talla

How to Prevent Losing Customers with Fast, Accurate Information

Empower Your Sales & Support Teams with a Better Knowledge Base

The purpose of a knowledge base solution is to empower your customers, partners, and employees to find critical information -- and answer critical questions -- on their own. This functionality is especially important for customer support and outbound sales teams, as they often need to respond to issues and inquiries in the moment.

Properly implemented, your knowledge base allows sales and support teams to proactively find answers, rather than reactively wait for help. No one wants to end a support call or a sales pitch with questions unanswered or issues unresolved. A successful knowledge base helps both sales and support representatives do their jobs better by ensuring they never have to say, "I don't know."

Unfortunately, most knowledge bases are not properly implemented, and thus are not ultimately successful.

In this eBook, we outline best practices for creating and organizing the information in your knowledge base so that the data it contains is as accurate, as useful, and as valuable as possible -- especially to the sales and support staff that need it most.

Best Practices for Organizing Your Knowledge Base

The premise of a knowledge base is self-service; users can be proactive about finding answers, rather than wait around for a human to respond to questions or help requests. To reach their potential, knowledge base solutions must be easy to use and the data within them must be easy to search. Thus, it is critical to organize your knowledge base effectively.

The organizational scheme for your knowledge base has three goals:

1. Make your information **easy to navigate**, so users can locate the answers they want without asking for help

2. Make information discoverable, so that users can find answers before they need to look for them

3. Minimize clicks, so that no answer-seeking process requires extra steps or extra time

Navigation

To solve the navigation issue, you'll need to decide on the primary way information in your knowledge base will be categorized. There are two typical approaches: categorize by product/solution or categorize by customer type. Organizing your primary categories by solution makes it easier for support teams to browse to find technical solutions to specific product issues. Organizing by customer type makes it easier for sales to drill down into the relevant product information to craft a sales pitch or handle a sales objection.

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In an ideal world, your knowledge base will be able to organize along multiple dimensions -- for example, with a tagging structure that can handle the same content in multiple content buckets -- and can present different primary navigation schemes to aid both use cases. If it can't, you'll need to choose one scheme over another, and it is advisable to choose based on which team has a bigger pain point or large caseload -- sales or support -- that needs priority.

Discoverability

To solve the discoverability issue, your knowledge base must support a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section or segment on its main page. This section should be regularly updated to adjust for emerging information on the most common issues. Similarly, the main page should surface the newest entries in your knowledge base so that users are aware when new information is available. Ideally, newly updated existing entries will also be surfaced so proactive users can stay abreast of recent changes.

A nimble knowledge base should not only allow you to craft a main landing page that effectively supports all these discoverability cases, but it should automatically suggest or surface knowledge base items that qualify for these promotional sections. If a handful of articles are constantly read and shared, they should become surfaced FAQs. If a new item is created or existing content is updated, the system should suggest these for main page promotion, or promote them automatically.

Minimize Clicks

As to minimizing clicks, a robust search function that includes natural language processing and robust autocomplete/autosuggestions will keep manual browsing to a minimum.

Moreover, an artificial intelligence-aided search system should be able to distinguish between current and out-of-date knowledge base content and should be able to excerpt a specific answer from within a longer content item. In the same way Apple's Siri or Google's Assistant can simply answer questions without forcing you to click a link, an AI-backed search can often return an explicit answer in response to a query, rather than requiring the user to navigate to a returned link and scan the resulting content page. With a solid search backbone, a user should never be more than two clicks from a relevant answer.

Best Practices for Creating Knowledge Base Articles

Making your knowledge base content easy to navigate won't help your sales and support teams if the content itself is bad. The rules of good content still apply but you can't simply dump your existing documents, videos, podcasts, and data files into a knowledge base and hope for the best. Content must be adapted for use by a knowledge base to ensure the knowledge base itself can best organize and serve that content.

Good Content Structure

A good knowledge base will have one or more content templates that ensure information is entered in such a way that it's easy to browse, search, and excerpt. These templates should include and enforce the following content components:

1. Descriptive title
2. Content author/subject matter expert
3. Content creation/revision date(s)
4. Description of the problem or topic
    1. Problem
        1. Description of problem/symptoms
        2. Step by step resolution
        3. Expected result
    2. Topic
        1. Description of item/subject
        2. Key points/features
        3. Value proposition/sales pitch
5. Links to related articles/questions/topics

This content structure ensures every item offers value to your sales or support teams, if not both. It also ensures users can read further for a deeper understanding of the issue.

Annotate and Atomize

It's not enough that your content be well structured; it must be annotated and atomized to ensure it is of best use within a knowledge base. Your sales and support staff need direct, succinct answers to specific questions; they shouldn't have to scan long articles, videos, or audio files to find the information they need. Atomizing your content into the smallest possible items that can fit the structure above minimizes this scanning.

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Annotate and Atomize *cont'd.*

It also helps search algorithms find the right content to answer a question, as no single content item will contain multiple, competing answers.

Annotation is a feature that allows advanced knowledge bases to recognize and distinguish key terms within your content. You can call out unique terms -- like product features, full solutions, staff names, industry acronyms and jargon, internal projects titles, company locations, etc. -- that can be cross-linked and explicitly defined in a knowledge base glossary. This gives an artificial intelligence within your knowledge base the ability to recognize, associate, and enhance the search results around these key terms.

Thus, if a sales representative searches for a specific product feature, the knowledge base could return a list of all solutions that include that feature, as well as the value proposition and sales pitch for those solutions. If a support engineer performs the same search, they could see every technical issue associated with a feature as well as every known resolution for those issues. And all those answers will be unique, separate, and easily discovered.

Best Practices for Your First Knowledge Base Content

Knowing how to organize and structure knowledge base content to help your sales and support teams doesn't mean you know what content to include in your knowledge base. Below are some sample topics that every knowledge base must include to be of use during the sales and support process.

Sales Topics

- **Solution brochures**
  Short, topical breakdown of each of your solutions, their key features, value propositions, and prices

- **Customer success stories/case studies/use cases**
  Examples of how your solutions can be put to use, specific problems they solve, and specific reference customers that will vouch for them

- **Objection-handling guides**
  List of common obstacles to closing a sale for a solution, and how to address those customer concerns

Support Topics

- **Known technical issues**
  A list of known bugs with your products and, where possible, their workarounds and fixes

- **Getting started guide**
  A step by step guide to ramping up use of a solution

- **Best practices/maintenance guides**
  Short guides to using and maintaining your products and solutions well

Best Practices for Maintaining Your Knowledge Base

A smart knowledge base makes your product documentation more valuable, so that it can actually help you close sales deals. Talla's smart knowledge base is proactive and self-aware, alerting your documentation team to out-of-date or incorrect information that could mislead sales representatives, prospects and customers. Talla's chat assistant can retrieve highly accurate information from your knowledge base to ensure that no sales question goes unanswered, even on the first phone call, and even for first-time sales reps.

Lack of timely information slows down sales velocity, and Talla's smart knowledge base ensures every member of your team has the product info they need, just in time. And with A.I. sales automation, Talla can offer that same support directly to customers, even when a sales rep isn't available.

By delivering just the right information at just the right time to just the right audience, Talla's smart knowledge base multiplies the value of your product documentation, sales representatives, and every single sales contact you ever make.

If you want to increase sales velocity, shorten sales rep training time, and offers more sales support with less staff, contact sales@talla.com.

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Conclusion: De-Silo Your Knowledge

In the end, the best thing your knowledge base can do for your sales and support teams is to de-silo knowledge, such that everyone can access vital information, rather than must rely on in-the-moment answers from overworked SMEs. A customer calls you for help, or you call a prospect to close a deal, and neither wants to pause or extend those calls while you scramble to answer already-solved and documented issues.

But each of the tasks listed above -- organizing, structuring, populating, and maintaining your knowledge base for maximum sales and support effectiveness -- is a daunting task. It requires a significant manpower investment that is rarely maintained -- which is why most knowledge bases fail. Fortunately, A.I. can help ease the burden of maintaining a valuable knowledge base so your sales and support staff can continue to rely on it over time.

Put simply, given the modern demands of a sales- and support-empowering knowledge base, an A.I. boost is no longer an optional luxury, but a must-have feature for every knowledge base solution.

Let Talla Help

Talla is building the artificially intelligent knowledge base of the future, designed specifically to assist sales and support teams. If you'd like to learn how A.I. can ensure your knowledge base never loses value to your sales and support teams, contact Talla today.

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