

Knowledge Management 2.0: SSPA Member's Choice Topic

By John Ragsdale, VP of Research, SSPA

SSPA Research's Topic of the Month for May is Knowledge Management, and when asked in the April SSPA News which title members would most like to see addressed this month, the winner with

50% of the vote was "The Next Big Thing: Knowledge Management 2.0." Judging from the high attendance for a recent webcast on this subject, and the questions received from members at last week's Best Practices Conference, Web 2.0 and its implications on knowledge capture and retrieval is a very hot topic with support management.

What is KM 2.0? Simply put, KM 2.0 is industry "buzz" for the next generation of knowledge management technology and processes: knowledge management for a Web 2.0 world. With online communities bringing together experts on any given topic, 'best practice' content on products, including technical support troubleshooting guidelines, is being amassed outside of corporate knowledgebases. How can this content, and these communities of experts, be leveraged to help customers in the future?

For those of you new to knowledge management, to put this in perspective it helps to understand where this technology segment began. SSPA Research has identified KM 2.0 as the 4th major 'wave' of customer service and support knowledge management. As seen in Figure 1, the first three waves were as follows:

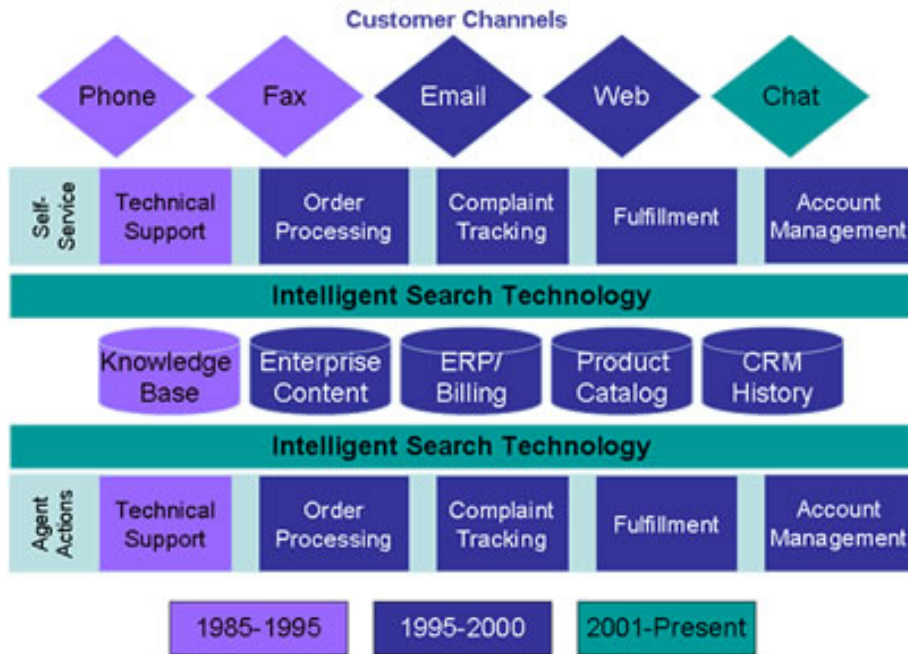
- **1985-1995.** The first wave of KM involved three primary vendors: Primus, ServiceWare, and my first startup, Answer Systems. The focus was searchable knowledgebases and diagnostic tools for technical support; the only supported channels were inperson, phone, snail mail and fax.
- **1995-2000.** Large consumer contact centers drove the next phase of KM, with higher volumes of interactions across many topics, including order, billing and inventory information, requiring integration to CRM and multiple back office systems. Additional channels were added, with new vendors emerging to address email and web, such as Brightware, eGain, KANA.
- **2001-present.** The tech crash initiated the 3rd phase of KM, with a new focus on streamlining processes and cost cutting. With

in this issue

- [Support Industry Converges on Best Practices](#)
- [Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Top Talent](#)
- [Knowledge Management 2.0](#)
- [Becoming a True Knowledge Organization](#)
- [Avoiding Costs Through Web Self-Service](#)
- [Moving from Product Resolution to Service Solutions](#)

effectiveness as a key objective, adding intelligent searching (from specialists InQuira, Kanisa/KNOVA, and defunct YY) enables more agents and customers to identify needed content wherever it is stored, including real-time data retrieval from back office systems. Web chat emerges as a viable channel for consumer support; microsites enable highly personalized self-service experiences.

Figure 1: Three Waves of Knowledge Management

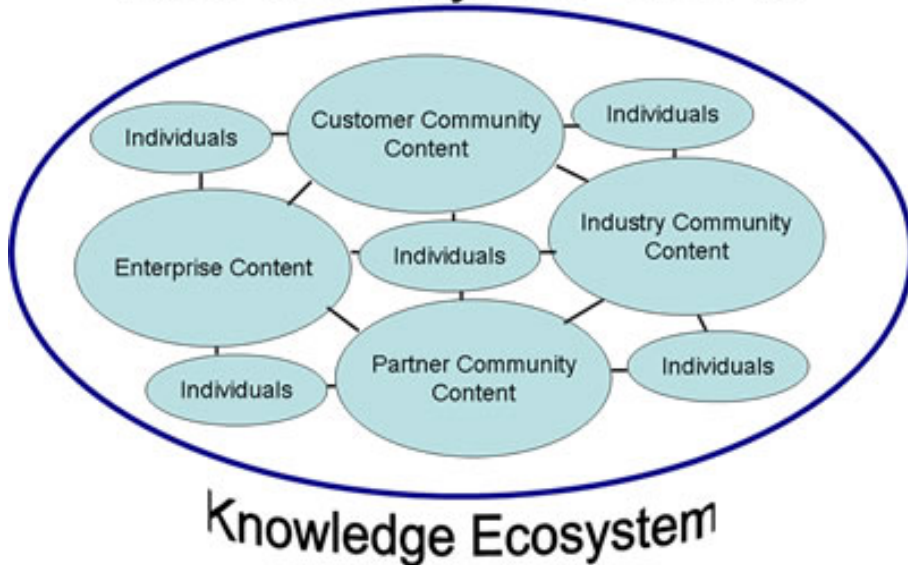


The assumption, through all of these waves, has been that content to answer customer questions, and to aid agents with problem diagnostics and resolution, was authored by the company and stored within the company's firewall. In a Web 2.0 world this assumption is no longer valid. Online content for both consumer and enterprise technology can now be found in a variety of places, including communities of customers and partners, industry groups and associations, as well as individual websites and blogs authored by industry insiders.

Agents are resourceful, and they will soon be (if they aren't already) participating in online forums, adding bits of their wisdom, and your knowledge capital, to these communities. Ignoring these new content sources would be wrong: there is simply too much good information out there to leverage, and the amount and quality of information is growing. The intelligent search technology that plays such an important role in finding content across the enterprise will now be pushed to do even more, including indexing and retrieving this 3rd party community content. As shown in Figure 2, KM 2.0 creates a virtual Knowledge Ecosystem of internal and external content sources and experts.

Figure 2: KM 2.0: A Knowledge Ecosystem

2007 and Beyond: KM 2.0



The technology required for success in a Web 2.0 world is different than in previous waves, and this is already being exhibited in 2007 spending. In the 2006 SSPA Member Technology Survey, only 6% of >\$1B members had budget for additional agent facing knowledgebase tools in 2007, while 22% had budget for Web collaboration technology, and 19% reported budgets in place for Web forums.

When evaluating where additional technology investments can help prepare your support organization for KM 2.0, consider these three functional areas:

- **Intelligent searching.** Dynamic, intelligent search engines are now a leading selection criterion for KM purchases, but today search is used exclusively inside the firewall, searching the knowledgebase and select additional indexed libraries. When useful content libraries are formed in forums, blogs and other community tools across the Internet, searching must be able to index and retrieve this content as well.
- **Web collaboration.** Though Web collaboration software is available today, it is typically used for customer Web chat, with few companies taking advantage of other features such as page push and screen sharing. Add to the mix online meeting facilities and the ability to have virtual teams, including experts from external communities and technology partners, and you begin to see how complex problem resolution will occur in the future.
- **Expertise management.** Tracking who is the expert on a specific product feature or line of code is challenging enough today, when only internal resources must be tracked. But as experts emerge in industry and customer communities, being able to tap their expertise will make sense. And, being able to instantly identify an expert at a technology partner will also speed resolution for multi-vendor support issues. With presence awareness now possible via IP, you can choose from a global list of internal and external

experts on any topic, and select from those currently online and available.

The SSPA Recommends

Web 2.0 and KM 2.0 are already a concern for consumer companies, and are increasingly of interest for enterprise companies. Here are a few recommendations on where to start:

- **Knowledge-enable your own customer forum.** As a starting point, be sure that content in your own customer community is accessible from the Web self-service site. Searching your knowledgebase should return matches from forum content, and customers wanting to post a new forum thread should be proactively prompted when content exists in the knowledgebase to address the issue.
- **Compile a list of community sites of interest.** Regardless of what your team supports there is a community out there discussing it. Beyond your own Web searches, survey your agents, customers and professional services techs to find out where they spend time online to find information on your products. You will be impressed by the quality of information on some sites; you may be horrified at the inaccurate or biased information on others. Cataloging these sites and the information they contain is important, as your customers see this information too, and assign someone to monitor sites for new content (or subscribe to RSS feeds if available) moving forward.
- **Create a list of external experts.** You will find, when perusing technical communities, that experts emerge, designated by number of postings, member ratings, or a combination of the two. Who are these experts? If profile information is available, contact these experts and engage them in a dialog: if they are influential to your customers you should get to know them. Longer term, you may want to loop them into collaborative problems solving, so start building those relationships today.

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.

Download PDF



[next article>>>](#)

Distributed by SSPA - 11031 Via Frontera - Suite A - San Diego CA - 92127
©2007 SSPA