

Lithium

making social the way
you do business



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we help companies unlock the passion of their customers.


The Lithium Social Customer Suite allows brands to build vibrant customer communities that:

intro

Those in charge of service and the customer experience today are faced with challenges both large and multifaceted. With both customer expectations and the cost of service delivery rising, service and support owners are faced with increasing pressure to close the gap.

And since control over the conversation has gone completely over to the customer, it becomes an increasingly difficult gap to close. Thanks to social media, we no longer control the messages zinging around the marketplace. Whether our products really are “New and Improved” is now under daily scrutiny by millions of social customers and they can broadcast their judgments at the click of a mouse.

So, many service and support owners today live in constant fear of a social media crisis brought on by that one disgruntled customer over that one thing that went wrong that one time. If we ignore or don’t respond quickly enough to customer feedback—heads up! It can be all over Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube as fast as you can say, “Doh!”



**their
customer
service
sucks!**

No question, building positive brand reputation and better customer loyalty with support is getting more expensive and harder to do right. Overall customer satisfaction is generally far south of our comfort zone. 60% of customers say customer service does not meet their expectations¹—an especially painful data point with cascading repercussions when all that poor service inevitably leads to poor sales. According to Jupiter Research, 80% of customers are less likely to buy again after a poor customer service experience.

The end result is an environment in which many service and support line of business owners now operate under unfunded mandates to deliver better customer experiences and improve customer satisfaction while servicing a growing number of channels. Indeed, the social media explosion has given us endless new channels and technologies to master and manage and with them, a veritable tsunami of data we needed to understand yesterday.



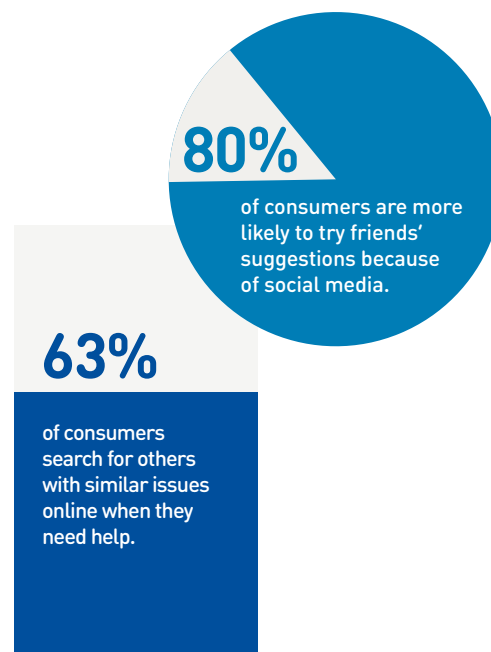
**i'm never ever
shopping there
again, ever!**

the good news

Your social customers are critical business assets that can help you not only deliver better service at a better value, they can help your product marketing teams ideate, give your brand marketers real-time feedback, advocate for your brand, generate leads for your sales teams, and deliver predictive analytics that can catapult your brand right to the head of the pack.

In growing numbers, your customers are turning to each other online for service, product reviews, and news on your latest offerings. 63% of consumers report they search for others with similar problems online when they need help². Customers are starting at search engines and increasingly navigating to customer community platforms, blogs, forums, and social networks to interact with your brand and share their voice.

Even more good news: When consumers use social media to share their experiences with your brand and products, they have enormous influence over each other—80% report that they are more likely to try new things based on a friend's advice because of social media³.



Source: Lithium, CMO Council 2011

bringing social customers into the fold

Most companies know their product and support teams are corporate assets. They know that when PR and marketing work in concert, they get better results. They realize the benefits of cross-functional teams, highly matrixed organizations, and the breaking down of siloes that stall, suspend, and even halt the march toward real business outcomes.

What they need to know is that pulling social customers into the function, not just as another cell in the matrix, but as an organizing principle, makes great things happen for the customer and the brand. Those brands that are leaping ahead have the policies, processes, and technologies in place to make social customers and their experiences the heart of the business. Through social community software and social media monitoring tools, they are sharing social customer data, insights, and decision-making across service & support, marketing, sales, PR, and operations—fully optimizing the critical business asset that is the social customer.



in it to win it

Consumers aren't social just when they're on Facebook or Twitter. They interact with companies across dozens if not hundreds of online touch points as they find, evaluate, access, purchase, use, and get support for your products and services.

When service & support, marketing, sales, product, and operations teams start to collaborate around the customer and start to leverage social technologies and behavioral data across teams, the customer experience becomes more cohesive, predictable, trust-worthy, satisfying, successful, and ultimately more aligned with the brand.

Looking ahead, "in it to win it" companies can expect to spend more time coordinating initiatives in cross-functional teams as they adopt a more holistic approach to social media. Not only will they deliver better customer experiences, they'll also enjoy more streamlined internal operations and reduced costs.

But making social the way you do business means not stopping there. At the end of the day, your organization is tasked with improving sales and reducing cost in a new business model where a two-pronged customer strategy focused on increased customer satisfaction and cost reduction is no longer enough. Competitive advantage now goes to Swiss army-style brands—those that use a number of smart integrations to deliver compelling social customer experiences and fully infuse all facets of the organization with the power of social.

Brands with the policies, processes, and technologies that put social customer data right on the doorstep of service and support, product and brand marketers, customer experience managers, PR professionals, business development, and sales executives are pulling ahead of the pack.

Yesterday's social customer strategies focused on satisfaction, loyalty, and awareness. Today, we shoot for insight into customer decision-making, building brand advocacy, social customer ideation, and using social media to generate sales leads. Next generation social and brand strategies aim for maximizing the business value of all social customer interactions—using social customer behavioral data Swiss army-style—in every way we can.

How? Brands that make social the way they do business:

1. Connect purposefully with social customers across the web, and
2. Capture social customer interaction data and leverage it across the business.

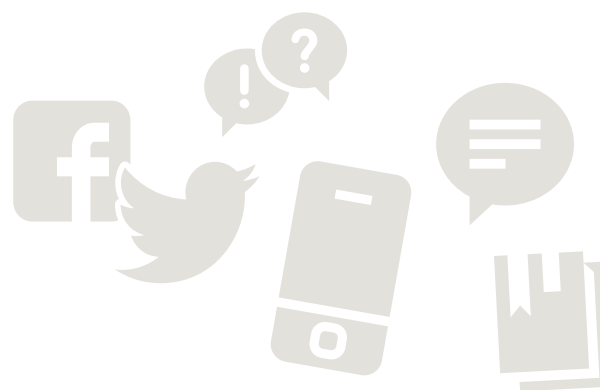
connecting purposefully with social support

Peer-to-peer support is a cornerstone of social business infrastructure and an important step in making social the way you do business. It helps brands to not just connect, but connect purposefully with social customers by enabling them to help each other quickly and easily across the web.

And, social support offers the immediate benefit of being better, faster, and cheaper than traditional agent-customer support. It's better because customers often know the product better than employees, faster because vibrant customer communities operate 24/7, and cheaper because it turns passionate contributing customers into an extension of your work force.

Moreover, social support is a veritable social customer interaction goldmine. The day your social customers start helping each other online in an environment that you own is the day you start mining that gold—caching social customer interaction data that can be used to inform the rest of the business.

Where does all that social analytics data come from? Online customer communities typically include a number of social applications that let customers help each other quickly in multiple channels, but that also build, develop, and house the knowledge capital naturally created by these social interactions—no matter where they take place.



When social customers tweet, “where’s the off button?” over and over again, when they post “how do I turn this thing off?” on Facebook pages, brands who let customers answer these questions, collect the best answers, and make them easy for everyone to find are building a social support infrastructure: a peer-to-peer customer assistance network made from social applications that collect and share customer data across the social web. Social applications that build social support infrastructure include:

Forums: Customer forums let you organize discussions at any level of granularity in order to share how-to information and troubleshooting advice. They can typically be embedded within any web page and often allow customers to rate them for their answer quality.

Q&A: Question and answer apps connect people with questions to experts with answers. They make it very easy for customers to ask new questions or find answers to those asked previously. They can also make it easy for contributors to find unanswered questions in their area of expertise and author educated social solutions.



50%

of consumers say they expect
to find support on Facebook.

Source: [Lithium](#), CMO Council 2011

User-Generated Knowledge Base: Enabling customer experts to create, approve, and organize helpful knowledge articles is faster than internal teams can publish documentation and FAQs. A well-organized user-generated knowledge base captures the most valuable content and turns it into a business asset optimized for search.

Mobile: Mobile apps help social customers to create, view, and respond to content from digital devices—smart phones and tablets—an especially valuable application for staying connected with brand superfans who tend to create most of the content.

Twitter and Facebook Integrations: Social customers need to be reached where they are, and they are everywhere. Twitter and Facebook integrations extend the brand's ability to provide social support in channels where customers actually spend their time, while bringing even more social customer data into the business.

capturing and sharing social customer data

Whether we listen or not, whether we enable a social support solution and start gathering social customer data or not—it's out there. Our customers are already talking to each other about our brand and products every day. If we don't listen or bother to bring social customer interaction data into our business, we can bet our competitors will.

Smart brands are listening. They listen to their own social customers, to their competitor's customers, and actively look for emerging industry trends. And they engage. They have the social media engagement infrastructure that allows them to listen, connect, enable, and importantly capture social customer interaction data so that it becomes owned media.

No question, the social media revolution has given us an explosion of data both inside and outside the enterprise. In this highly active interaction channel, it becomes increasingly important that valuable data is owned, so that it's not lost or ignored. And while there is no true fixed engagement platform in the social universe, organizations with a clear focus on making social the way they do business are placing bets on:

1. Social networking apps and add-ons
2. Better engagement management systems
3. Flexible core platforms that easily integrate with other sites and networks
4. Bringing multi-channel interaction data into a single coffer of customer intelligence

It's not hard to imagine how such a coffer of social customer data might benefit various departments throughout the organization from service & support, to sales, to product marketing, and to PR. And smart brands are doing just that—using their imaginations to leverage investments in social media across the entire business. Smart marketers leverage customer intelligence to identify superfans—their most engaged, passionate social customers and enlist their help in driving brand advocacy. Savvy community managers use customer intelligence to track community health and vibrancy. Service execs leverage social customer conversations to enable peer-to-peer support, product teams to drive product innovation, sales teams to identify prospects, and PR teams to track the reach of executive blogging.

Leading social brands are not just finding ways to listen to, create, and own more social customer data, but they are also finding smart ways to leverage that data across the entire business. With modern CRM tools and traditional process automation, smart social brands are combining social customer interaction data with established workflows to create real business change. Bringing issues reported through Twitter into Salesforce, for instance, appending customer contact records accordingly, and giving sales teams the means to engage in highly relevant dialog with customers and prospects is just one example. Using Salesforce business logic to route and respond to issues raised in social media is another.

line of business	use of social	business value
brand marketers	find and engage superfans	drive advocacy
community management	track community health and vibrancy	increase customer satisfaction
service executives	enable peer-to-peer support	reduce support costs
product marketers	ideate with social customers	accelerate innovation
PR	track executive blogging	measure influence

In fact, the combination of social networking and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has been so successful for so many, that it has spawned its own full-blown discipline—Social CRM.

Social CRM is concerned with the software, social applications, and processes that allow employees, customers, and partners to communicate quickly and easily. Social CRM is also concerned with data and its use—particularly, with social customer data, its capture, analysis, and management such that the organization realizes improved customer satisfaction, reduced response times, and accelerated product development. Social CRM Integration takes it even one step further, bringing critical data to lines of business in order to maximize productivity and increase efficiency across the entire enterprise.

And while efficiency and productivity are excellent aims, the social CRM-savvy are yet again reaching for what's next, positioning themselves for even greater competitive advantage. And what is next? Predictive analytics: Knowing early in the purchase process who will buy what and when. Those able to use customer data to make reliable predictions about future trends in consumer behavior are those that will enjoy the greatest competitive advantage—all because they make better use of social customer interaction data.

a note on corporate culture

Social support isn't just about improving customer satisfaction. Social support also builds enormous SEO value—of huge interest to digital marketers. Social CRM isn't just about building customer relationships. It's also about building productivity and efficiency—highly valuable to business operations.

Moving on to the next generation of social support—making social the way you do business—means an organization-wide effort to organize around optimizing the customer experience. It means working in cross-functional teams where social customer data is shared, analyzed, and all sides of the business are involved in customer experience strategy decisions.

The policies, processes, and technologies described above are the infrastructure needed to enable the effort, but the proper corporate culture is necessary to make it hum. The larger and more entrenched the organization is in traditional, siloed ways of managing customer interactions, the more difficult it can be to realize the full benefit of enterprise-wide social customer engagement.

Customer-centric corporate cultures recognize that everyone in the organization from senior VP, to sales rep, to product developer, to service agent has a business objective that involves some set of customer interactions. Customer-centric cultures invite everyone who touches customer data to the social customer experience party, and in doing so, are gaining enormous competitive advantage by leveraging the full potential of the social web.



check list

Is your business ready for to make social the way you do business?

Here are a few ways to examine what's needed in your business to get started:

1. Do you have the social infrastructure to connect meaningfully with your social customers across the web?
2. Do you have the workflow, processes, rules, data structure, training, and people ready to manage online customer communities and social media channels?
3. Do you have the technology, workflows, and processes to create comprehensive customer views and share them throughout the business?
4. Is your organizational culture rallied around customer experience optimization?
5. If not, do you have the commitment to and strategy for needed change management?

resources

1. Getting Social Business Advantage in 2012
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2. Forrester Research, Inc.—2012 Customer Experience Predictions
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3. 10 Steps to Integrate CRM and Social Media
<http://thesocialcustomer.com/jesushoyos/37704/10-steps-integrate-crm-and-social-media-socialcrm-scrm>
4. Social CRM Changes CRM Definition
<http://www.enterpriseappstoday.com/crm/social-crm-changes-the-definition-of-customer-relationship-management-2.html>
5. Integrated Social CRM—A Path to Satisfied Customers and Profits
<http://www.eweek.com/c/a/Enterprise-Applications/Integrated-Social-CRM-A-Path-to-Satisfied-Customers-and-Profits/>

Lithium social solutions helps the world's most iconic brands to build brand nations—vibrant online communities of passionate social customers. Lithium helps top brands such as AT&T, Sephora, Univision, and PayPal build active online communities that turn customer passion into social media marketing ROI. For more information on how to create lasting competitive advantage with the social customer experience, visit lithium.com, or connect with us on Twitter, Facebook and our own brand nation – the Lithosphere.