



Whitepaper

The Best of Both Worlds: Combining Communities with Self-Service

Creating A Great Customer Experience
While Lowering Overall Support Costs

Companies are constantly challenged to improve their customer service experience to meet increasing customer expectations—while at the same time, being asked to reduce costs. The popularity of new customer service communication channels just adds to the complexity of delivering a great customer experience.

The most effective solutions are focused on either enabling customer communities that include questions from popular social channels or developing self-service capabilities powered by a knowledge base. At Jive, we believe both elements are critically important, and that you shouldn't choose one over the other, but rather deliver them together in a seamless customer experience.

The Benefits of Customer Communities

Customer or peer-to-peer communities help improve both satisfaction and loyalty by allowing people to quickly get answers to questions, locate support resources and keep up with the latest product news. As other customers and experts answer many of the questions, support organizations benefit from greater efficiencies. The result? Happier customers AND lower support costs.

- **Greater Customer Satisfaction**
Our customers have increased their own customer satisfaction by 30% or more.
- **Increased Brand Loyalty and Sales**
Our customers have seen community members spend 240% more.
- **Reduced Operating and Support Costs**
Our customers have cut support costs by 70%, increased call deflection by 40% and reduced callbacks by 10%.

The Benefits of Self-Service

More than ever, customers are telling us that the most important thing a company can do is to value their time. Implementing self-service support provides access to a knowledge base populated by vetted, definitive information from an authoritative source. This ensures customers get accurate, relevant and complete answers, so they can quickly get back to what they were doing before the issue arose.

- Customers want to solve their issues quickly and easily on the Web. When they can, they are likely to buy more, with 88% saying they will increase their spending.¹
- Beneficial to all companies—big and small—easy-to-use self-service encourages customers to help themselves efficiently, and at lower cost to your organization.

So, which solution provides the better result?

Customer communities provide a great resource, allowing customers to pose questions in their own way, while easily being able to reference previously asked (and answered) questions. They can provide richer information when seeking support, including images, photos, screen shots, logs and video to describe the issue, and use the device of their choice—laptop, smartphone or tablet. They can get real user insights from one another, something that your own support agents are often unable to provide, and can more readily address emerging issues/questions that your organization didn't anticipate.

However, self-service—enabled by a well-maintained knowledge base—has the advantage of highly valued and vetted information. Often, organizations know answers to commonly asked questions that could be managed in a well-curated knowledge base. Knowledge base articles can also be augmented with rich media, providing exceptionally easy responses to your customers' most common questions.

With limited resources, where should you invest? Which solution will give you the best return?

Our experience at Jive is deep. Between our numerous customer examples and first-hand experience delivering award-winning customer service, we know that both provide value in different ways. And choosing between the two only provides a partial solution. Why?

First, from the customer's perspective, a knowledge base is a small subset of what the organization actually knows. So there are many times when it doesn't have the answer. Then the customer is back where they started, having to create a case, and wait for an answer. It may help reduce some calls, but it doesn't address the customer's need for rapid responses to all their questions.

From the organization's perspective, a knowledge base isn't just a technology expense. The real value is realized when every article is meticulously maintained. With resources at a premium, allocating people to maintain knowledge base articles means less time closing cases.

Community vs. Self Service		
	Community	Self Service
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolific, large • More experts • Fast content development • Known and emerging issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small content base (succinct) • Proven experts • Vetted content
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large content base • Needs curation and community management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small content base (limited) • Lacks true user experience • Known issues • Needs dedicated resources

Best of both worlds: customer communities and self-service

By creating a customer community experience with structured self-service, you're actually giving customers exactly what they want—and your organization is getting exactly what it needs:

- Lower operational costs
- Increased agent productivity
- A rise in customer satisfaction

Jive's Story

Jive's customer community has allowed peers to come together to share information on a range of topics from managing customer communities, to supporting developer communities, to answering questions on how to use and configure our software. It's also how customers connect with Jive's support organization to create a case.

Kevin Williams, Vice President of Customer Support has been innovating around how to continue to meet high customer expectations by bringing community and self-service capabilities together.

"We began by designing the overall support experience from the customer's perspective," explains Williams. "This was critical to ensuring that we didn't offer a siloed, disjointed feel where the documentation is in one place, discussions in another, ticketing in another, and the knowledge base in yet another." Once the process was mapped, Williams optimized the internal processes—and embedded self-service at every opportunity in the customer experience—to make it as efficient as possible. "Each step was designed to gently nudge the user to the most efficient way to solve the issue, and so they don't have to use the direct support option—which is the most expensive and lowest customer satisfaction experience."

By inserting self-service into the process at every step—in the workflow, search, navigation, and wizards, when creating a case—we provide customers with a choice rather than dictate their path. "Not every customer wants to use self-service or use peer-to-peer." We recognize that as well, so providing choice is really important."

Measure and Report

Many organizations have a knowledge base, but fail to keep it properly maintained—easy to do if you're unable to track the value it's providing. The knowledge base enables customers to get their answer without having to create a ticket, therefore deflecting a potential case or call to a direct support agent. This deflection allows your support team to concentrate efforts on more pressing issues, which results in decreased costs and increased productivity for your organization.

But how do you measure something that didn't happen?

Williams uses the table below to determine how the community and self-service are each contributing to case deflection, based on users' behavior.

Create and Abandon (Row A): If customers start to create a case, and then abandon it after viewing a knowledge base article, this counts as a deflected case.

Review and Leave (Rows B and C): If customers review a knowledge base article, and leave the community, we believe that 20% of the time (a conservative estimate) they got their answer. So for every five of these "behaviors" we can identify that a case has been deflected.

Open and Close (Row D): If customers open a case, and it's quickly closed with minimal support—and a knowledge base case was used in the process—we identify this as a Knowledge Base-assisted case.

Measurement

		May 18- May 28	May 25- May 31	June 1- June 7
Support Knowledge Base Article Metrics				
A	Case Wizard KB Doc Finds	54	42	54
B	Non-Case Wizard KB Doc Finds by Logged in Users	99	99	153
C	Non-Case Wizard KB Doc Finds by Guests	36	39	42
D	Case Assisted by KB Docs	60	60	81
	KB Self Service Finds	249	240	330
Support Discussion Metrics				
	Case Wizard Discussion Finds	54	60	33
	Non-Case Wizard Discussion Finds by Logged in Users	75	69	99
	Non-Case Wizard Discussion Finds by Guests	12	12	15
	Case Assisted by Discussion	141	141	147
	Success Metrics Total (SMT)	360	381	477
	Enter your average cost per service incident →	example: \$10		
	Total weekly savings (multiply above 2 numbers)	example: \$10x360=\$3,600		

Sometimes, due to increased products or new product launches, Customer Support experiences peaks valleys in support case numbers. One key performance indicator is to monitor the **number-of-cases to number-of self-service cases ratio** to be sure that case deflection, as an overall percentage, is increasing.

It's also important to regularly review your customers' experience to ensure they're presented with and aware of lower cost, higher customer satisfaction options to resolve their own problems. In Jive's case, we were able to realize a 10% increase in the above ratio, which allowed for growth in support services with fewer direct support agents.

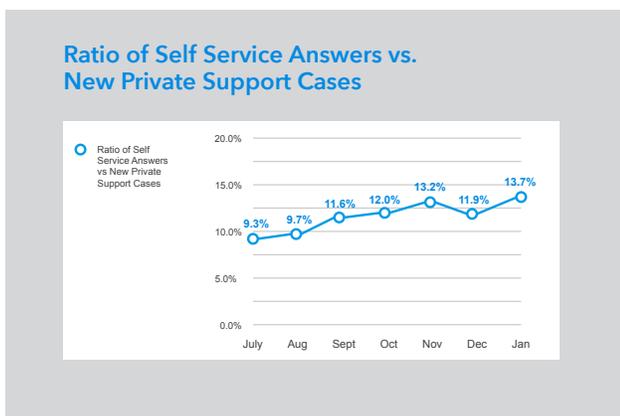


Figure 1: Case to self-service case ratio

Once you know how many cases a direct support agent can close, and how many are deflected using your knowledge base, you can use the information to decide where to invest in the future.

Jive has developed a comprehensive resource for Support Managers on how to develop their own [Support Community](#), which is open for anyone to use.

¹ Dixon, Matthew, Freeman, Karen, Toman, Nicholas, Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers, Harvard Business Review, July-August 2010.

² Self-Service That Really Serves, CRM Media, April 2009.

Conclusion

At Jive we understand the need to deliver a world-class self-service experience in a community-oriented environment to our own customers. We've seen first-hand that investing in, and developing an information-rich knowledge base—enabling self-service within a community environment—can help companies achieve increased customer satisfaction and overall sales, while also significantly reducing support and operating costs.

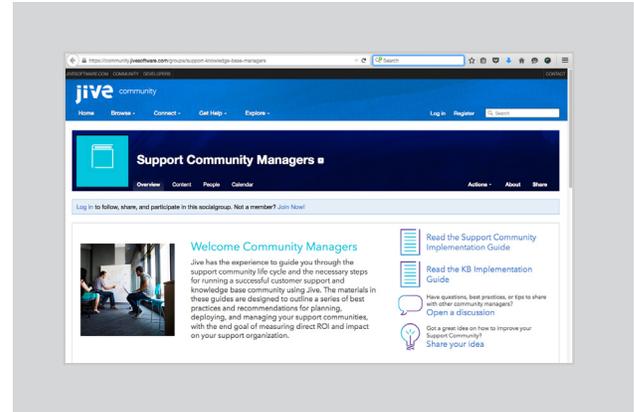
Recommended Reading

By 2017, 67% of customer service interactions won't require a human. In this new research from Gartner, "Why You Need to Rethink Your Customer Self-Service Strategy" (March 2015), learn more best practices and common pitfalls around customer self-service strategies.



Download the analyst report

<http://jive.to/rethink-self-service>



Jive Support Community

Talk to Us

Contact us to learn how Jive-x provides best-in-class support communities with integrated self-service and peer-to-peer capabilities!



Get in Touch

<http://jive.to/contact>