

PARTNER COMMUNITY 101:

5 BIG BENEFITS FOR YOUR CHANNEL PARTNERSHIP



Introduction

So you've got the perfect product or solution — it addresses a need in the market and you've got a stellar team driving your company forward. The problem? You need help actually getting out and selling it, meaning more boots on the ground. So you team up with a channel partner to increase your geographic reach, your value proposition, and your revenues.

But, as in any partnership, conflicts can arise. In order to make things work, you need three key ingredients: transparency, collaboration, and speed. If your systems aren't connected to your partner's systems, friction in the deal process can complicate the relationship. And if partners don't have visibility into what you're doing (and vice versa), it's difficult to predict and influence deals in a timely and cost-effective way.

That's where a partner community comes in. A partner community manages all aspects of the deal process — not to mention the partner relationship as a whole — in a seamless and transparent way. In this e-book, we highlight five big benefits a partner community can offer — and show you how creating a partner community can save your business time, money, and headaches.

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Chapter 1

Improve Your Partner Relationships by Reducing Friction

When it comes to creating a mutually beneficial partnership, good communication is essential. But when two partners are operating in siloed systems and connecting across a range of fragmented channels, communicating effectively can be a challenge. And when partners don't communicate effectively, the results are clear and far-reaching. Often, a partnership that originally looked promising can crumble as concerns go unheard, feedback is limited, and neither side feels empowered to actively move deals forward.

The need for good communication goes hand in hand with the need for transparency and visibility into what your partners are doing. In order to manage individual deals, each partner needs access to its respective systems of record. Without this level of transparency into the other partner's activities, channel managers are unable to glean insights or accurately predict deals, and the potential benefits of the partner relationship go unrealized. Leads go cold, forecasts are missed, and deals are lost because your partners lack the information and expertise they need to win, and you lack the knowledge that they needed help in the first place.

Partner communities address these problems before they arise. By combining insights about partner business



processes and fostering collaboration all in the same place, a partner community creates a transparent bridge between two companies. A partner community can do it all — joint business planning, shared pipeline, shared analytics, and more. Suddenly, alignment and communication become the foundation of your partnership, rather than an elusive goal.

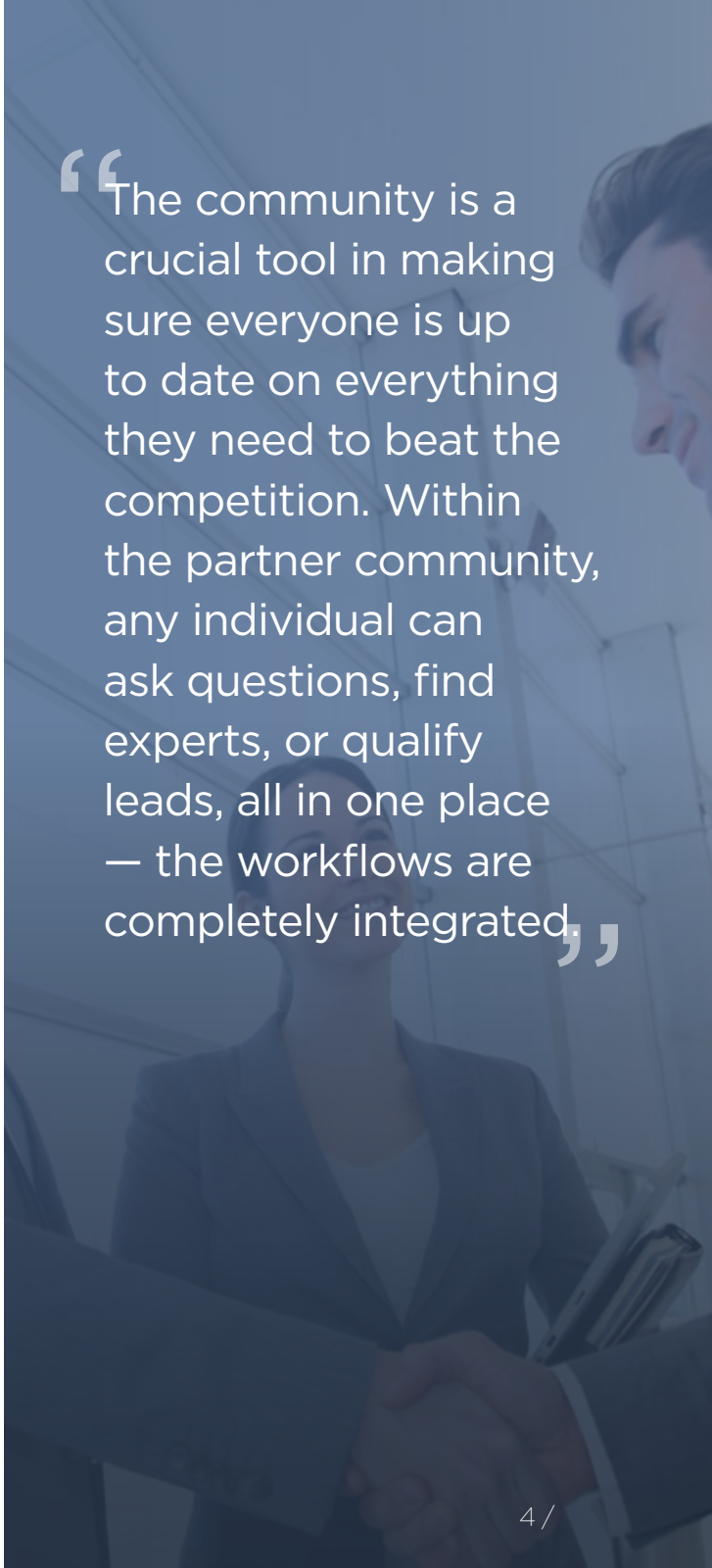
So how do you create a partner community? Here's the good news: you can build one in a matter of minutes. Better yet, you can customize the community to your brand, industry, and business processes (no coding required!) and have it up and running with your partner company from day one.

A partner community can assist you with the very first step of developing a partnership: recruiting and onboarding. To make sure your partners get up to speed quickly, you can provide easy access to training and certification materials, directly within the community. You can manage the training process and even automate it, guiding the partner step by step. By embedding gamification, like badges, you incentivize your users to complete the process. If they get stuck, they can ask someone within the community, and someone from the support team (or even a fellow partner) can assist them.

As soon as your team members join the community, they receive suggestions on frequently followed users, groups to join, documents to view. The more you use the community, the more it learns from your actions to make additional relevant suggestions.

Once created, the community is a crucial tool in making sure everyone is up to date on everything they need to beat the competition. Within the partner community, any individual can ask questions, find experts, or qualify leads, all in one place — the workflows are completely integrated. Shared dashboards mean that you can track performance across channels in a way that's visible to both parties.

By grounding your partnership in trust and transparency, you're able to reduce conflict and decrease the time it takes to register a deal. Both parties can discover and exchange information faster — which means you can close deals faster, giving your reps more time to go track down more leads. Real-time collaboration, constant visibility, and effortless communication combine to make your business partnerships more effective than ever.



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Chapter 2

Boost Your ROI

The benefits of a partner community aren't limited to productivity and efficiency. It's also about combining forces to move both organizations forward into new territory that helps increase ROI.

One key way to do this is by providing marketing development funds for co-marketing activities in order to incentivize channel behavior. With Community Cloud, you can customize incentives and workflow to fit your partnership's unique needs.

Partner communities also provide a platform upon which to manage the entire co-marketing lifecycle. With Community Cloud, you can create and manage campaigns in Salesforce, which ensures that you're tracking and monitoring every aspect of your marketing strategy. Community Cloud also helps you build a content hub, where partners can collaborate to create, edit, and publish content to attract new audiences and boost your inbound marketing presence. Partner communities also help automate all the behind-the-scenes work that goes into a marketing campaign. Beyond marketing, partner communities can also help support the management of other business processes such as incentives, rebates, and point-of-sale data.

So how does all this help boost ROI? In three key ways:



A single system of record.

Partner communities are built on Salesforce, which pioneered the idea of creating a single, cloud-based system of record for all of your most important customer data. Today, that idea has evolved to allow for customizable business communities that not only unify your customer and business data, but also incorporate partner communications, collaborative file sharing, and everything else you need to run a successful partnership. Better yet, you can choose which data to share with your partners, and which to keep private. All of this means less time spent switching among different systems of record or digging around for the data you need to make informed decisions.

Streamlined business processes.

Just as a partner community unifies your data and communications, so too does it help streamline all of your business processes. Throughout the lifecycle of each partnership you enter, Community Cloud helps you keep track of every step — from campaign setup and planning to sales, marketing, and service. With Salesforce, you can run every aspect of your business through a single point of communication — the partner community — and ensure your partners are up-to-date on every new development. As the #1 trusted cloud platform, Salesforce also ensures that all

of your data is secure at all times, and that your partners see exactly what they need to (and nothing that they don't).

Faster time to market.

Instead of waiting for partners to sift through their inboxes and respond to lengthy email threads or return phone calls, a partner community puts all your communications in one place. With all of your crucial information and communications streamlined and unified in a single system of record, key business decisions happen faster — and with more data to support them. This means every business choice you make is more informed, more collaborative, and more efficient than ever before — which, in turn, gets you to market faster. And it's not just about getting to market. Once you're there, a partner community ensures that continued innovation and iteration happen seamlessly, so you can continue to adjust to the market and to your buyers' needs.

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Chapter 3

Improve Reporting and Forecasting

The data floodgates have opened. Key analytics are now available to everyone — not just the highly-paid data analysts of the past. Where data was once seen as too complex to be useful to the average salesperson, the power of everyday sales insights is now clear. Leadership recognizes that data is far too valuable to keep hidden away under lock and key.

Selling grounded in data and numbers works both ways. Today's salespeople have a rich, thorough profile of their prospects — not just a name and number on a business card. A single prospect's profile can include online tracking data, social profiles, account history, and much more. This means that the sales process can be more personalized — and potentially more successful — than ever before.

More data also means that sales leaders can evaluate their salespeople more thoroughly than ever. Improved tracking metrics offer a better understanding of sales performance, which makes it easier for managers to address problems with training exactly when it's needed, not just during sporadic coaching sessions scheduled months in advance.

Data In Context

Partner communities are armed with useful dashboards that enable both parties to review key metrics, right



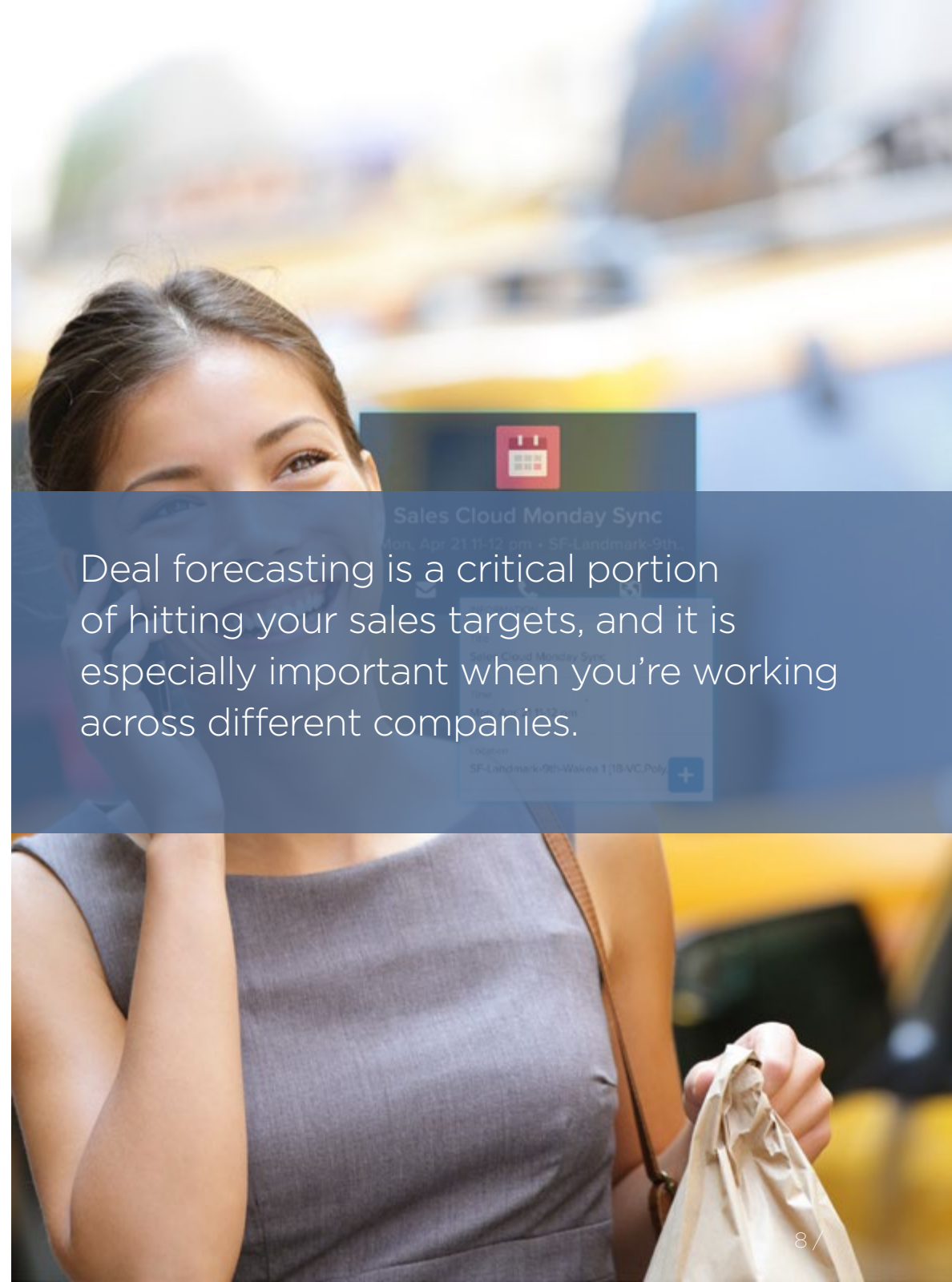
within the community. These dashboards can include an updated view of your pipeline, team quota numbers, performance by individual rep, or pretty much anything else you can dream up. By unifying your crucial business data, you can ensure that your partners are armed with the same knowledge and working toward the same goals.

What's more, partner communities are built on the secure Salesforce1 Platform, trusted by hundreds of thousands of companies around the world. With Salesforce, you can be sure your data is safe — and, using partner communities, you can share only what your partners need to know at any given time.

Forecasting Together

Deal forecasting is a critical portion of hitting your sales targets, and it is especially important when you're working across different companies. Rather than trying to remain aligned across multiple systems, you can ground your forecasting in the community, so everyone is on the same page.

With a partner community, you can view your pipeline by sales team, deal timeline, size, or numerous other filters. You can even see how each individual rep is contributing to the forecasts. You and your partners can also manage and edit your forecasts in real time. Simply change the numbers within the community and add a note if you'd like to clarify something. Everyone will instantly see the changes in real time, ensuring that your employees and partners are always seeing the most up-to-date information, all in one place.



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Chapter 4

Arm Your Partners With the Latest Content

Just as today's consumers are more connected and informed than ever before, your partners are, too — and they expect you to engage with the same level of responsiveness, timeliness, and personalization that they expect and deliver in their own lives. One key way to deliver on this expectation is by offering timely and personally relevant content that resonates at each stage in the partnership.

In today's fast-paced economy, business is changing on a daily basis — which means it's even more important to constantly arm your team with new content and information. The partner community ensures that your partners always have the latest information. A partner can follow a document in order to receive real-time notifications when changes or updates are made. You can also add new training or certification courses easily within the community, and reward early adopters with a leaderboard recognizing top contributors.

Content and Experts at Your Fingertips

Content marketing — the practice of delivering valuable content to your customers and partners — continues to be a valuable part of the customer experience. Within the partner community, your sales reps can access and

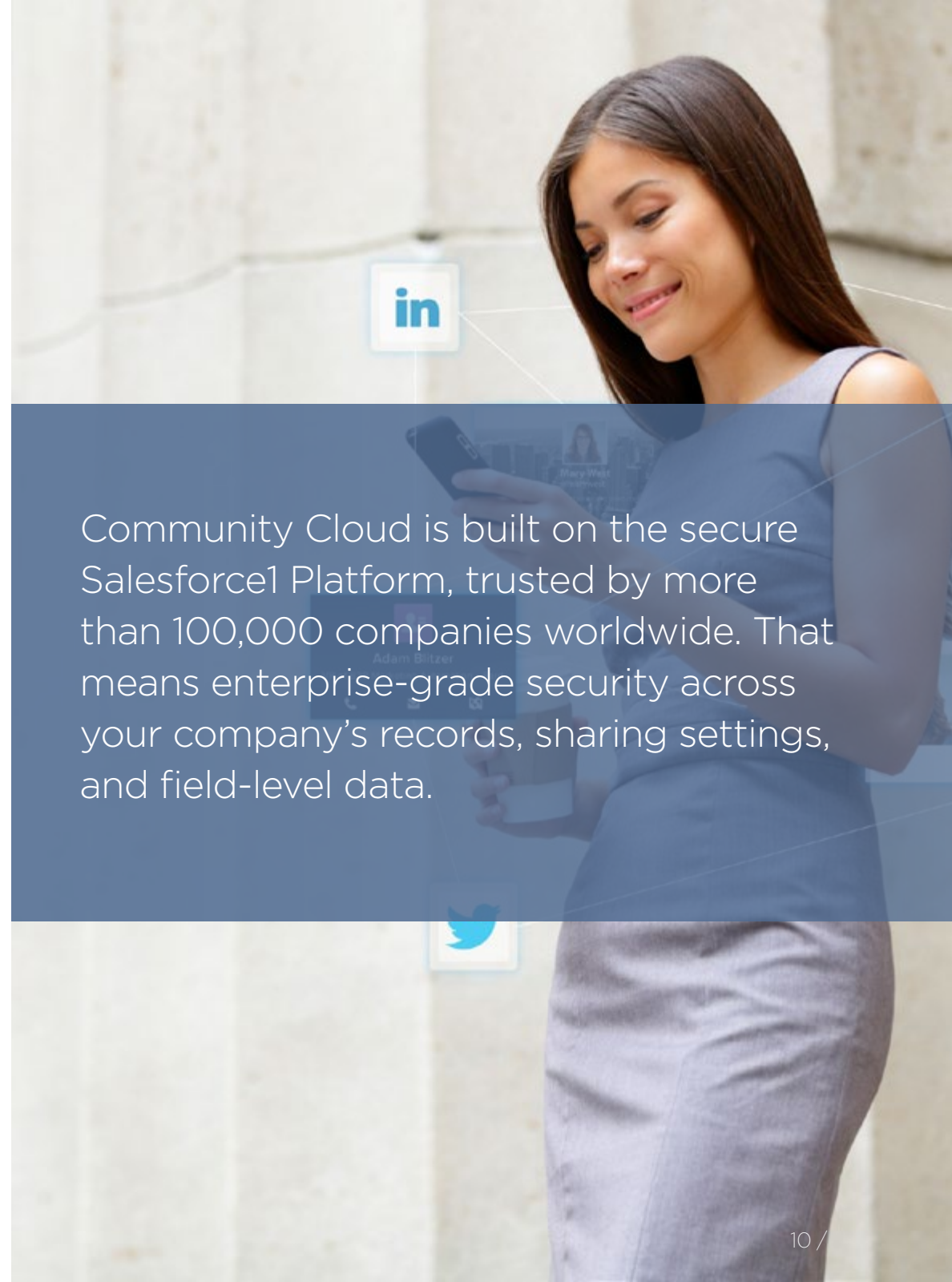


share relevant white papers, e-books, and infographics the moment a customer or partner needs them. This equips your reps to more effectively address your prospects' pain points, in addition to establishing her as a valuable resource.

Your reps won't always have all the answers, which is why collaboration is key. With a partner community, it's easier than ever to identify experts who will have the answer or resource you need. Rather than tracking down an email or a phone number, each individual has a profile that lists their role, expertise, and direct contact information, so you can reach out right from the community.

A Flexible Platform Means Sharing Only What You Want

Community Cloud is built on the secure Salesforce1 Platform, trusted by more than 100,000 companies worldwide. That means enterprise-grade security across your company's records, sharing settings, and field-level data. On top of that, you can customize settings to ensure that your partners only see the data they should — and nothing they shouldn't. Collaboration doesn't have to mean oversharing: with Community Cloud, it means precisely targeted cooperation according to your business's unique needs. The platform is also highly flexible, allowing for private or open collaboration depending on whether you need deal support within your private sales team or want feedback from partners on a joint project. With every step of the way, you can be sure your data is secure.



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Chapter 5

Stay Ahead of the Mobile Curve

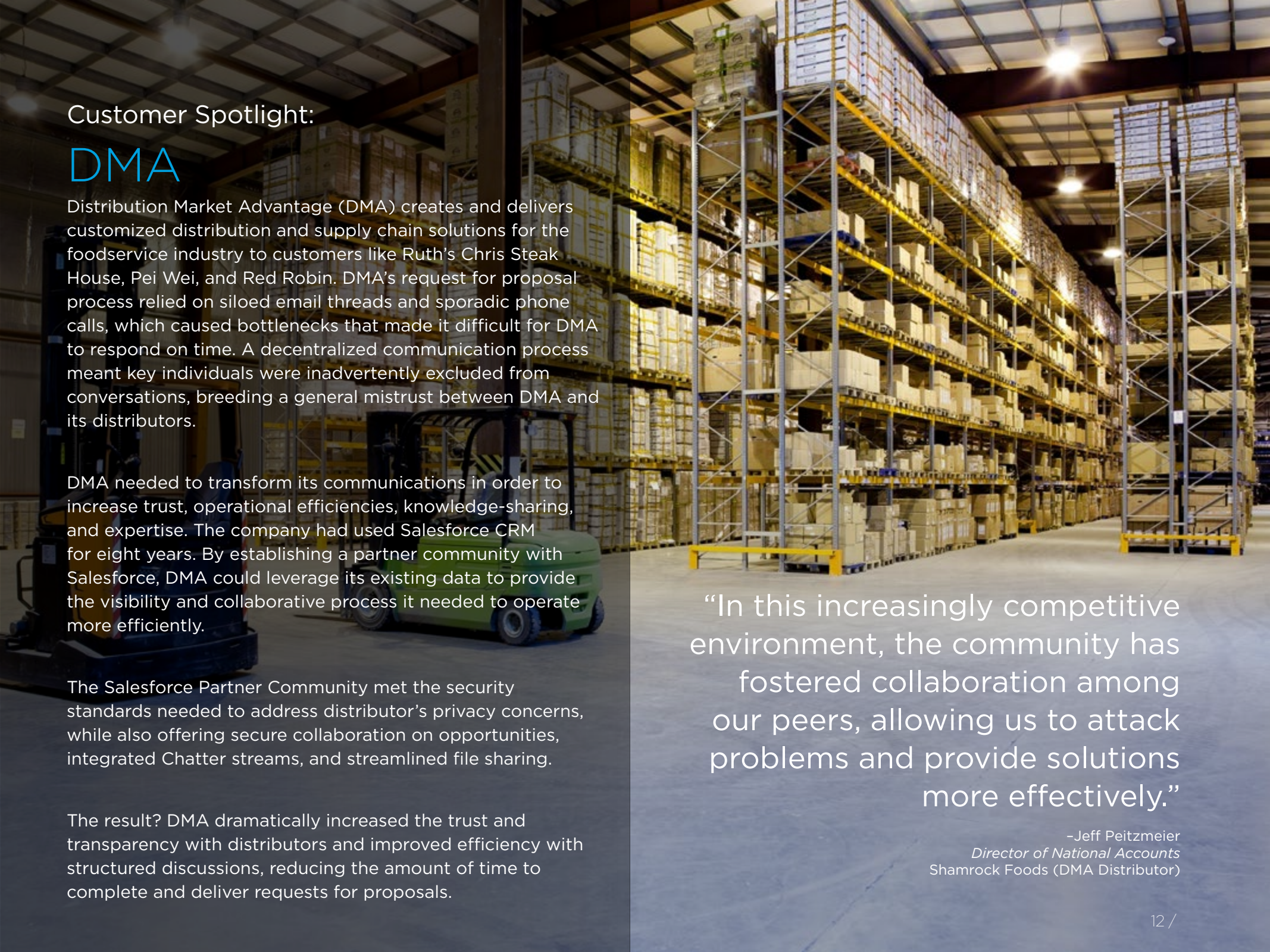
Remember when all business was conducted within the four walls of an office? Yeah, we don't either. Your employees and partners — particularly your sales reps — are constantly on the move, meeting with prospects and customers or collaborating with other teams. Regardless of whether they're sitting at their desk or in a cab on their way to a meeting, they need access to the same information, regardless of their location. "I'll get back to you with that number," is no longer an acceptable response. Salespeople should show up to every call or meeting with every piece of information they need.

In order to make the right decisions wherever you are, you need the tools that equip you with the right information at the right time, whether that means the most recent account activity, purchase history, or the latest product and pricing information.

The Salesforce1 Mobile App empowers your employees to close the deal from anywhere. The partner community is completely mobile — meaning you can share information, ask a question, or register a deal right from your smartphone. Anything you can do with the community on your desktop is also available on your smartphone.

Your employees are already connected to their smartphones from the moment they wake up until they fall asleep. By putting the community at their fingertips, you're mirroring their lifestyle and tapping into everything your partner community has to offer.





Customer Spotlight:

DMA

Distribution Market Advantage (DMA) creates and delivers customized distribution and supply chain solutions for the foodservice industry to customers like Ruth's Chris Steak House, Pei Wei, and Red Robin. DMA's request for proposal process relied on siloed email threads and sporadic phone calls, which caused bottlenecks that made it difficult for DMA to respond on time. A decentralized communication process meant key individuals were inadvertently excluded from conversations, breeding a general mistrust between DMA and its distributors.

DMA needed to transform its communications in order to increase trust, operational efficiencies, knowledge-sharing, and expertise. The company had used Salesforce CRM for eight years. By establishing a partner community with Salesforce, DMA could leverage its existing data to provide the visibility and collaborative process it needed to operate more efficiently.

The Salesforce Partner Community met the security standards needed to address distributor's privacy concerns, while also offering secure collaboration on opportunities, integrated Chatter streams, and streamlined file sharing.

The result? DMA dramatically increased the trust and transparency with distributors and improved efficiency with structured discussions, reducing the amount of time to complete and deliver requests for proposals.

“In this increasingly competitive environment, the community has fostered collaboration among our peers, allowing us to attack problems and provide solutions more effectively.”

–Jeff Peitzmeier
Director of National Accounts
Shamrock Foods (DMA Distributor)



Conclusion

The benefits for your channel partnership are vast — increasing your value proposition, growing revenue, and strengthening your customer relationships. But without an effective way to manage those partnerships, you're missing out on a gold mine of value for your business. With partner communities, you gain valuable insight from everyday partner interactions that are more connected, transparent, and collaborative than ever before.

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.

[Learn more ›](#)



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