CUSTOMER COMMUNITY 101

3 WAYS TO TRANSFORM YOUR CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

salesforce community cloud

Introduction

Customers expect, no, demand individualised, 1:1 experiences with your company and a service experience that is smarter and more personalised than ever. These same customers are the ones driving your business growth, so exceeding their expectations is critical. But lean support staffs make it difficult to deliver these interactions to each and every customer and many self-service options fall short – not built for collaboration and disconnected from your company's other customer support systems.

The best customer service experience is the one that never has to happen because your customers are empowered to solve their own problems without even picking up the phone or sending an email. The solution to service that satisfies your customers without stretching your support staff too thin? A customer community that enables your customers to help themselves and each other – building brand loyalty amongst your customers and freeing up your agents to focus on the more complex questions and problems.

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Self-Service at the Core

The benefits of enabling your customers with self-service are plentiful: reduced support costs and empowered, satisfied customers who can seek answers on their own time. Your customers want to find answers fast, share their experiences with fellow customers, and even work together to solve problems.

Today's consumers are moving fast and when they come across a problem or question, they don't want to waste any time in getting answers to these questions. These same customers are expecting more and more that they will be able to find these answers themselves. Social media channels encourage more personal interactions with companies and create a deeper connection between the brand and the consumer.

How do you deliver fast, personalised service to these social-minded customers, without a support agent speaking to them on the phone? A self-service community deeply integrated in all of your customer support processes. Self-service can become the core of your entire service processes with a Salesforce Customer Community.

Fast, Smart Support – No Phone Call Necessary

Within the customer community you can include a full knowledge base and Q&A section so that product questions can be answered within minutes. Community Cloud's highest-quality search bar allows you to search in both the knowledge base as well as previous community discussions in order to locate the best possible answer. But your customers won't just be accessing the community from their desktop or laptop. The customer community is also mobile-first for your increasingly mobile-minded customers – putting the answers right in the community member's fingertips.

When your customers have the ability to solve their own questions and concerns, that means less calls, emails, and tweets directed at your customer service department. According to a Salesforce Customer Relationship Survey, customer communities result in a 31 percent increase in call deflection, so your support agents are free to tackle the tougher cases.

Home Depot Appeals to its DIY Customer Base

Home Depot's consumer self-service site allows their passionate and fiercely independent do-it-yourself customer base to ask questions and look up articles within the community, many of which are written by real Home Depot employees. Topics in the community include a variety of discussions, like building materials, electrical, or tools and hardware so Home Depot customers can find information that fits their particular project. If the customer can't find what he's looking for, he can post a question within the discussion board and select employees can also participate in discussion and give pointers to point the customer in the right direction.

Looking for even more helpful community content? Visit the Salesforce Community Cloud resource center!

CHECK IT OUT

" " Companies that implemented an customer community saw a

31%

increase in call deflection. " "

Salesforce Customer Relationship Survey

Customers Helping Customers

Within a customer community, your customers aren't just empowered to help themselves, they can help each other, too. Your service agents aren't the only ones with thorough knowledge about your company's product or solution, many of your customers who are using it each and every day are also experts. By leveraging this passionate group to also answer questions within the community, you add a human face to your brand that also promotes other customers to become brand evangelists.

A Support Ally

When a customer has searched through the FAQs or knowledge base within your community but still has a question or comment, the customer can post the question within the community. Additionally, robust sharing rules allow your community manager to alter settings for who sees what. So while some questions and comments can remain public for the entire community to see, you can also manage other questions, like about a broken product, for example, in a private channel.

You can also incentivise this active community participation with gamification, like special badges for your most active community members and leaderboards. Customers have direct access to their peers, who are often using your product in new and interesting ways—including ways that may not have occurred to you.

But your customer service agents are never disconnected from the community and are always able to jump in and provide answers when the community is not able to come up with them on its own. This could mean an agent could share relevant files or documents, create a support case or escalating it, or just answering the question right within the feed by commenting. A customer community enables your support team to deliver premium service, efficiently.

PonoMusic Connects Music Lovers

Rock and roll legend Neil Young started PonoMusic to revolutionise the listening experience with a high fidelity audioplayer and by looking to bring back the communal aspect of music. Young and his team set up a Kickstarter campaign to fund the creation of the PonoPlayer and were surprised when the discussion board within the Kickstarter became a hub for people to come together and talk about not just Pono, but music as a whole.

The PonoMusic team was inspired by these vibrant discussions and sought to create a social music store that blends the e-commerce, the Pono website, and the community. To do so the Pono team used Community Cloud to build a Pono social music store where the focus wasn't on the e-commerce aspect. The Pono community is a place where people can hang out, talk to like-minded people and maybe buy some music. The public-facing community is a space where consumers can connect with one another on the topics that they're passionate about, while also assisting with the customer service side by answering questions for those who are interested in learning more about Pono.

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CHECK IT OUT

" Community Cloud is built to easily incorporate third-party and custom apps that integrate data from any system, like Google Hangouts. "

Deeper Insights, Richer Relationships

For true multichannel support, it's important to connect your customer community to your other service processes. With the Service Cloud and Community Cloud tandem, all of your customer service processes are on one platform – delivering a unified, comprehensive look at what's driving your support department, and what could be done differently.

With Service Cloud you can monitor all of your support metrics in real-time, and can make business decisions based on these metrics immediately, rather than waiting to run a report with your data analysts and receiving the results 2 weeks later. Real-time results means you can clearly identify and track emerging issues and stay on top of them. Community Cloud is easily integrated with Service Cloud, meaning that your customer community is not a separate entity from the rest of your customer support channels. You can also create a workflow so that when a question in the community goes unanswered for a certain amount of time, a case is automatically created and directed to a service representative to answer the inquiry.

A Direct Line to Your Customers

With a customer community, you can incorporate customer feedback in all of your business decisions – their questions, concerns, and opinions are all within the community – your business is constantly in touch with that customer voice in a more intimate, personalised way. You can take this one step further by leveraging your passionate customer community members to create ideas by starting a discussion within the community and highlight the top ideas through community endorsement. When customers see that you're listening to their pain points, ideas, and feedback, they will be more loyal to your company.

Hit the Ground Running

Getting up-and-running with a community (and customising the community to be an interactive extension of your brand), can feel like a big undertaking. But out-of-the-box community templates enable rapid implementation of the community, without sacrificing any branding or customisation elements. Community Cloud features rich customisation options so that your customer community is a seamless extension of your other online properties, like your website and social media presence.

Community Builder makes it simple to alter the visual impact of your community and it's easy to see how the community will look different on a desktop, tablet or mobile device so you can optimise for all these different devices using drag-and-drop tools, no coding required.

With just a few simple clicks you can change the color scheme, logo, header images, login pages, backsplashes, whatever is needed to keep the community up-to-date with your company's branding. You can also easily incorporate third-party and custom apps, like Google Hangouts, to customise the community to meet your company's specific needs.

With the Salesforce1 Mobile App, your community designers and community managers can access the community – even multiple communities – from anywhere so they can make changes or answer customer questions on the go.

Make It Yours

Whether you want your community on mobile or desktop, branded or unbranded, open or closed, Salesforce gives you the ability to customise all aspects of your platform to not only make it yours, but to deliver the best experience for your customers.

Conclusion

Setting up a customer community is a win-win: your customers are empowered to answer their own questions in real-time, leading to greater customer satisfaction. But on top of that, you have greater insights into your customers because of these personalised interactions. With Community Cloud your customers can find everything they need to make the most of your product through a direct line to helpful resources, your support staff, and other customers.

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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RESOURCES YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE:

Communities: The New Key to Business Success

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Why We Built a Salesforce Community: PonoMusic

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IN A WHOLE NEW WAY**

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