Now on Now: Optimizing self-service customer support in the ServiceNow Community

A look back at year one of running on the Now Platform®

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Optimizing self-service customer support

ServiceNow's philosophy is governed by a simple question: How do we make work, work better for the people who use it? One way we do this is through the ServiceNow Community, powered by the Now Platform® and hosted on our customer service portal, called Hi. Connecting with customers and partners gives us a unique perspective to learn directly from the people who use our products.

Rethinking the Community experience

ServiceNow believes that a community is a gathering place for users to share knowledge. It simplifies the resolution of questions through an interactive, easy-to-use collection of conversations, personalized content, and expert advice. It connects to multiple knowledge repositories within ServiceNow to provide a self-service ecosystem of easily accessible information.

At the beginning of 2018 we migrated from a third-party solution onto our own Community application, part of the Customer Service Management product. Our goal was to dramatically improve the user experience for all Community members, but also allow customers to take advantage of Customer Service Management's new powerful digital workflow.

"By moving Community onto the Now Platform, we can integrate it into our customer service ecosystem, beginning with ServiceNow Knowledge Management and extending to ServiceNow Case Management and the Customer Service Portal. Our goal is to offer automated workflows for case creation to known customers whose questions don't receive an adequate response. We are constantly working toward a more seamless customer experience for question resolution," said Luke Morris, Director of Operations, ServiceNow.

Community & support: customer service digital workflow

ServiceNow has had its Community site for more than 10 years. In recent times, it's grown to 190,000 members and a significant amount of content. The bulk of our Community users are customers and partners. We aim to deliver a faster option for resolving inquiries no matter where the user originates from: Google, Community, our Knowledge Base, or the Customer Service Portal.

By improving functionality on the site, adding capabilities that increase people's trust in our Community, and expanding the visibility of our content to search engines like Google we have increased our annual **views** to more than 30 million, 5,000 questions asked per month, and a significantly lower demand on Customer Support for low-priority cases.

> **ServiceNow Community Highlights**
>
> - 5,000 questions asked per month
> - Over 3 million monthly views
> - 190,000 members and growing
> - 80% of questions get replies in 6 hours
> - Significant reduction in Customer Support tickets submitted

We migrated to Customer Service Management's more consumer-friendly interface to offer more comprehensive, self-service access to information, drawn from our knowledge repositories as well as Community experts. To do this, we created integrations that allow users to seamlessly navigate our self-service ecosystem. Federated search and related content widgets collect and display answers from multiple ServiceNow sites and present richer and more complete results.

A more robust collection of knowledge means customers can find answers to their questions faster. This in turn gives our technical support engineers (TSEs) more time to focus on solving complex, higher priority cases and creating relevant Knowledge Base articles. The result is increased customer satisfaction, as measured by our Net Promoter Scores (NPS) of 55 for service and support.

Optimizing search on the platform

Approximately 80% of Community traffic starts with a Google search. We fine-tuned the Community to ensure relevant content appears in Google search results. Furthermore, when a user lands on a Community content page, they will see sidebar widgets linked to related Community and Knowledge Base content. Here are some of the integration highlights we have achieved so far, with more to follow.

- When customers initiate a keyword search in the Customer Service Portal, we display the relevant, cross-referenced content from the larger ecosystem of ServiceNow self-service sites, including Community. They can then click on topics for further information. This is a good way for users to get answers to questions that others have already asked and avoid creating cases.

- When customers browse the Customer Service Portal, we show recent and contextual Community content based on cases the user has opened in the past. We then tailor the recommended content, reducing the search time and improving time to resolution.

- Within the Customer Service Portal, customers can submit a question directly to the Community and a list of their previous Community questions will appear for reference. Clicking on any of the past questions takes them to the discussion within the Community, making navigation between the two sites quick and easy.

- Within Community, all customers can search on keywords. In addition to viewing answers from within Community, users can also click on a new Knowledge tab to see results from the Knowledge Base.

- If customers ask a question on Community but still feel they require technical support, they can create a case. A note will appear, displaying the average time to resolution. Customers can then choose how to resolve their questions, via self-service or a support ticket.

- Later this year we will add automated case creation within Community, eliminating the extra steps required to submit a case from the Customer Service Portal.

By delivering content across multiple platforms and optimizing the results for search engines, we can facilitate communication between experts and those with questions. Customers can see a more targeted and accurate list of answers to their inquiries. We continue to expand Community integrations to include Product Documentation, Training, and the Customer Success Center.
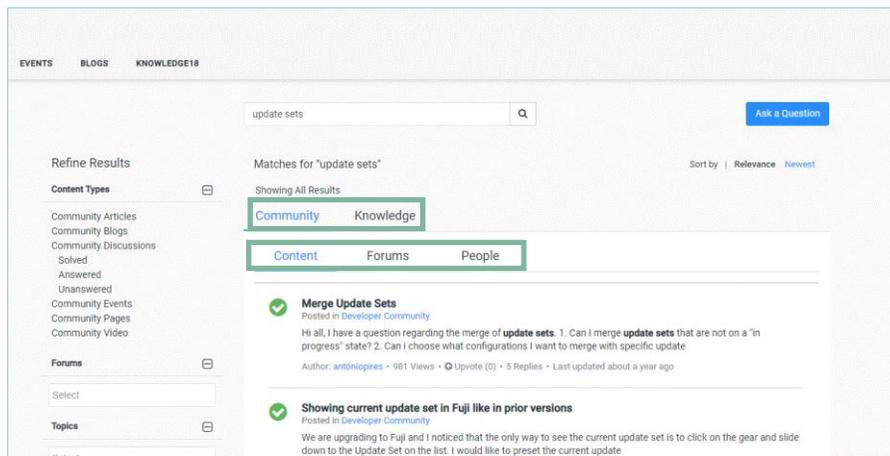

Figure 1: A typical Community search generates results that include Community content, forums, expert links, and Knowledge Base articles.
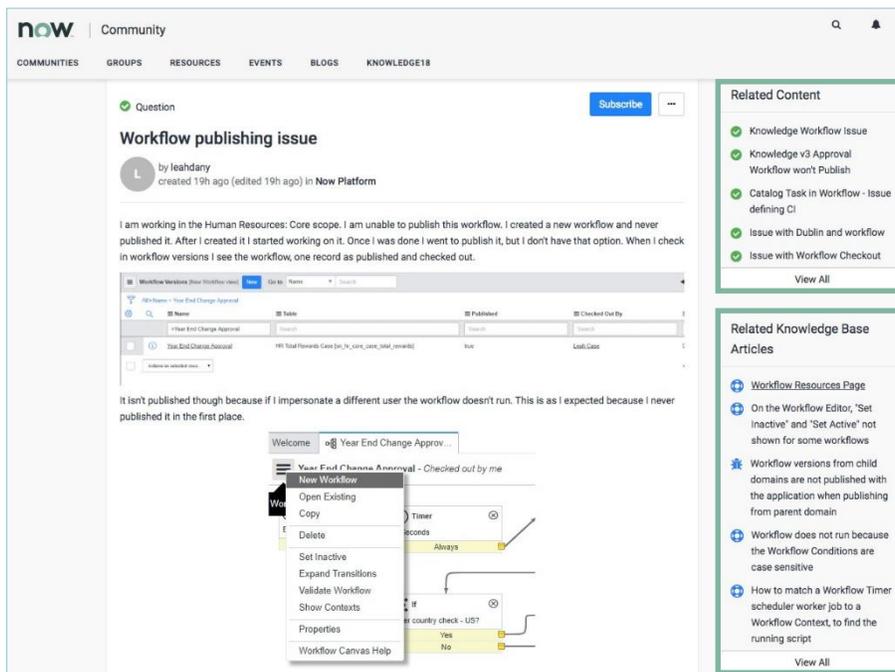
Figure 2: A question posted by a user in Community generates content in the sidebar, including related Community content (upper right) and Knowledge Base articles (lower right). Knowledge Base links take the user to relevant articles.
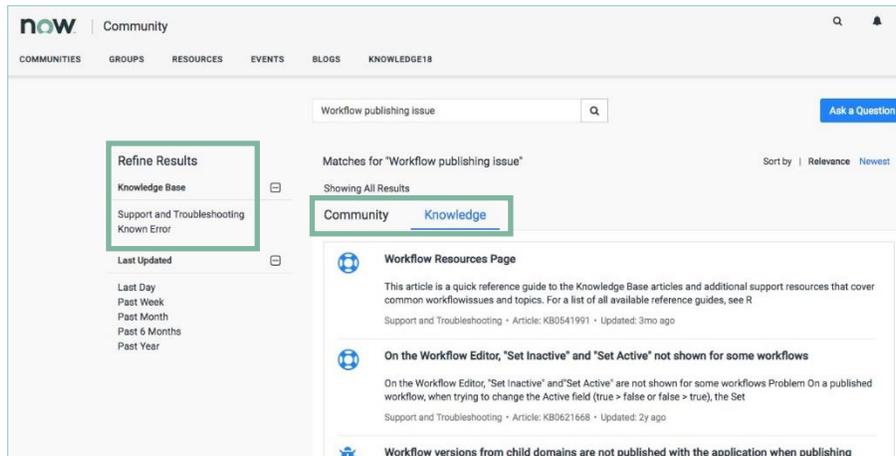

Figure 3: When a keyword search is performed in Community, results are presented on numerous tabs. Relevant content from the Community is posted on the left tab and Knowledge Base on the right tab. Icons identify which Knowledge Base the information comes from (in this case Support & Troubleshooting or Known Error) as shown on the left navigation bar.

Steady growth

Following the migration of Community to the Now Platform, we've seen engagement and metrics rise above pre-migration levels. Survey results showed that more than half the time Community users find the answers to their questions by using search, eliminating the need to even post a question. This further deflects the number of cases being submitted to Customer Support for resolution.

"Community should provide a user experience that breaks down the content silos and provides frictionless support. The more we can integrate our platforms, the faster we can serve up relevant answers in the format preferred by the customers," said Tim Albright, Director, Community Marketing, ServiceNow. "We are constantly evaluating the best way to surface the most relevant answers so customers can resolve their issues quickly. The content categories are broadening to include Knowledge Base articles, forum discussions, and, in the future, product documentation and online training."

Moving Community to a new platform was a risk. A vast amount of content and user profile information had to be migrated, and users had to learn a new interface. But a year later, we can see that the benefits—an easy to use interface, improved features such as gamification and reputation ranking, the integration of a broader range of information sources and formats, and better search optimization—have won our users over. The number of monthly unique visitors has increased 40% year over year.

As users experience how easy it is to find information and get answers, Community question volume continues to increase while the volume of question cases submitted to Support decreases. Since 2016 the number of questions asked has increased from 30,000 to 55,000, an 83% increase as ServiceNow's business has grown 30% per year. We have deflected more than 13,000 support cases in the last 12 months, saving an additional $4 million in operating costs.

Positive customer feedback

So far, the Community journey has been a win-win; both customers and partners are happier. 2019 survey results (624 respondents) confirm that our users are having a positive experience.

- 78% are satisfied or extremely satisfied with the Community
- 87% state that their issues are often or always resolved
- 88% say that they often or always find answers to their questions through a simple Community search (versus asking a question)
- 92% said Community always, often, or sometimes influences their success in getting value from the ServiceNow platform
- 92% said that Community contributed positively to their opinion of ServiceNow and its products

> **How often does Community influence customer success in getting value from the Now Platform?**
>
> 81% Often / Sometimes
> 11% Always
> 8% Rarely / Never

To sustain growth, we constantly encourage employees, partners, and customers to play active roles as experts on the Community. Our ongoing success depends on the quality and relevance of Community content and that is made possible by the engagement of experts on the site. In addition to the gamification and reputation features, we monitor and reward voluntary employee participation. Partners can also earn visible recognition as experts and partner companies that contribute are featured on a partner-specific leaderboard.
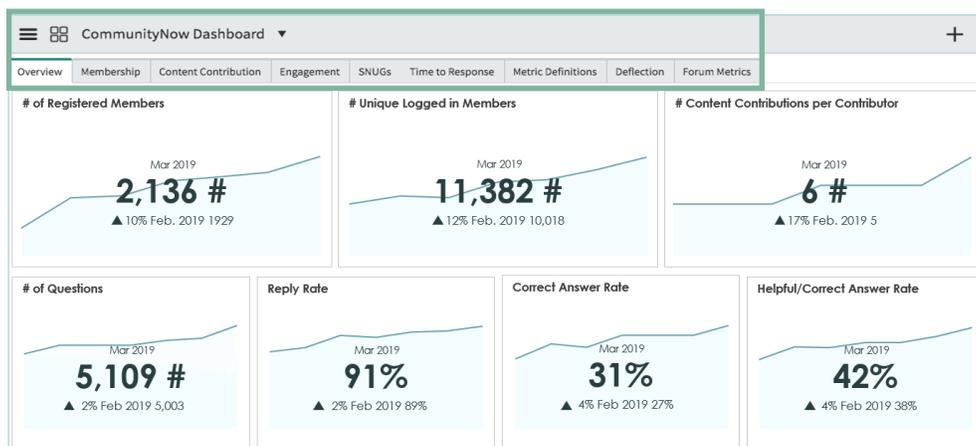
Figure 4: Obtaining reports and creating dashboards is easier with a single system that features integrated Performance Analytics as shown in the sample dashboard above.

Using our own products

By hosting Community on our customer-facing instance, we've shown that it's possible for Community to operate on a production instance where other high-usage ServiceNow applications are hosted. In addition, as part of our Now on Now program, Product Operations and Marketing provide significant product feedback to our development teams who use this information to improve future product releases.

Michele Richards, ServiceNow's VP of Product Operations, believes that Community is a key component of ServiceNow's customer support strategy. "With a solid integration to our support portal, Community delivers answers to our customers' questions faster and reduces the workload on our support organization. The ServiceNow Community is reliable and capable of scaling to meet our future business needs."

Looking forward

For its efforts ServiceNow won a silver 2019 Stevie Award for Innovation in Customer Service-Computer Industries. The award recognized ServiceNow for its work in improving customer satisfaction and reducing costs using knowledge management and the online community.

As we integrate more applications with Community on the Now Platform, it will only continue to get better. Users will benefit from faster and easier ways to retrieve relevant information. With a pulse on trending questions, we can better understand both current and future customer needs and act on real-time insights and feedback from our Community members.

About ServiceNow

ServiceNow is making the world of work, work better for people. Our cloud-based platform and solutions deliver digital workflows that create great experiences and unlock productivity for employees and the enterprise. For more information, visit: www.servicenow.com.

Now on Now is about how we use our own ServiceNow solutions to work faster, smarter, and better. With Now on Now, we're achieving true end-to-end digital transformation. To learn more, go to: www.servicenow.com/nowonnow.