How to Build Customer Loyalty with a Customer Community

salesforce community cloud

Introduction

It's important for companies to realise that every customer interaction in marketing, sales, or service is a chance to increase customer satisfaction and retention. Fostering customer loyalty is so much more than just having the most reasonable price, or marketing resources that keep customers informed about the most effective ways to use your product. Customers don't just want one-off positive experiences with different departments in your company – they want cohesive, personalised, end-to-end journeys. Unfortunately, customer service is a critical, but often an underwhelming aspect of the customer's journey. Even the customer service department's role in influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty is shifting dramatically. The old benchmarks of a high-performing service department – first-call resolution numbers and average resolution time – are certainly still important, but customers (especially millennials) value self-service options.

What does it mean to deliver an exceptional customer experience? That question is extremely nuanced, which is why we've created an e-book dedicated to best practices for enhancing your customer relationships with a customer community.

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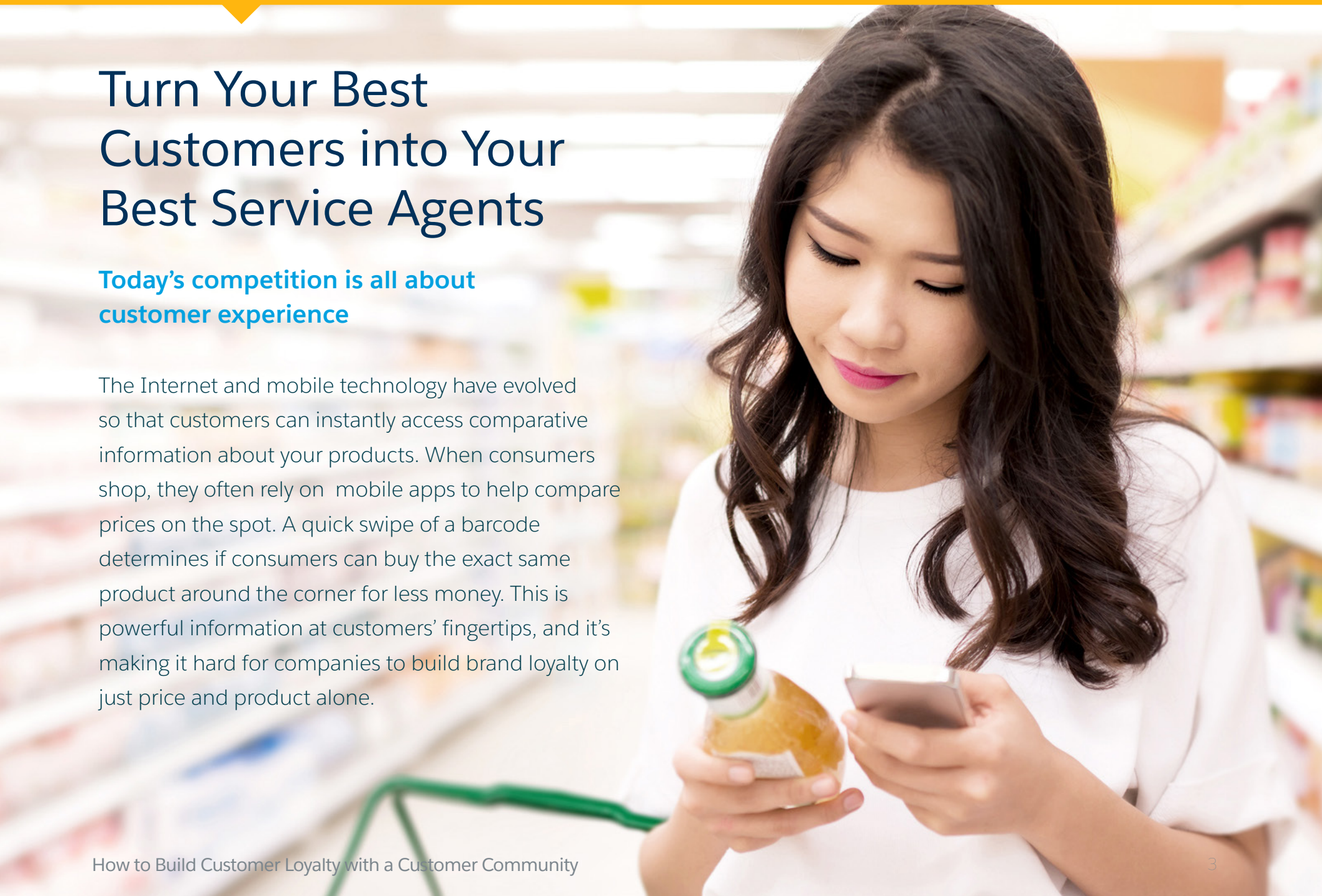
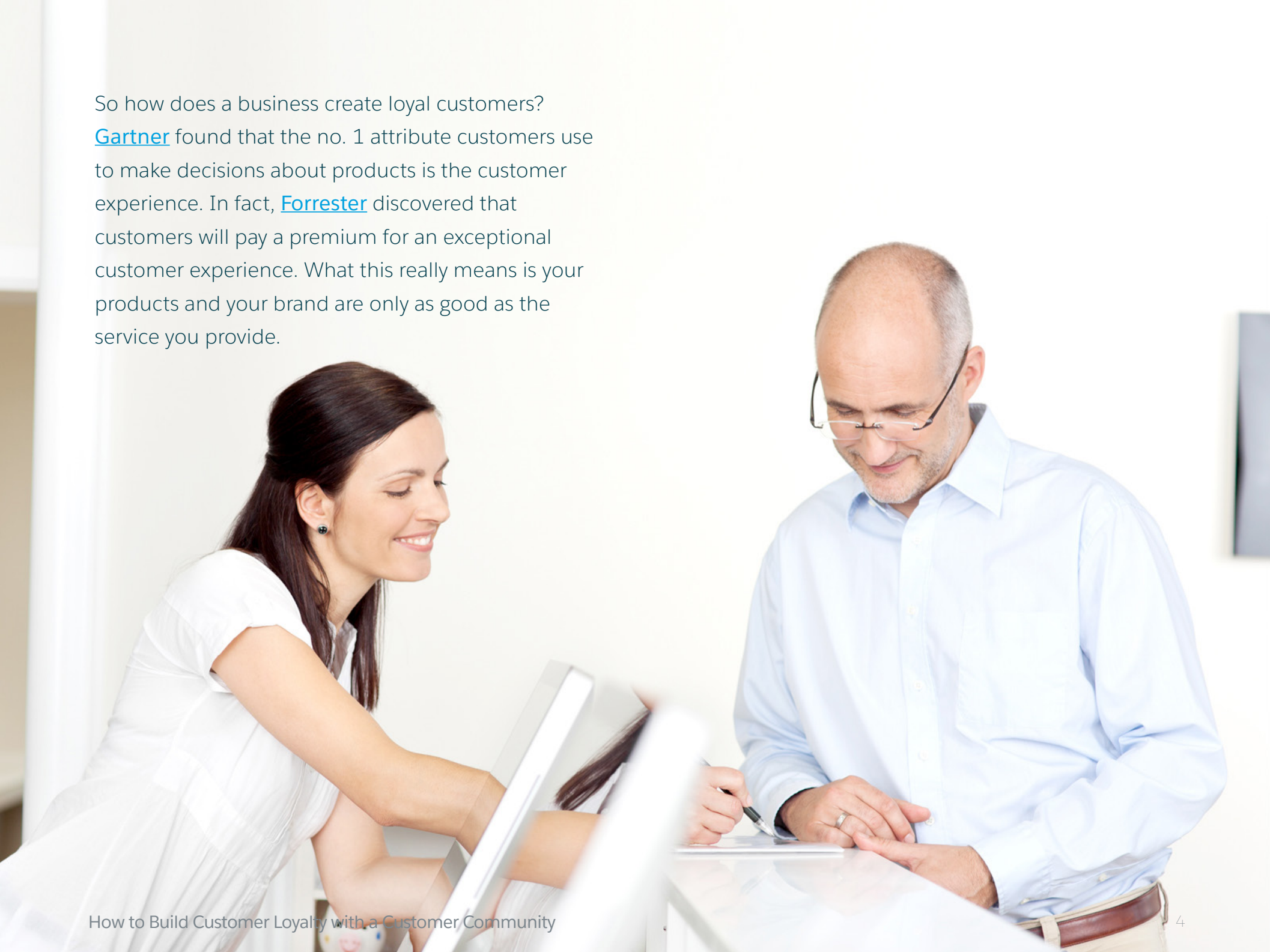
Turn Your Best Customers into Your Best Service Agents

Today's competition is all about customer experience

The Internet and mobile technology have evolved so that customers can instantly access comparative information about your products. When consumers shop, they often rely on mobile apps to help compare prices on the spot. A quick swipe of a barcode determines if consumers can buy the exact same product around the corner for less money. This is powerful information at customers' fingertips, and it's making it hard for companies to build brand loyalty on just price and product alone.



So how does a business create loyal customers? Gartner found that the no. 1 attribute customers use to make decisions about products is the customer experience. In fact, Forrester discovered that customers will pay a premium for an exceptional customer experience. What this really means is your products and your brand are only as good as the service you provide.



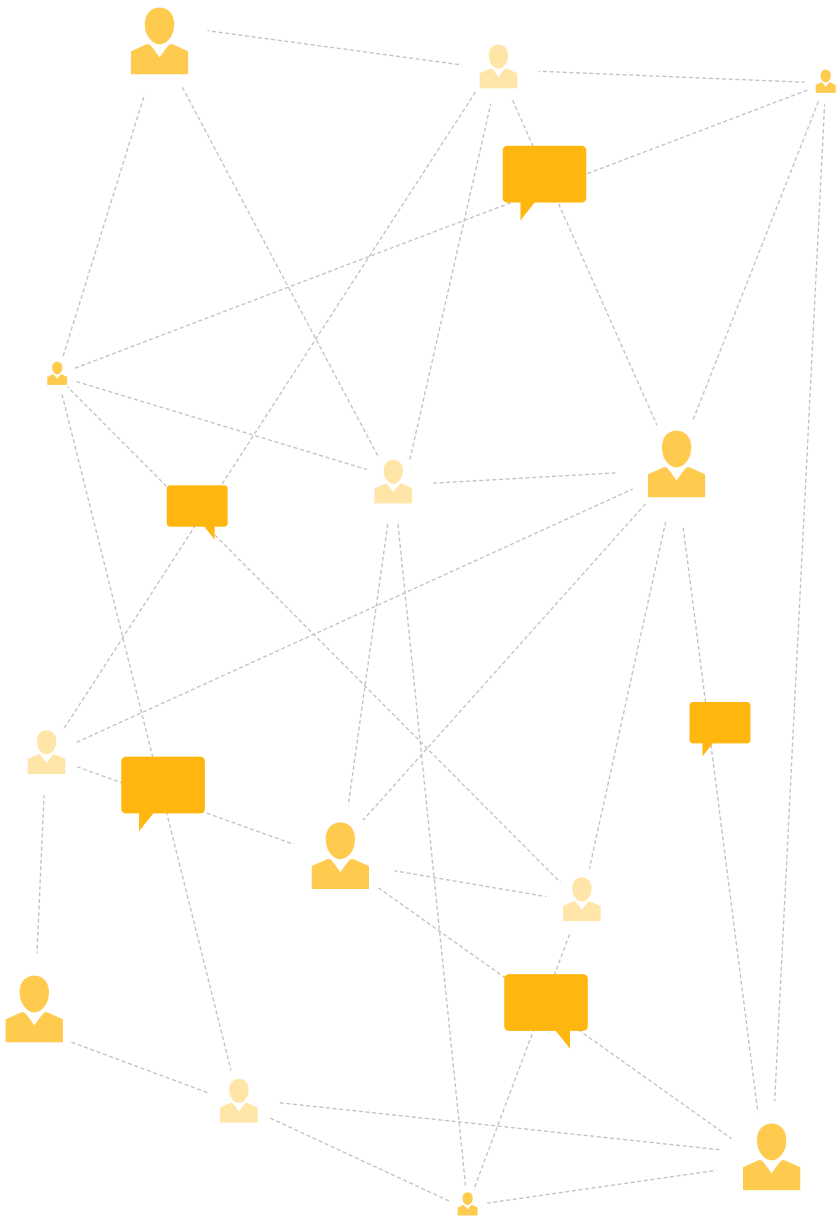
Customers expect to find answers online

Customer expectations have changed in terms of how companies should deliver service and support. They don't want to pick up the phone to call you every time they have a question. They're tired of long hold times, long-winded answers from service agents, and calling multiple times to resolve their issues. Today, customers expect to find answers online. In fact, research shows more than 70% of customers prefer to get answers to their questions from the company's website.

Help customers help themselves – and each other

The best kind of customer service experience is the one that empowers customers to solve their own problems – without a phone call or an email. A portal where customers can search your knowledge base is a start, but to truly improve customer satisfaction, your company should launch an engaging, self-service community.

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.



Your service agents aren't the only ones with a deep understanding about your company's products. Devoted customers and power users become experts simply by interacting wth your product on a regular basis.

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 never occurrred to you.

commschoice
transforming business connectivity

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT:

CommsChoice

Salesforce empowers CommsChoice to put their customers first

CommsChoice works with large businesses to optimise how they connect (their telecoms) and what they connect to (their IT) to ensure that their use of communications technology is seamlessly integrated, cost-effective, convenient and continually aligned with the organisation's overall goals. According to CommsChoice's CEO, Grant Ellison, the company was founded with a single overarching goal: to provide optimal client-aligned strategies and solutions in an industry that traditionally hasn't put customers first.

CommsChoice focuses on Australian companies that have between 200 and several thousand employees. According to Ellison, approximately 6,000 businesses fit this description.

"When I launched with Salesforce, it was because I knew I could trust it to help us put clients at the centre of everything we do."

Grant Ellison, CEO

“By narrowing down our target audience, we’re able to offer a truly specialised service that takes into account the challenges often faced by large and growing organisations,” he says.

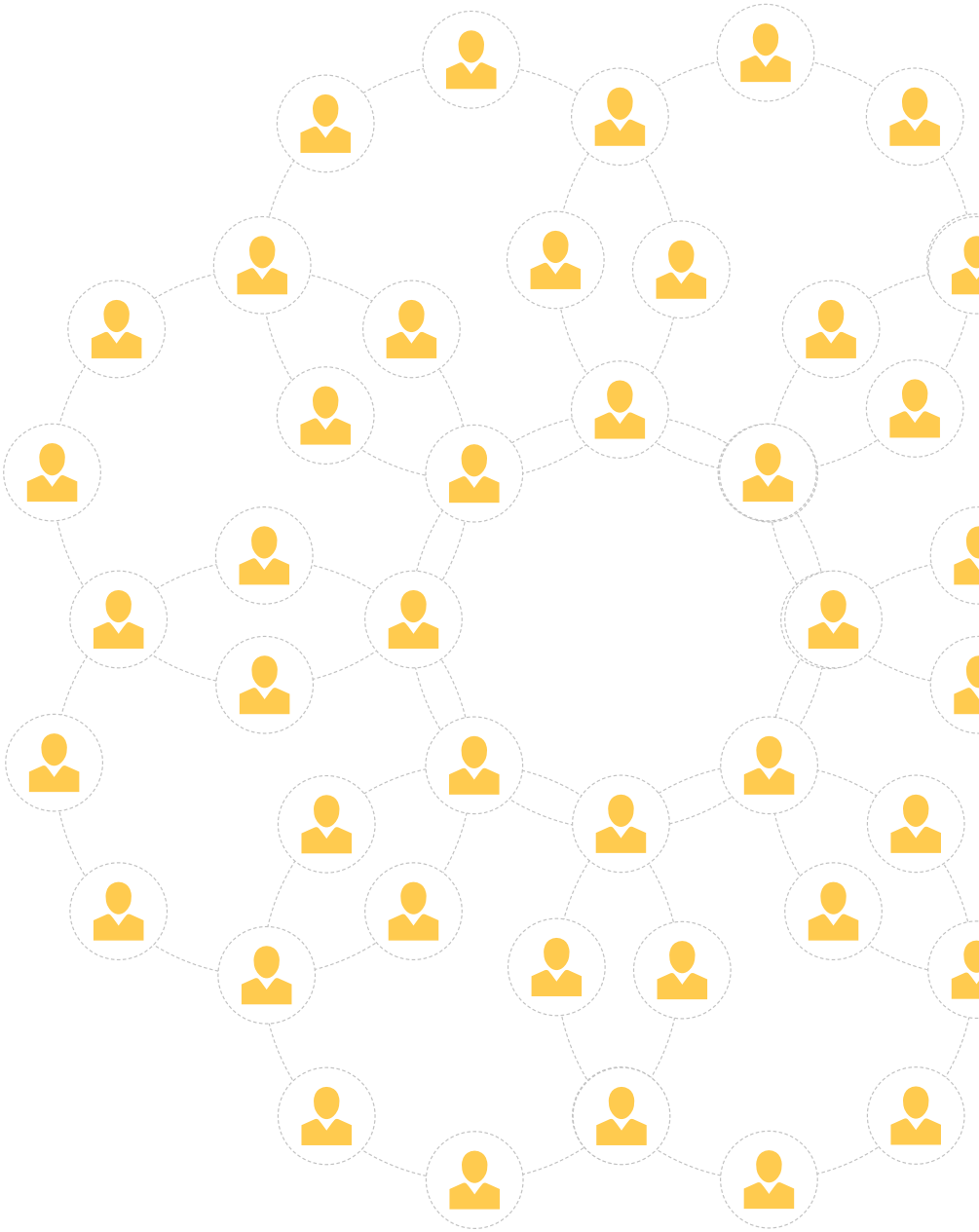
Using Salesforce, CommsChoice is able to proactively identify potential customers and begin profiling them even before they make contact. As a result, CommsChoice staff members are able to keep conversations warm, relevant and personable from the first moment a new customer gets in touch with them.

To accelerate the sales pipeline, CommsChoice staff members take advantage of Salesforce Pardot. Pardot identifies promising leads and ensures that staff members contact them at appropriate intervals. It also automates the distribution of personalised emails.

“Our customers include market leaders in banking, health, insurance and more,” Ellison says. “So we absolutely must be a market leader when it comes to communications. Salesforce has been the key to us getting out in front and staying there.”

Become a Customer Company with a Connected Community

Many companies have created self-service portals where customers can access knowledge articles or interact with other customers to find answers. But self-service portals are not enough. What happens when a question goes unanswered in the support forum or a customer needs more information than what's contained in your knowledge base? Customers leave your site with a disjointed service experience because these traditional self-service portals are unassisted touchpoints, disconnected from your help desk.



Gartner predicts that one-third of all service requests next year will still require help through assisted touchpoints such as Web chat or call centres. This means businesses risk damaging their brand's reputation by not delivering an omni-channel service experience. Companies must invest in a connected community that allows for a seamless transition between touchpoints to reduce friction and help customers find answers fast.

To do so, a self-service community must have the ability to escalate cases in three ways:

1. Allow customers to create cases.

2. Give agents the ability to create or respond to cases in the feed.

3. Escalate cases automatically if a question goes unanswered.

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The need for a 360-degree view of your customers' information

Multimodal engagements in service are difficult to execute effectively. For example, Jeff is a customer who bought a cell phone from a brick-and-mortar store and now wants to learn how to change the battery. He logs in to a self-service community to search the knowledge base, but cannot find the instructions for his model. Jeff then posts a question to the community, but his cell phone is so new, that no one has the expertise to help. Preset rules in the community create a case and escalate the question to a help desk after the question goes unanswered, but now Jeff expects service agents to start the conversation with the understanding of his journey thus far. It is this transition between unassisted to assisted touchpoints where companies falter.

Having a 360-degree view of your customer is critical at this juncture to deliver an exceptional experience. According to the Harvard Business Review, 22% of repeat service requests involve issues related to problems after the first contact, even if the issue was resolved the first time around. In order to personalise the experience, businesses must give agents insight into service journeys like Jeff's. This requires a connection between the community and the help desk, so agents understand what Jeff has tried so far.

To truly become a customer company, agents should also be able to view Jeff's purchase history to gain a deep understanding of who this customer is and how he has interacted with the company to date.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT:

AVG

How to connect your help desk and self-service community

! °B, a leading online security provider, has decoded the secrets for creating an exceptional customer experience. Its community makes it easy for consumers, business customers, and partners to choose the experience that's right for them – whether that's self-serving through hundreds of knowledge articles and videos, posting questions for other members and Community Gurus, contacting support via live chat, or by logging a case. Since members log in to the community using their Facebook or AVG MyAccount credentials, the registration process is seamless, and agents have an immediate 360-degree consolidated view of the customer and all previous interactions through the phone, email, Live Agent, community discussions, or social media engagements.

Since launch, the AVG support community has brought in more than 11 million unique logins, raised Net Promoter Scores from 50 to a record-high 70, and helped the company exceed its self-service goals by 25%.

"Supporting millions of customers is quite demanding," said Daniel Urminský, director, ICT for sales, marketing, and service. Since launch, the AVG support community has brought in more than 11 million unique logins, raised Net Promoter Scores from 50 to a record-high 70, and helped the company exceed its self-service goals by 25%. "I think it really goes to show that when you have all the pieces lined up – when you have an attractive site, good quality search, good quality articles, and you're able to guide the customer quite easily through the service process – it works phenomenally well," said Jas Dhaliwal, AVG's social care director.

Crafting an exceptional experience, as AVG has done, exponentially improves the service experience. But now that customers are happy, how can businesses enable their communities to be as agile and expansive as the company is?

"We are able to provide support successfully while maintaining a relatively small customer care team."

Create a Community That Grows with Your Business

In this hyperconnected world, companies strive to deliver a customer experience that meets the rising expectations of consumers. Businesses are turning to community solutions since they are extensible and can tackle a wide variety of use cases. Those in charge of a community face two important challenges: sustaining engagement in their community and proving ROI of the community.

These challenges can be addressed by focusing in on three key areas.

1. Obtain executive sponsorship to prioritise adoption and engagement with internal stakeholders and external customers.

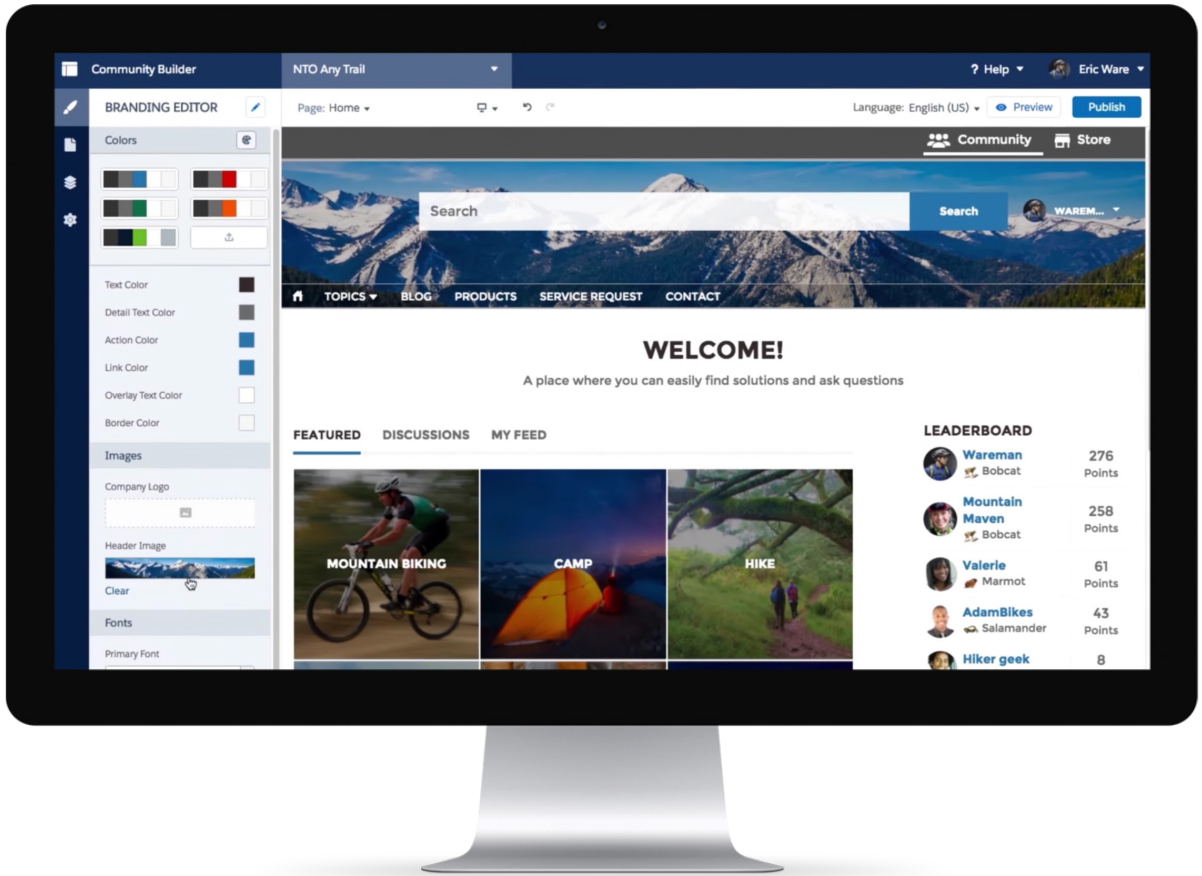
2. Ensure business processes are integrated into the community as part of the customer's journey.

3. Have a Community Manager who oversees the daily health of the community.

Launching a next-generation community may seem like a daunting task, but identifying a platform that is easy to launch and extensible will save time and money in creating a community that's easy to stand up and grows with your business.

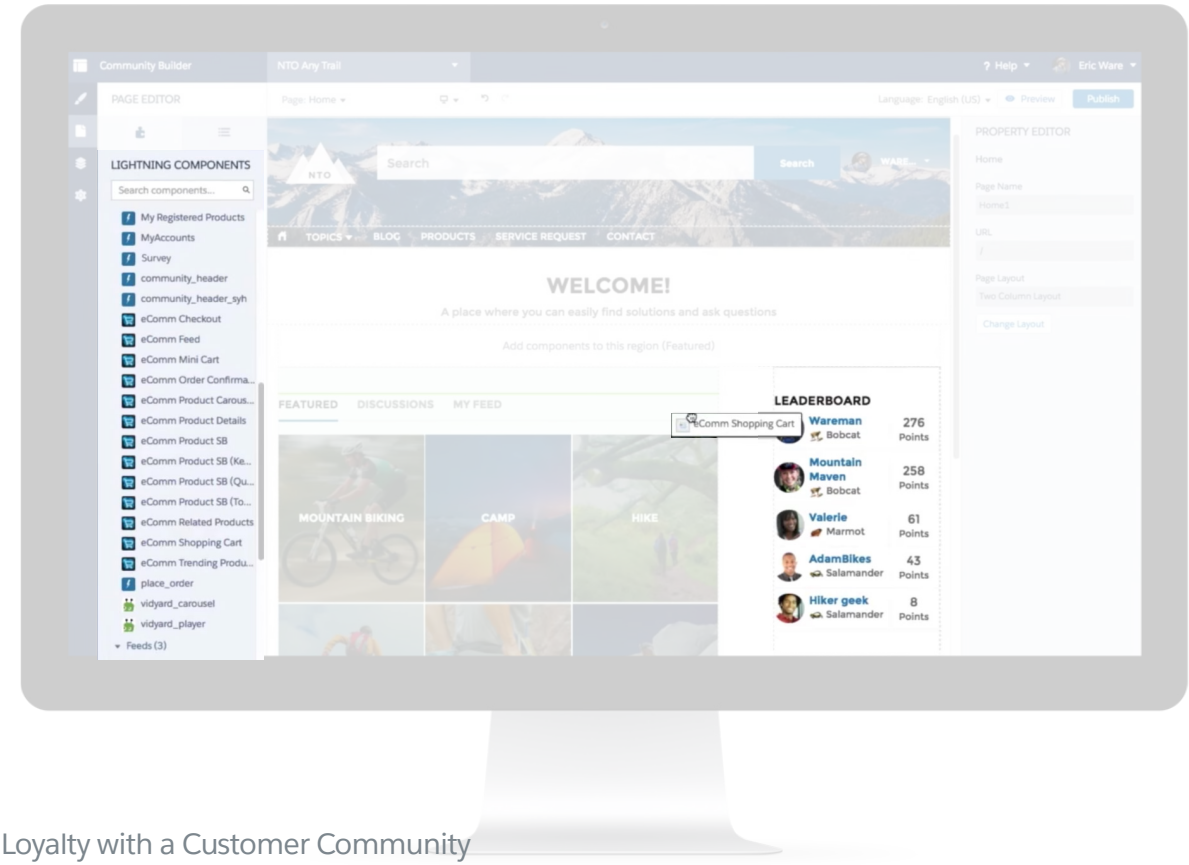
Move at the speed of your customers

If Community Managers want to keep pace with their customers, they should embrace a “template approach.” Community Templates for Community Cloud are game changers because they allow any company to build a fully branded and responsive community that looks great on any device. Not every company has an extensive IT department to deploy new platforms, which is why WYSIWYG editors such as Lightning Community Builder are equally important. Drag-and-drop technology helps companies keep development costs down and accelerate deployment since no coding is required.



The easiest way to increase the community's functionality is by investing in a platform with a strong ecosystem of components. For example, Lightning Components for Community Cloud allow businesses to easily drag and drop widgets built by partners right into the community.

Components like Livefyre's Media Wall, which allows customers to import their Twitter accounts, allows businesses stay abreast of the conversation happening around their brand to serve customers better. CloudCraze's Commerce on Salesforce, which integrates the shopping cart experience into the community, makes it easier to navigate to a commerce portal. Extending functionality with components saves development time and resources while streamlining the customer's experience with your brand.



CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT:

eWay

A community from scratch in just four days

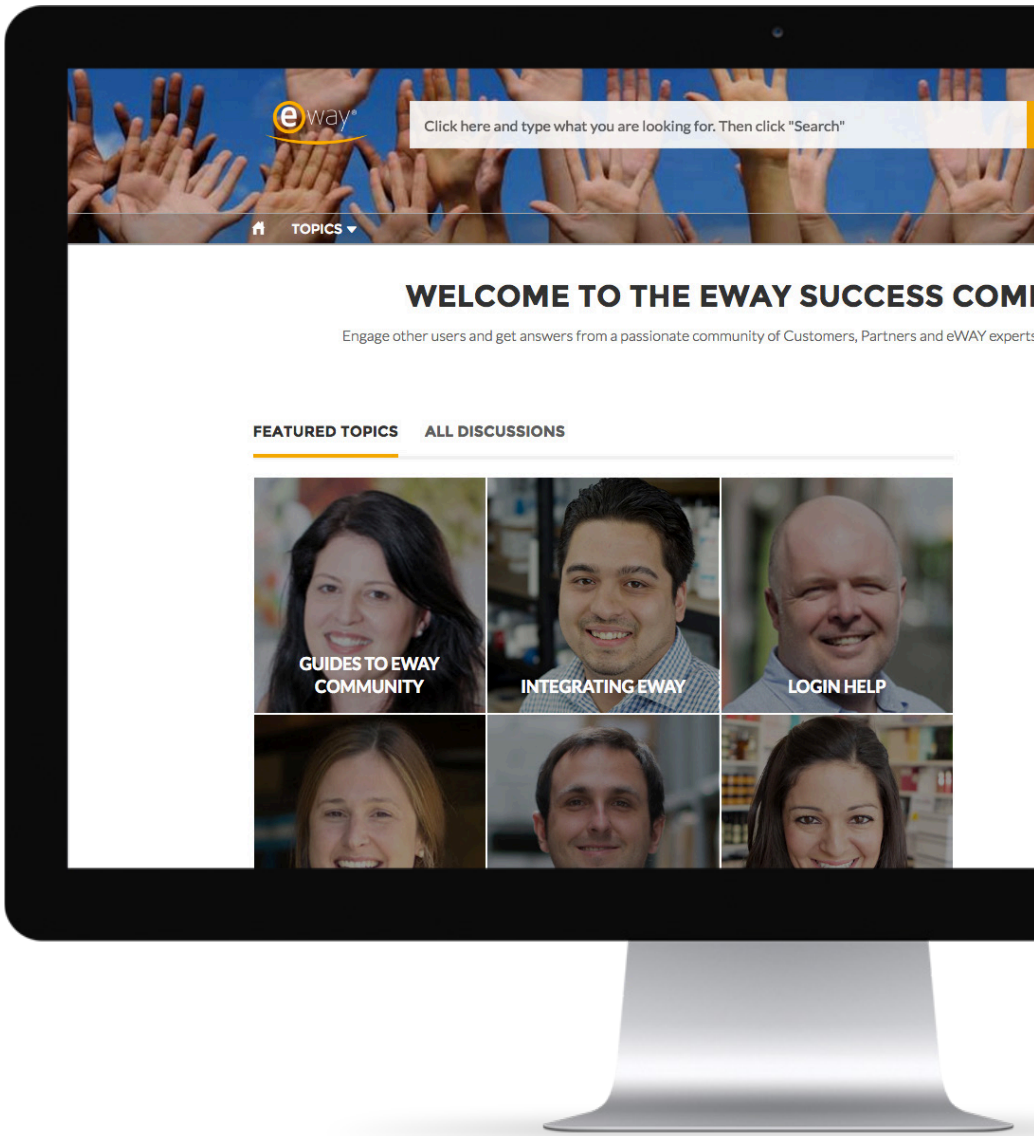
Australian company eWay provides a safe, reliable, and frictionless online payment gateway to help businesses worldwide grow and thrive. Built on a commitment to personal service and support, eWay now handles a rapidly growing market share of online payments in Australia. With such enormous growth, eWay needed service capabilities that stayed ahead of the growing customer base's expectations – which means providing self-service options available at any time and with any device.

"Our customers are growing, and so are we – it's a beautiful thing."

Matt Bullock,
Founder and CEO,
eWay

With Community Cloud's easy-to-use Lightning Community Builder and Community Templates, eWay was able to build a completely customised and mobile-optimised community with third-party and custom apps included – and no coding or IT required – in just four days. Now eWay customers can find answers to their questions within the self-service community, quickly and easily. As eWay's customer base grows and their expectations change, eWay can transform the community using drag-and-drop Lightning Components from Community Cloud and the Salesforce partner ecosystem.

By establishing a scalable community and integrating with your sales, marketing, and service channels, your business is uniquely positioned to maximise each and every customer touchpoint and connect to your customers in a whole new way.



Conclusion

Setting up a customer community is a win-win: your customers are empowered to easily find answers, 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 by connecting them directly to helpful resources, your support staff, and other customers. The end result? A full customer journey that connects every department of the business and boosts customer loyalty.

CONNECT TO YOUR CUSTOMERS
IN A WHOLE NEW WAY

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