



2008 SSPA Member Technology Heat Map

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I have been busy slicing and dicing the data from our annual Member Technology Survey, which tracks the service and support technology used by members, how satisfied they are with it, and in what areas they are planning additional investments in 2008 and beyond. This year we received 81 completed surveys with a mix of companies of all sizes. Thanks to everyone who took the time to fill out the survey!

Last year I published the first [SSPA Member Technology Heat Map](#) showing the level of member adoption across 21 functional areas of service and support technology, covering CRM, contact center, eService and field service applications. For the 2008 SSPA Member Technology Survey, three new product categories were added:

- **Enterprise CRM.** Though the 2007 data included many key elements of CRM, such as incident management and service level agreement (SLA) tracking, the survey did not ask members about overall CRM platforms, meaning a cross-enterprise deployment with automation for support, marketing and sales.
- **Intelligent Search.** Strong, analytic-based natural language search improves the accuracy and usability of a Web self-service site or an internal knowledgebase implementation. Though leading search vendors also sell knowledgebases platforms, more SSPA members are evaluating search technology separately.
- **Wikis.** In the last year Web 2.0 has become one of the hottest technology topics among SSPA members, and forward-looking support organizations are now including Wikis in their knowledge management strategies.

The results are in, and Figure 1 shows the updated member adoption of each functional category.

Figure 1 2008 Functional Heat Map

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SSPA 2008 Functional Heat Map

Percentage of Members Using Each Module

Web Collaboration	Proactive Chat	Email Response
Agent Knowledgebase	Agent Diagnostics	Self-Service Knowledgebase
Self-Service Diagnostics	Intelligent Search	Remote Control/ Diagnostics
Moderated Forums	Wikis	Enterprise CRM
Case Management	Entitlement/ Warranty Tracking	SLA Tracking
360° View	Upsell/ Cross-sell	Skills Based Routing
Work Force Management	Quality Monitoring	Voice Self-Service
Scheduling/ Dispatch	Parts Inventory/ Logistics	Wireless Field Service



Compared to last year's Heat Map, seven functional categories saw a large enough adoption increase to move from one color designation to the other. These categories are:

- **Web collaboration.** Adoption of Web collaboration jumped from 39% to 64% in the last year, with companies finding ever more robust platforms available for both internal and external collaborations. In last year's survey, 14% of >\$1B members said they had budget allocated for Web collaboration tools, and it appears these purchases proceeded on track.
- **Email Response Management Systems (ERMS).** As email volumes continue to climb, and email service levels continue to be significantly lower than for phone, investing in technology to streamline email processes makes sense. Adoption of ERMS in the last year grew from 38% to 54%.
- **Agent knowledgebase.** This category saw one of the largest increases this year, with adoption growing 30% to 86%. Only incident management, with 91% adoption, has more member usage than agent facing knowledgebases.
- **Agent diagnostics.** In last year's survey, 14% of >\$1B members were planning to purchase agent diagnostic tools, and adoption of this technology, which helps support techs troubleshoot problems and identify the root cause, has grown seven percent to 31%.
- **Self-service diagnostics.** Similarly, in 2007 13% of >\$1B members planned to invest in self-service diagnostics in hopes of increasing self-service success and deflecting more assisted interactions. Though adoption only grew three percent to 26%, it was enough to push the category over the one-quarter mark.
- **Remote support platforms.** Remote support platforms, enabling

remote control and diagnostics, also saw a 30% increase in adoption this year, to 70%. The high adoption reflects that remote support vendors have been expanding suites to support new platforms (Mac, Linux), new devices (Windows mobile devices) and even unattended Windows and Linux servers.

- **SLA tracking.** As penalties for missed service levels become a reality for more support organizations, having bulletproof tracking for SLAs is increasingly important. Adoption of SLA tracking software increased six percent from 47% to 53%.

2007 was the year “Web 2.0” made it into the vocabulary of every support manager, and spending on Web 2.0-related technologies was strong. In the survey, discussion forums showed a sharp increase in adoption, from 36% in 2007 to 49% in 2008, and missed being recategorized in a “hotter” area by only .1%. Wikis, or collaborative authoring environments, made a good showing in their first time on the survey with 25% of members adopting. Another method of deflecting live agent interactions, voice self-service, also showed a significant increase in adoption from 31% to 43%.

The SSPA Recommends

I will be publishing additional research reports based on the results of the 2008 SSPA Member Technology Survey, including trends in planned purchases. It appears, from initial analysis, that spending on new support technology in 2008 will be as strong as or stronger than in 2007, so I offer this advice to companies shopping for new products.

- **Start with incumbents.** With all the mergers and acquisitions in the CRM and eService world over the last few years, it is becoming easier to buy more from a single source. Enterprise CRM vendors now own ‘best of breed’ technology for real-time analytics; some telephony vendors offer ‘best of breed’ quality monitoring and workforce management. Before investigating point solutions, identify what modules are available from your incumbent vendors, who will give you much better pricing for adding an additional module. And, in theory at least, implementation and integration should be much less expensive as the new products will be pre-integrated to your existing systems.
- **Recognize that 80% may be good enough.** Best of breed may be overkill, at least for the first 1-2 years. In the Member Technology Survey, a large percentage of members are using Web collaboration not from an eService specialist, but from their remote control vendor. Email management and knowledgebases, as an example, are now bundled into most CRM suites; incident management and SLA tracking are included in most eService suites. Though these options may not have all the bells and whistles of a niche specialist, if you can get 80% of what you need for free, put off buying the bigger solution until you need it.
- **Risk questionable viability for innovative technology.** I hear lots of questions from members about the viability of customer service vendors, a large number of whom seem stuck in the \$25M

range with little chance of dramatic growth. While these small vendors are obvious candidates for acquisition, keep in mind they will be bought because a larger vendor needs access to their innovative technology. In other words, the risk is low because an acquiring vendor is likely to maintain and extend the product. If you want to provide exceptional service and feel investing in innovative technology (such as natural language searching, voice automation, or community platforms) can give you a competitive edge, take a risk on small visionary vendors—they will likely want to partner with you to help define the future of their products.

About John Ragsdale.....

John Ragsdale is Vice President of Research for the SSPA. Ragsdale spent 10 years managing tech support operations before moving to Silicon Valley where he held product management and marketing positions at eService and CRM vendors. He spent 5 years at Forrester Research as VP and Research Director before joining the SSPA.

Comments? Suggestions? We would like to hear from you. Please email the editor at sspanews@thesspa.com.

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