partners and are part of the development process from day one. We talk with customers about 30,000 times a day about things that really matter to a sustainable business: accounting, payroll, and payments. We organize focus groups and surveys, and listen in to service calls or sales visits.”

### Why are small businesses so important to Sage?

“We’re energized by providing smart software so companies around the world can do what they love – build their business. Sage is proud when we help customers achieve their goals faster and easier. Serving SMBs is not just important, it’s our life and passion. The “why” is expressed in our vision: We give businesses around the world the information, insight, and smart tools they need to succeed.”

### What are some challenges unique to small businesses?

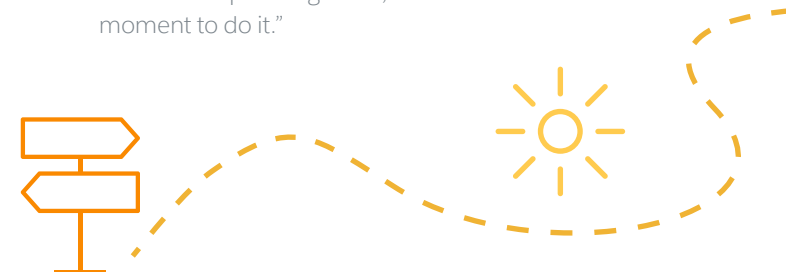
“We believe the main challenge is scaling in a sustainable way. We’ve spent a lot of time talking with business builders and have found

four factors to be key accelerators: 1) capital, 2) people, 3) partners, and 4) technology. It goes back to having a focus and knowing what will make an impact on your change.”

### Any insights for our small-business readers?

“Manage your finances wisely, with special focus on cash flow and hiring the right people, partners, and advisors at every moment of the journey. In particular, hire someone who understands the numbers. You don’t want to end up in cash flow red alert.

“The second insight is to plan ahead. Today’s sales and costs are really important, but if you don’t plan for growth, problems will arise at the worst time. For example, think ahead when making technology investments: If you make investments for today’s volume and number of customers, you will need to change everything to scale in the middle of explosive growth, which is a terrible moment to do it.”



*“We talk with customers about 30,000 times a day about things that really matter to a sustainable business: accounting, payroll, and payments.”*

**SANTIAGO SOLANOS**

Sage





*“The central focus is the customer.”*

– Evan Ellis

Xactly is a sales performance and incentive software provider and a high-growth business itself. As the President and COO of Xactly over the past nine years, Evan Ellis has overseen the company’s growth from a couple dozen customers to more than 900. He shared his perspective on replicating that same success.

**What have been some of your biggest challenges and victories?**

“Some of the biggest challenges for me were in learning a new business model – in this case SaaS – as quickly as possible, and understanding the subtleties of providing an industry-leading app to the general market.

“For greatest successes, I have two victories to share. First, we’ve built a solution that’s providing long-lasting value to our customers. After 10-plus years of being in the market, customers keep renewing. The second victory is our company culture. We were recently named the #1 workplace in the Bay Area for mid-sized companies by the [Bay Area News Group](#). You can’t get a much better combination than providing great value to our customers and creating a great work environment.”

**What have you learned from your customers?**

“Commit to a 100% SaaS environment. I didn’t understand this at first, but realized that SaaS fundamentally changes everything you do in the company itself. We’ve organized Xactly

cross-functionally to provide that customer experience in a unique way. Customer support, services, product management, and data center customer operations meet on a regular basis. This has allowed us to provide an application that’s valuable and responsive to customer needs.

“It starts with the business model and a set of values where the central focus is the customer, because at the end of the day, that’s what we’re here for.”

**Why are small businesses so important to Xactly?**

“The world is run by small businesses and most people work for small businesses. I learned early that you need to push the high end to learn the basics, but ultimately, you want to provide a product that goes to a very large base, which are small businesses.”

**What are some challenges unique to these high-growth businesses?**

“Small businesses have more constraints because of their size and at the same time, they have to

grow as quickly as possible. Sales productivity is key, so the tools to make those precious sales resources as productive as possible are important. You can’t afford a loss of productivity.”

**Any insights for our small-business readers?**

“Balance the quest for growth with a measured time frame for hitting goals. It’s critical to understand your business and business model. For example, in SaaS, customers have got to be happy or they’re going to check out. Focus on churn, renewal rates, and understanding the impact of that on the business. Some younger businesses today focus exclusively on growth, and they didn’t take into account their long-range business model.

“In addition, identify key individuals around you, outside of the company – a board member, an investor, a peer in a similar business that you respect – for unemotional, dispassionate advice. The longer we’re around, the more we tend to think we have all the experience and our way makes sense.”



*“It starts with the business model and a set of values where the central focus is the customer, because at the end of the day, that’s what we’re here for.”*

**EVAN ELLIS**

Xactly



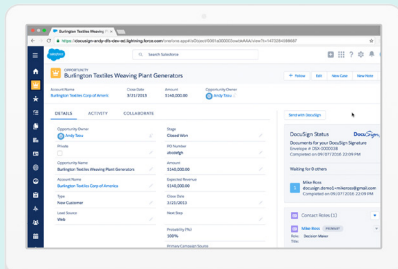


# Leading with the Customer

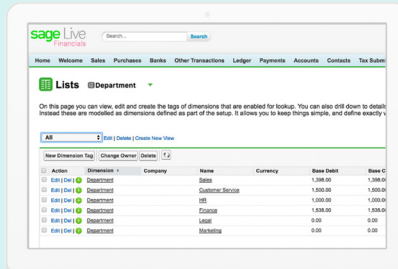
These are exciting times for members of the Salesforce ecosystem and there's no better time than right now to make customers as happy as possible. Whether you're a big company serving small businesses or a small business growing fast, you'll see tremendous success when the customer is always at the center of everything you do.



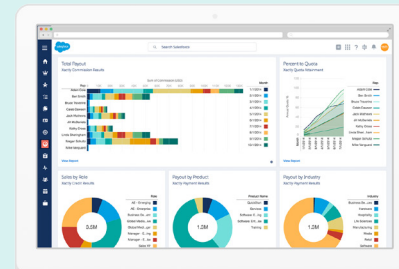
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