

JIVE WHITEPAPER

THE CUSTOMER SERVICE BALANCING ACT
NEED TO REIN IN CUSTOMER SUPPORT COSTS?
THERE'S NO NEED TO SACRIFICE QUALITY AND SATISFACTION.

jive

Balancing customer service quality and costs is an ongoing battle for most organizations. Superior service means higher labor spend, but shunting customers into long support queues and confusing self-help areas costs companies loyalty and retention. Conventional technologies don't help much: They're fragmented, with no unified view of customer interactions. They don't provide fast answers and effective peer-based support, leaving customers frustrated and dissatisfied; and they do nothing to improve retention, knowledge-sharing and overall enablement of service rep teams.

Now there's an alternative that eliminates the conventional cost/quality trade-offs. Jive Customer Service Communities, powered by Jive's social business platform, provide an optimal combination of assisted peer-to-peer support communities, call deflection, selective escalation and productivity-enhancing private collaboration. The result? A combination of reduced call volume and faster resolution times, happier customers and lower costs

Customer Service Without the Compromises

According to McKinsey Global Institute, improving customer service is essential to unlocking many billions of dollars in additional value for companies worldwide. But how do you boost the quality of customer service while also controlling costs? How do you please new and returning customers while keeping support reps effective and satisfied at the same time?

The status quo is not encouraging: companies can staff up call centers with rockstar support reps and delight customers, but only at budget-busting prices. Or, they can cut back on in-person support, subject customers to long hold times and fend-for-yourself online forums where it may take days or longer to get answers, and watch loyalty and repeat business take a nosedive.

And adding a few low-cost social media touchpoints, such as a Facebook Page, doesn't solve the problem. These don't provide the real engagement and detailed answers customers crave, and only add to an already fragmented view of customer interactions scattered across CRMs, forums and other disconnected channels.

In addition, conventional solutions do almost nothing to make reps more efficient. CRMs may be great at tracking tickets, but they don't deflect the kind mind-numbing repetitive issues that can make support work so tedious.

Jive had all these challenges in mind when it designed Jive Customer Service Communities. Jive Customer Service Communities are a significant departure from previous technological approaches. They apply the next-generation capabilities of the Jive Social Business Platform to provide more effective peer-based support communities that solve customer issues fast and deflect a large percentage of calls and cases. Jive communities make it easy for customers to find answers in second, navigate to relevant resources and assist each other with questions and issues.

Jive leverages built-in intelligence and advanced social technology to optimize the effectiveness of every resource involved, including agents, customers and digital content. The solution also breaks down silos and ties together badly splintered support channels.

In contrast to transaction-based systems like CRMs, Jive addresses the human factors and relationships central to successful service. For example, customers use the community to meet up, ask and answer questions, access rich support content and share best practices. Jive drives the whole process by simplifying search, proactively recommending content and people, anticipating users' needs and pointing them to helpful resources, and facilitating connections among like-minded users. This optimized mix of human interaction and intelligent assistance leads to much faster resolution, and saves reps from having to constantly answer the most common questions, day in and day out. And if issues aren't quickly solved in the community, Jive can automatically escalate them so reps can step in strategically to resolve things.

Jive Customer Service Community also provides private collaborative spaces where support team members, subject matter experts and customers can work together to share information and solve specific issues.

In short, Jive transforms the whole customer service equation. The sections below describe how.

Customer Service Integration: Provide Synergy, Not Silos

Fragmented systems are a huge barrier to effective customer service and support, and ultimately, to satisfaction and loyalty. The problem has been getting worse, not better, as tools and solutions proliferate. Look under the hood of a typical customer service organization and you might find a support forum disconnected from the CRM; a knowledge base sitting on an outdated, isolated SharePoint site; a Facebook Page that has turned into a pseudo-support community; and other social media channels where customers post and discuss issues without any coordination with the company's systems. The greater the disconnection, the harder it gets to manage your customer interactions, to follow an issue through to resolution and get a handle on what's working and what isn't.

Jive integrates disparate channels and provide a unified view of your customer service interactions. You get the complete picture, not an impossible-to-solve jigsaw puzzle. Jive bridges your key systems, including:

- **Your CRM:** It's critical to make sure that any questions that get asked in your public-facing community can be easily converted to a support case in your CRM if they go unanswered. Jive Customer Service Communities provide this crucial CRM-community integration.
- **Facebook:** Jive automatically replicates Facebook Page content in your customer community, where resident experts can step in to answer questions and resolve issues, with their responses automatically posted back to Facebook. Both environments stay in sync, and customers get the help they're looking for.
- **Private collaboration:** Your team needs its own place where reps can work together, share knowledge and consult experts to solve customer issues—and then easily share the answers with the broader community. Jive Customer Service Communities include fully-connected collaborative spaces where your team—and subject matter experts, stakeholders and customers themselves—can converge, share, communicate and solve issues without disconnects.
- **Your CMS:** This is where, for years, well-intentioned support and knowledge base documents have gone to die. But what if you had a community where your customers could easily search and find answers quickly, whether those answers came from other customers, subject matter experts or your support team? What if a simple conversation could easily be converted into a knowledge base article that was up-to-date, accurate, crowd-sourced and then marked official by your support staff? Suddenly you've turned a document graveyard into a dynamic, living and breathing collaborative community. That's what Jive does.

Peer-Based Support That Really Works

Ideally, customers could get the answers they need promptly and at little or no cost to service organizations. In an ideal world, the experience would be so good that it would convert otherwise indifferent customers into authentic product champions.

Of course, that's a far cry from today's norm. Here's a more typical scenario: Call after call comes into your support team, often after the customer has searched online and waded through pages of documentation without any luck. It's an often demoralizing experience that leaves customers fuming and your call volume (and support costs) soaring. Traditional customer support strategies and systems haven't helped much either. CRMs help track and manage support tickets, but they've failed at their promise to improve customer relationships.

Here's the formula for peer-based customer service success:

- **Forget the 800 number and DIY forum you scraped together 5-10 years ago:** They're not working. Jive enables customers to easily find answers, documentation and peers who can quickly help solve their issues and build enthusiasm in the process. Social networking has fundamentally changed the way people connect, share and learn, and Jive leverages these social dynamics.
- **Gamify:** Badges, points, missions and leaderboards are proving to be powerful incentives for community participation and peer-based assistance. Gamification can be the catalyst that turns a customer base into an extended support team. Jive's powerful game mechanics can motivate people to do exactly what you want them to do—answer questions that your service reps would otherwise be answering.

- **Great search:** Jive's search technology lets customers quickly find what they're looking for, before they think of picking up the phone. Its social search engine goes beyond simple string-matching and factors in user behavior and preferences to identify and recommend the most relevant content and most helpful peers. And it provides robust, community-wide searches of the knowledge base, discussions and participants, so if the answer is out there, the customer can find it without having to start a new discussion thread. Jive even goes further, proactively recommending helpful resources based on user interests and behavior, before the user even initiates a search.
- **Built-in case deflection:** Inevitably, there will be some questions that haven't yet been answered in user discussions. When that happens, Jive gives customers the next best thing, highlighting related dialog and content that may provide the needed information. Typically, users will either get the help they need through pre-existing resources (via search or recommendations) or by posting their questions and receiving answers from community experts.
- **Auto-escalation:** When a user posts a question that goes unanswered, Jive can automatically escalate those questions after a configurable interval (such as 24 or 48 hours), enabling reps to jump in and post the answer. That way, no customer is left behind, but reps are deployed strategically—only intervening when they're really needed, not stuck answering routine questions over and over. And any answers that reps do post are now available to the community as a whole: a much more efficient one-to-many alternative to the old one-to-one support paradigm.

Jive Customer Service Communities: No More Customer Service Dilemma

Jive Customer Service Communities transform a set of either-or alternatives—quality vs cost, efficiency vs satisfaction—into a win-win. Customers get the answers and help they're looking for faster, and they develop community connections that solidify genuine loyalty and satisfaction. Reps become much better at their jobs, and more likely to stay in those jobs. Organizations benefit from greater productivity, lower costs, happier employees and higher revenues.

But forget those qualitative claims for a moment and look at the quantitative evidence. A top-three global business consultancy recently analyzed the impact of Jive on hundreds of customers and found these results:

- Reduced overall call volume 8%
- Reduced call escalations 13%
- Increased first call resolutions 16%
- Reduced call handling time 15%
- Decreased overall customer support costs 9%
- Increased workforce productivity 15%
- Improved employee satisfaction and reduced turnover 24%

Those are the kinds of impacts that really do rewrite the rules of the game, eliminating the traditional customer service compromises and adding many millions of dollars to companies' bottom lines annually.

It's a new day for customer service. Learn more at: jivesoftware.com/customer-service-communities