

# TECHNOLOGY INSIGHT

EDUCATION  
SERVICES

FIELD  
SERVICES

MANAGED  
SERVICES

PROFESSIONAL  
SERVICES

SERVICE REVENUE  
GENERATION

CUSTOMER SUCCESS  
AND SUPPORT

## The State of Knowledge Management: 2014

Growing Role & Value of Unified Search in Customer Service

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*October 20, 2014*

*A Joint White Paper from  
Coveo and TSIA*

*TSIA-EI-14-023*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TSIA's second annual knowledge management survey is complete, documenting the people, process, and technology components of technology service knowledge management (KM) programs. This year's survey examined core metrics and practices related to knowledge capture, sharing, and maintenance, as well as forward-looking elements such as video, crowd sourcing, and expertise management. KM is no longer just of interest to technical support and call centers. The survey was open to all TSIA disciplines, and 50% of the 400-plus responses were from groups other than support services, including 24% of responses from professional services organizations.

Improving KM is seen as a key way to improve efficiency, and a third of respondents said they could improve productivity by 30% or more if they were sharing knowledge effectively. Companies often "reboot" their KM programs, with 48% of respondents saying they were on their third, fourth, or fifth employee-facing knowledge platform, yet overall satisfaction with existing technology is not high. When asked to rate their current tools, employee-facing knowledge systems averaged 5.0 on a 10-point scale; customer-facing systems averaged 4.9.

In this report, TSIA and Coveo present survey data to illustrate the current state of KM, and provide insight into how KM technology, in particular unified search solutions, can positively impact business processes. Companies looking to improve customer self-service and optimize agent-assisted support should consider a unified search solution which delivers high-ROI and specifically addresses the KM challenges faced by service organizations today.

## DIGITALIZATION OF THE WORKPLACE MAKES SEARCH BUSINESS-CRITICAL

A KM strategy that enables unified search is becoming increasingly important, not only across service divisions, but across entire enterprises. The digitalization of the workplace, i.e., the shift toward all enterprise technologies and processes being accessible online, is driving this trend. Case-deflecting and case-resolving content typically resides across the enterprise, and making it easily findable and usable by customers and employees alike has elevated the role of search. Associated trends are also contributing to the executive-level concern KM now fields:

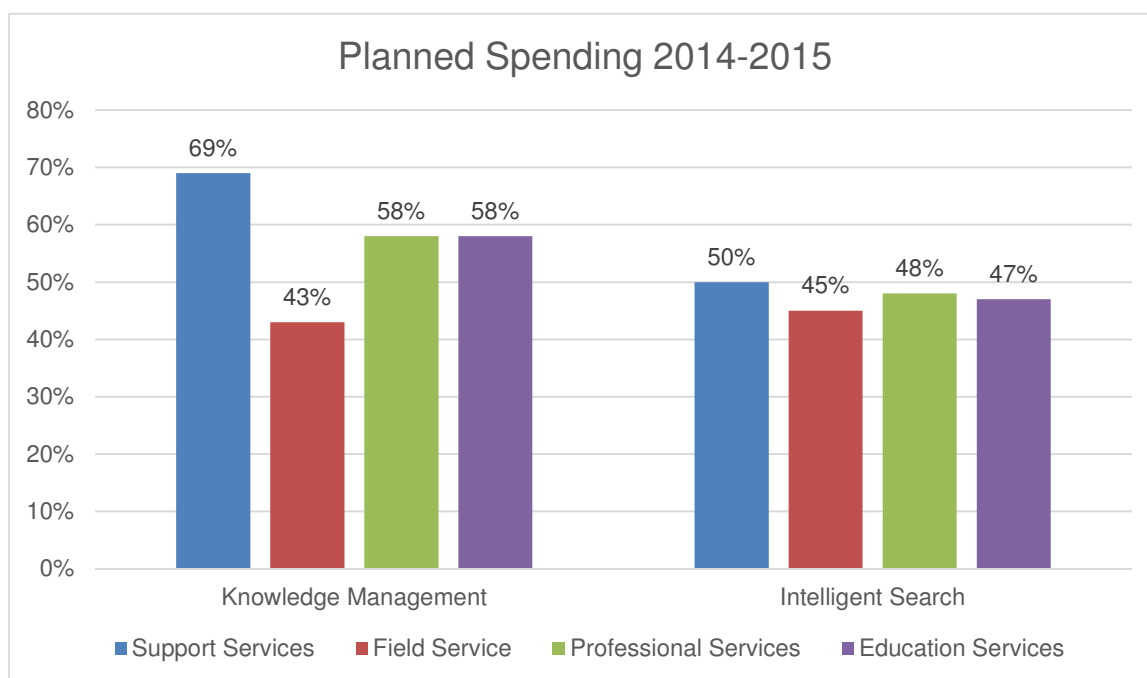
- **Retiring workforce.** Some large TSIA members have reported that a third or more of their service employees are due to retire in the next five years, and there are growing concerns about these senior workers leaving the company and taking their hard-earned expertise with them. CIOs are pushing company-wide knowledge programs hoping to capture learnings from employees in a searchable, shareable format, adding to the digital troves of companies.
- **Rise in mobile adoption.** The mass adoption of smartphones and tablets means employees and customers are able to connect to corporate content at any time, from any location. Unified

search capabilities delivered in an intuitive, user-friendly manner on mobile screens and touch interfaces becomes essential.

- **Social enterprise.** Younger employees and customers have come of age in the social era, and are more open to sharing information than previous generations. With adoption of enterprise collaboration tools on the rise, new streams, formats and sources of enterprise knowledge are being created. This largely unstructured content (social chats, team forums, etc.) must be incorporated into a broader KM strategy, and be made easily findable by customers and employees through unified search.

TSIA survey data shows that planned investment in KM and complimentary unified search technologies is very high across all areas of service. *Figure 1* shows the 2014-2015 planned spending on KM and unified search by service discipline.

*Figure 1: KM and Intelligent Search Planned Spending*



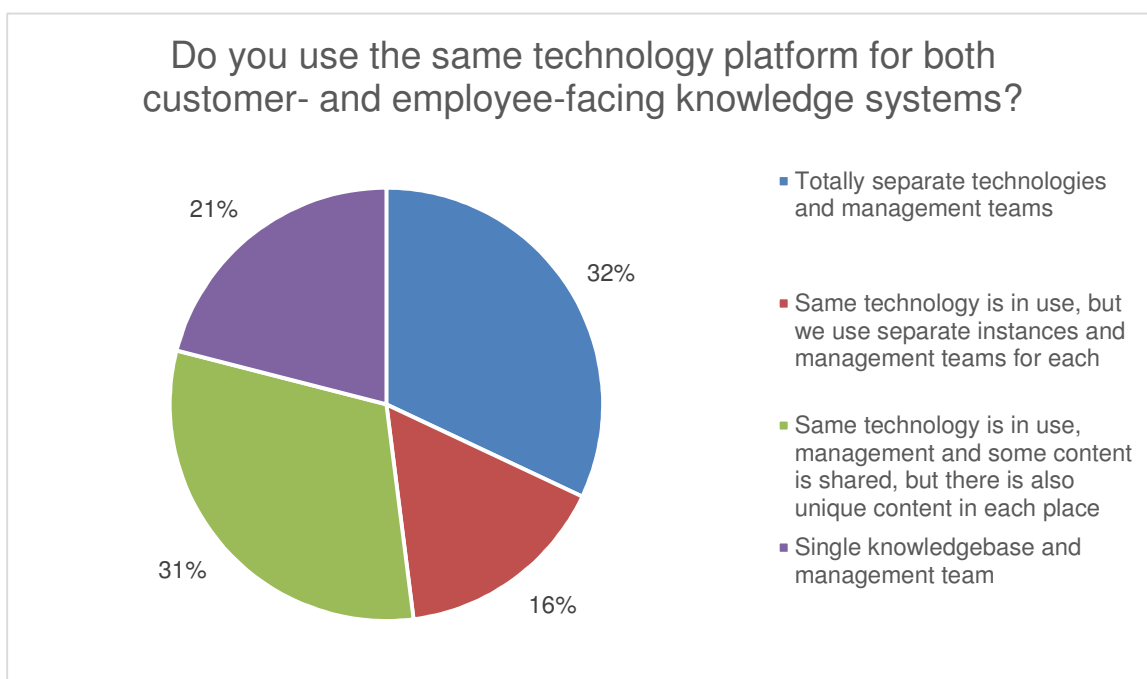
Source: TSIA 2014 Global Technology Survey.

## KM TECHNOLOGY: UNIFIED SEARCH IS IMPERATIVE

The technology infrastructure for knowledge management is undergoing tremendous change. The approach originating in the 1990s of a standalone searchable knowledgebase may still be the norm for some companies, but many are now dealing with a growing number of content sources and content types. This diversity of knowledge has made a unified search capability increasingly important to enable users to find the right information at the right time—regardless of where it is stored.

TSIA's knowledge management survey captured information about both employee and customer knowledge systems, to help understand if strategies are converging or remain separate. A good starting point is identifying how many companies are leveraging a single technology stack for both systems, as seen in *Figure 2*.

*Figure 2: Technology Used for Employee-Facing and Customer-Facing Knowledge Systems*



Source: TSIA 2014 Knowledge Management Survey.

Nearly a third of respondents, 32%, use totally separate technologies and management teams for customer and employee knowledge systems. Another 16% have adopted the same technology for both audiences, but use separate instances with no shared content. Only 21% use a single system and management team for both audiences. Though centralized management of these resources is more efficient and cost-effective, companies often cite the need to make sure appropriate security and

access controls are followed. Ensuring customers and employees can access only content for which they have permission is, appropriately, absolutely critical. Fortunately today's best unified search solutions honor all securities associated with a company's diverse content sources and formats, and enable the easy, centralized management of knowledge access by user, group, and role.

## SEARCH A DRIVER OF CUSTOMER SELF-SERVICE

Over the years TSIA has found that the companies with the highest rates of self-service success, including STAR Award winners for Best Online Support, have done use-case analysis to understand what sort of questions customers are asking via self-service, and what tools they prefer to help them find the answer. When asked which tools companies offer to assist self-service customers, the survey results were:

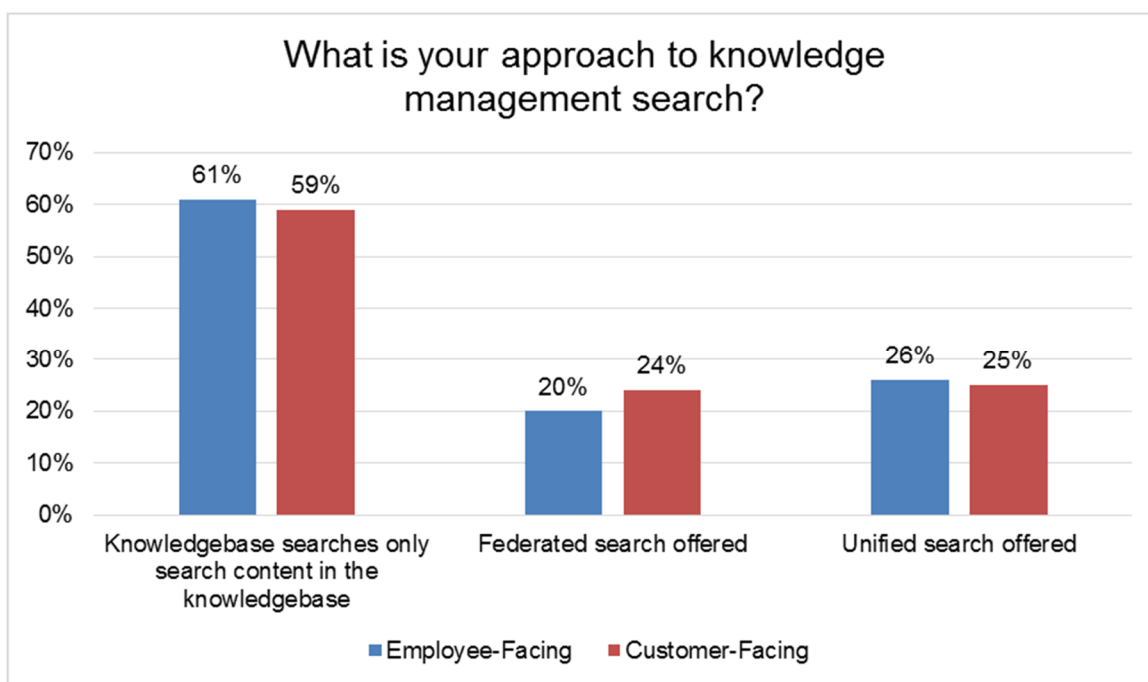
- **Search box.** Practically everyone, 97%, offers a search box on their self-service site. While offering search is an obvious place to start, it may be surprising to learn that the search box is intimidating to some customers, particularly novice customers who don't know your product terminology. This can be alleviated by providing customers with a more intuitive search experience that automatically suggests relevant information and insights to the customer, based on the current or past interactions with the company, prior cases, demography, and more.
- **List of FAQs.** 68% of companies offer a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs), with links to the related knowledge articles. This is a great approach for common problems, putting them at the top level of the self-service site so no additional searching is required. Ideally, the FAQs are dynamically generated and filtered to display issues specifically related to the customer's unique context, history, and demography.
- **Real-time suggestions.** In an attempt to convince customers to try self-service channels before submitting a case, real-time suggestions take the content entered into a new case screen, search across all content sources (knowledgebase, CRM, collaboration platforms, corporate file shares, and social media channels, for example) and prompt the customer with potentially relevant information and insights before the case is created. This can deflect assisted support interactions, particularly for common problems that are well documented.. A total of 21% of respondents currently offer real-time suggestions as part of their self-service offerings.
- **Decision tree/index.** An index of content, also known as a decision tree is offered by 21% of respondents. Decision trees appeal to analytical types who want to narrow down their choices, and helps customers that aren't sure exactly where or how to look for what they need.

Successful unified search solutions support decision trees, and enable the customer to filter and navigate the various "branches" quickly and easily.

### Success Requires Search Solutions That Are Mobile & Social

Service organizations are faced with a challenge impacting all enterprises: IT fragmentation, i.e., multiple, disconnected point systems and content sources. The importance of unified search technology is rising, as companies look to capture maximum value from these fragmented data repositories, including libraries of product documentation, release notes, design specifications, system logs, and online communities. If the search technology used for internal productivity or customer service only searches content within a single knowledgebase, employees and customers will never know that the needed information may be available in another content store.

*Figure 4: What Is Your Approach to Knowledge Management Search?*



Source: TSIA 2014 Knowledge Management Survey.

As seen in *Figure 4*, a majority of companies surveyed use a solution(s) that only searches their primary knowledgebase. This proves a significant barrier to success, as TSIA benchmark data indicates that the knowledgebase is less useful in solving customer problems than multiple other data sources, including customer log files and the online community.

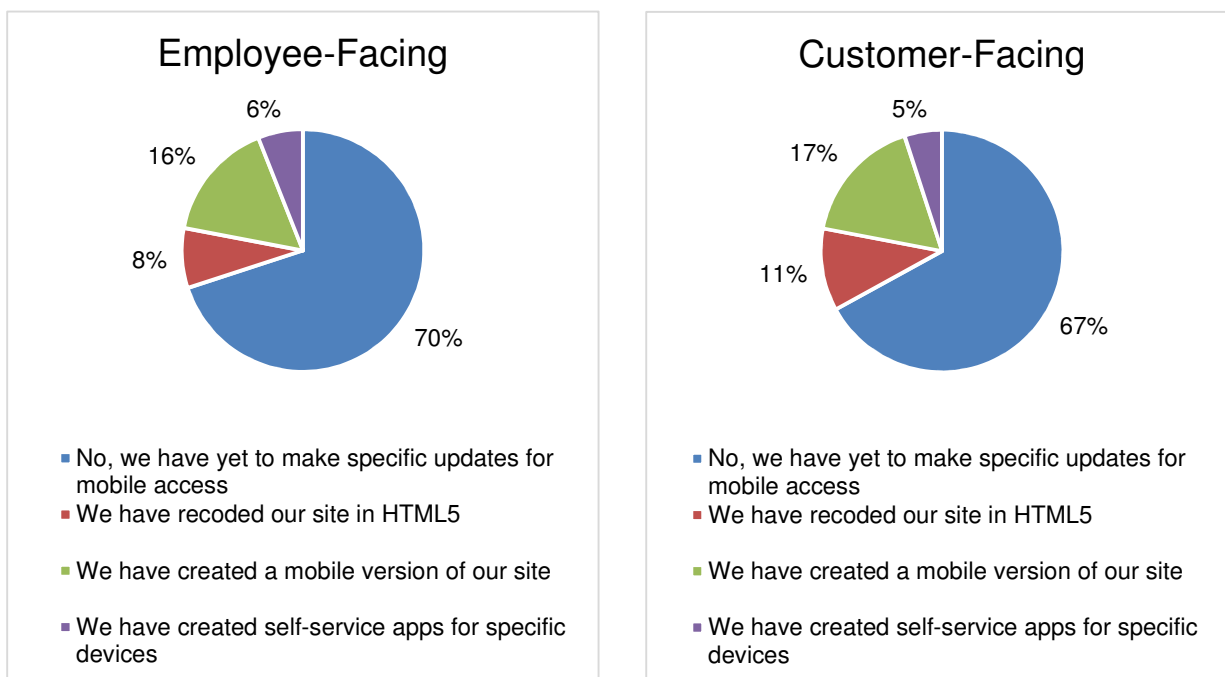
To address this, some use what is called federated search, which uses the different search engines inherent in any additional linked content repository and displays the results on a single screen. However, the most relevant results and best user experiences are achieved by unified search, which directly indexes the content in the additional repositories and allows users to filter and explore the results swiftly. Because unified search indexes content from across all enterprise systems and sources, text analytics can be performed on this diverse content to understand the “who, what, why, when, and where” of each knowledge asset. Metadata can be automatically normalized and enriched, making all the company’s content more findable and actionable. Such rich analytics and metadata enrichment is not possible with a federated search approach. Unified search is currently used by a quarter of companies.

Another benefit of unified search is expertise management, because the technology can automatically assess the diverse sources of enterprise knowledge and identify individuals that are experts for any topic, based upon their actual work-product and (optionally) correspondence. Two-thirds of respondents do not have any capabilities for expertise management today, while 27% use employee profiles or job descriptions to identify possible experts, often extracted from seldom-updated human resource systems or other static profiles. Only 12% of companies are currently leveraging analytic-based expertise management, which is the most accurate and cost-effective method to identify current skills and expertise.

The mass adoption of smartphones and tablets is changing the way employees and customers access content online. While consumer technology companies have been creating mobile-specific self-service sites for customers, enterprise technology firms have been slow to make any changes to knowledge systems to better enable the mobile experience.



Figure 5: Making Knowledge Mobile Accessible

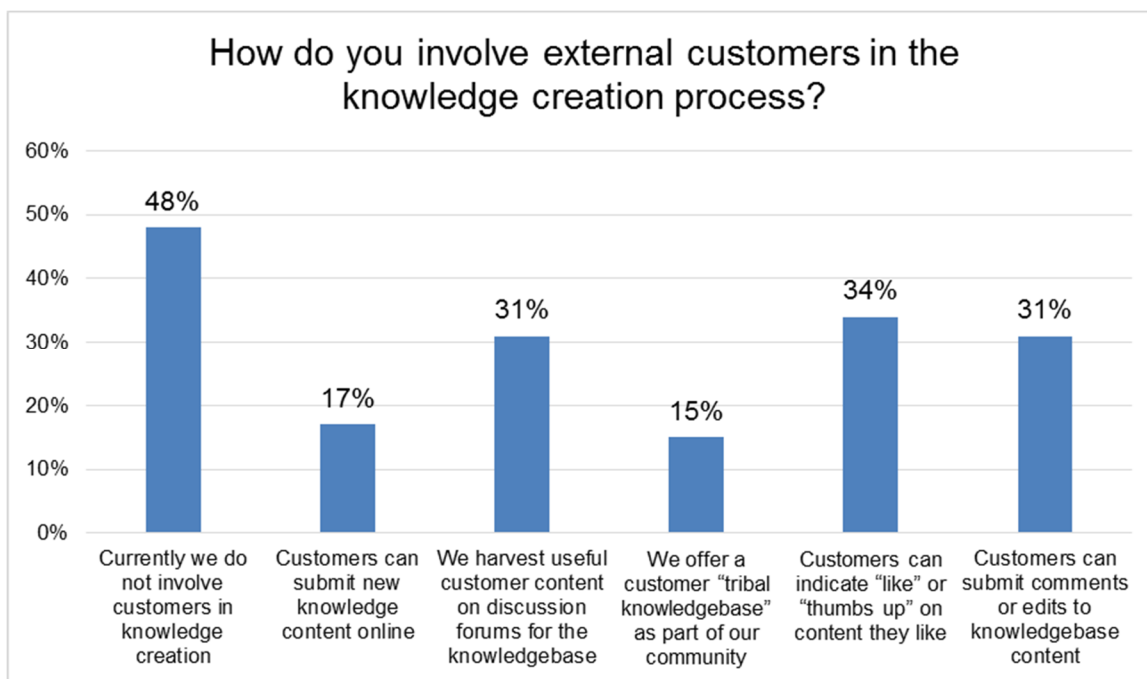


Source: TSIA 2014 Knowledge Management Survey.

As seen in *Figure 5*, a large majority of B2B technology firms have made no updates to their knowledge systems on either the customer or employee side to better enable mobile access. About a third of companies have made progress toward mobility, with some companies using HTML5 to offer a better mobile experience, others creating a mobile-specific website, and a small percentage creating mobile apps for knowledge access. As mobile users start spending more browsing time on smartphones and tablets instead of PCs, companies need to make sure their corporate and customer self-service knowledge is easily accessible and consumable via mobile devices, including verifying that unified search works effectively for customers and employees using mobile devices.

The final technology element from the survey relates to social. Today's highly connected customers follow you on Facebook and Twitter, join your online communities, and take advantage of ideation websites to submit product ideas and vote on what enhancements they want to see in the next release. These customers also want to have a direct impact on your knowledge management infrastructure. The survey asked, "How do you involve external customers in the knowledge creation process?" The results for the adoption of crowdsourcing knowledge are shown in *Figure 6*. Respondents could select all options that apply.

Figure 6: Crowdsourcing Knowledge



Source: TSIA 2014 Knowledge Management Survey.

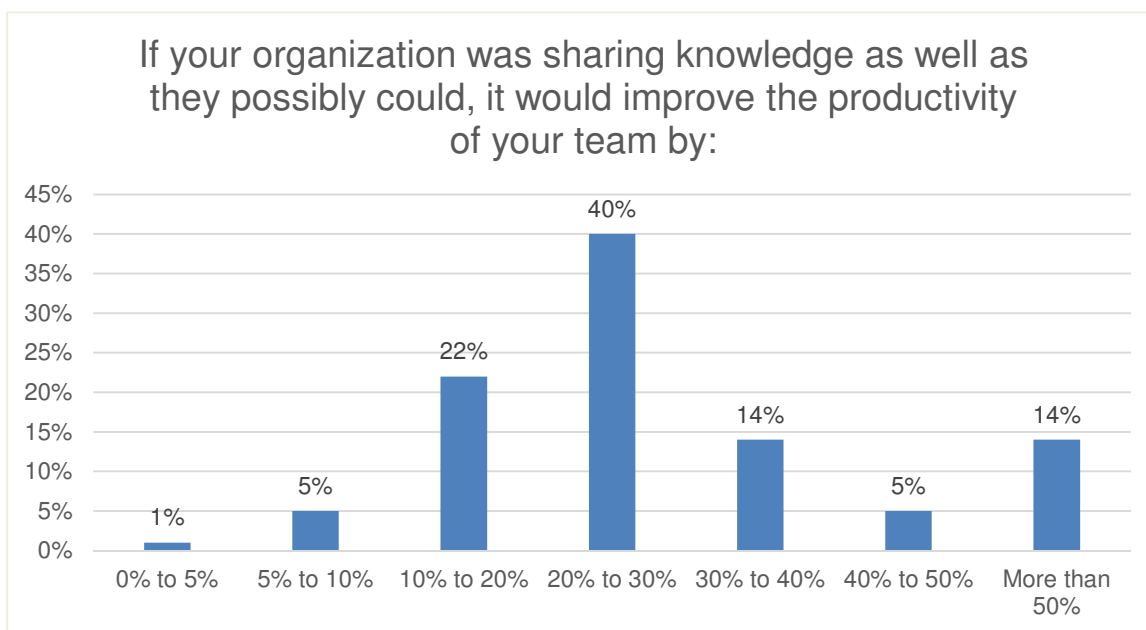
Though nearly half of companies, 48%, currently do not involve customers in the knowledge creation process in any way, many companies have begun to embrace various approaches. The most direct approach, used by 15% of respondents, is offering a "tribal" knowledgebase, sort of an online wiki for customers to add knowledge articles as well as edit or submit comments on existing articles. More indirect approaches include allowing customers to "like" content, used by 34% of companies, and accepting customer comments on knowledgebase articles, used by 31% of companies.

Companies who have embraced crowdsourcing knowledge are usually surprised at the strong and insightful information customers provide. As users of the products, they have a unique insight to add to your internally developed content. However, if this approach is adopted, making this customer-derived content easily findable and actionable by others is key. A successful unified search solution will index all social media channels and sources, and make the case-deflecting and resolving content within findable for future customers and employees alike.

## THE BUSINESS IMPACTS OF KM POWERED BY UNIFIED SEARCH

The payback of achieving an effective KM program holds significant promise for companies, and this promise drives increased investment. When asked in the survey how much improvement to productivity could be achieved if the organization was sharing knowledge as well as they possibly could, respondents indicated there were major benefits yet to be achieved.

*Figure 7: Potential Productivity Improvements from Effective KM*



Source: TSIA 2014 Knowledge Management Survey.

As seen in *Figure 7*, 40% of respondents said that productivity could be boosted 20% to 30% with effective KM. A total of 33% felt their productivity improvement could be more than 30%, with 14% claiming more than 50%. With this much at stake, companies should take a long look at their corporate information infrastructure and culture, and be sure it is optimized for knowledge sharing and collaboration.

### Calculating the ROI of Unified Search

Service organizations track a lot of metrics; in fact the TSIA support services benchmark tracks nearly 200 operational, quality, and financial metrics. Many metrics are tightly related. For example, changes to average talk time for technical support engineers (TSEs) also impacts average hold time and abandon rates. When TSE talk times extend, customers hold longer and abandon rates rise. When

talk times drop, assuming the same amount of available staff, hold times and abandon rates drop as well. This section focuses on metrics directly impacted by unified search technologies.

### Human Resources Metrics

Multiple metrics related to human resources (HR) are impacted by unified search solutions, including compensation, time to contribution, and turnover/attrition rates. By presenting the right information at the right time based on the agent's context, support organizations find that Level 1 agents are able to perform at a deeper and broader level, which enables the flattening of the support organization, the hiring of fewer specialists, higher agent satisfaction and hence less turnover, and less training time. Measuring the ROI for HR metrics includes:

- **Compensation.** Pre- and post-implementation salary levels.
- **Reduction in time to contribution.** Measure time prior to agent handling calls pre and post-implementation X the fully burdened hourly rate for time prior to handling calls.
- **Cost of turnover.** Typically 2x average annual compensation, fully burdened.
- **Annual attrition rate.** Subtract post implementation projections from pre-implementation records.

As an example, after implementing a unified search KM solution from Coveo, a Life Sciences company began hiring for customer support skills instead of medical technology degrees at a 40% reduction in salary. They were able to locate agents in emerging geographies closer to customers and at significantly less cost than in developed regions. The company also saw a reduction in time to contribution from two years to two months, a reduction of more than 11 times. Reduction will depend on complexity of products supported and experience of new hires. Expect a conservative range from 20% to 50% faster time to contribution for new hires. In Coveo case studies, increases in retention generally range from 10% to 20% after the introduction of unified search.

### Average Handling Time (AHT)

When implementing unified search for the first time, even when a knowledge management program has been in place for some time, companies find that by placing relevant information from multiple systems at the fingertips of the customer (for self-service) or agent, they access case-deflecting and resolving information and expertise far faster, lowering phone time with customers and reducing overall resolution time for incidents.

To measure the ROI from improvements in AHT, first determine the cost per minute of handling time. To do this, calculate the average fully burdened cost per incident (CPI), divided by average resolution time (RT), to arrive at average cost per minute (CPM) for incidents:

$$\text{Avg CPI} / \text{Avg RT} = \text{Avg CPM}$$

Then, use the cost per minute figure to calculate the savings from any reduction in average handling time post implementation. It is critical to calculate average incident cost both pre and post-implementation to measure the total savings derived from the technology.

According to Gartner Research, decreases in handling time can range from 20% to 80% due to increased access to contextual knowledge. Coveo customers with established KM programs saved on average 25%; higher impacts should be anticipated for less mature programs or those implementing KM technology for the first time.

### **First-Contact Resolution (FCR)**

Because unified search delivers case-deflecting and resolving knowledge more quickly to customers and agents, more issues can be resolved on the first interaction. Customers no longer need to be placed on hold or called back after the agent researches the issue in multiple systems, scans through long documents, reads case histories from previous incidents, or discusses the issue with others.

When a service response requires rework, i.e., interacting with a customer more than once for the same issue, these multiple touches conservatively double the cost of the initial interaction, and potentially raises per incident cost much more than that. The time to research the resolution, document it, and re-contact the customer not only increases costs substantially, it decreases customer loyalty and satisfaction. Rework may also include re-solving known issues without using content from past solutions. For all contact centers, the Yankee Group estimates that 30 to 35% of calls are repeat calls for the same issue; for complex products and enterprise support expect that percentage to be higher.

To measure the cost savings of increasing first contact resolution, use the CPM calculation above to calculate the average cost of incidents solved on the first interaction verses incidents requiring multiple contacts:

$$(CPM \times \text{average rework case resolution time in minutes}) - (CPM \times \text{average FCR case resolution time in minutes}) = \text{Cost savings from FCR}$$

Then, estimate the potential savings for increasing the FCR by multiplying the estimated number of incidents solved on the first contact due to knowledge and search technology by the cost savings from FCR:

$$(\text{Average number of rework cases per month} \times \text{Estimated percent of FCR increase}) \times (\text{Cost savings from FCR}) = \text{Potential savings from increasing FCR}$$

As a guideline, a 10% increase in first contact resolution is realistic for companies with advanced knowledge management programs that utilize unified search, while less mature programs or companies implementing KM and search for the first time may achieve a 30% or more increase in FCR. As a proof point, one Coveo customer measured a 67% reduction in the time to identify known issues after the implementation of unified search.

### **Escalated Incidents**

Because knowledge enables first-level agents to handle more complex issues, escalations and Level 2 or higher involvement are reduced. TSIA studies show that escalating an incident to Level 2 or beyond can easily double the cost of an incident, so tremendous savings can be realized from resolving more issues at Level 1.

To calculate the cost savings from reducing escalations, figure the average additional cost of escalating an incident by factoring in rework time of escalated incidents as well as higher salary cost of Level 2/3 employees:

*(L2/L3 CPM X Average rework case resolution time in minutes) X (Number of escalated incidents)*

Perform this calculation pre and post implementation to accurately measure the cost savings from reducing escalations. As a guideline, Coveo customers typically see escalations reduced by approximately 40 to 60% due to the introduction of unified search.

### **Support Center Capacity**

As average incident handling time decreases and first contact resolution increases, TSEs are able to handle more incidents per shift, allowing the same volume of inbound interactions to be handled by fewer technicians. In effect, better access to broad and yet relevant knowledge increases contact center capacity.

To calculate the potential increase in support capacity, use this formula:

*(Time saved per agent, per month X CPM) X Number of agents = Value of increased capacity*

As an example, Coveo customers typically see an average increase in capacity of 15% to 20% due to productivity improvements inherent in a unified search implementation.

### **Self-Service Case Resolution**

According to a recent TSIA report, 65% of those surveyed said self-service was their preferred channel when seeking product support, compared to only 11% who preferred phone calls. Using unified search to improve the customer experience and success of web self-service, support

organizations are able to move significantly more customers to their more preferred method of interaction, and dramatically reduce the cost of service delivery. TSIA's most recent data shows that the industry average for fully burdened incident cost by phone was \$510, compared to only \$4 for web self-service.<sup>1</sup>

To calculate the potential cost savings of shifting assisted support incidents to web self-service, multiply the projected number of cases moved to self-service per month by the cost savings between assisted support and unassisted support incidents. Using TSIA's industry averages, the cost savings per phone incident would be:

$$(\$510 - \$4) = \$506 \text{ cost savings per phone incident moved to self-service}$$

Then multiply the cost savings by total number of incidents estimated to be moved from an assisted channel to web self-service on a monthly basis:

$$\$506 \times (\text{Incidents moved from assisted to unassisted support in a month}) = \text{Monthly savings from increased self-service adoption.}$$

As a guideline, Coveo customers who implemented unified search for their web self-service site saw an average increase in self-service adoption of 40%. Additionally, an average increase in self-service satisfaction of 15% was also realized by Coveo customers.

### **Productivity Increases**

Overall increases in productivity contribute to multiple areas, from increased retention of formerly frustrated agents (turnover) to requirements for fewer agents during peak traffic times (capacity) to increases in first call resolution (FCR), and the time to solve even challenging issues (AHT).

To calculate additional cost savings from improving knowledge management, identify measures accounting for time savings outside of those previously listed. These may be specific to your organization. As an example, agents may have more time to focus on value-added tasks instead of administrative tasks.

Some examples from Coveo customers include: 67% reduction in time to identify duplicate issues, and an average of 40% to 60% less time spent searching multiple systems or content repositories one at a time.

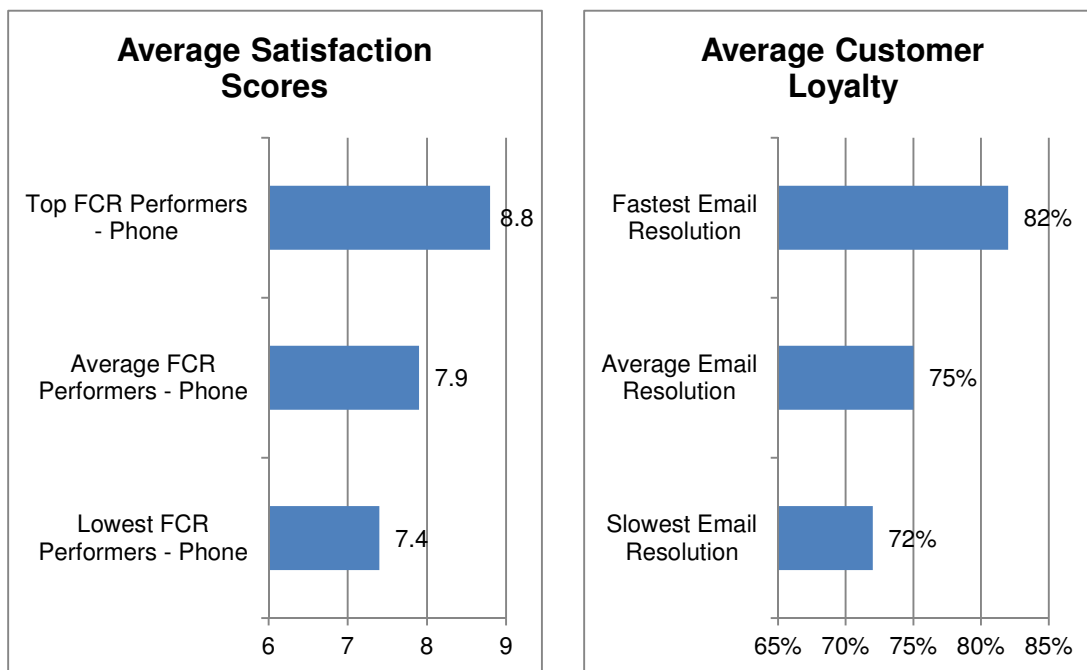
## KM Impacts to Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

As mentioned previously, each metric directly impacted by unified search has a trickle-down effect on many other metrics. One area everyone asks about is customer satisfaction and loyalty. How are these critical metrics influenced by a KM program supported by unified search?

When customers are interviewed about the ideal characteristics of a support interaction, the results reveal that customers value a fast and accurate solution. TSIA data shows that two specific metrics related to speed of resolution, first-contact resolution rate and resolution time, have a major correlation to satisfaction and loyalty. Improvements to both metrics are also closely linked to knowledge management.

In *Figure 8*, customer satisfaction scores (using a 10-point scale with 10 being “highly satisfied”) are sorted according to average first-contact resolution for phone incidents. Top performers for phone first-contact resolution also have the highest customer satisfaction. Companies with the lowest first-contact resolution have the lowest customer satisfaction.

*Figures 8 and 9: Response and Resolution Times Drive Satisfaction and Loyalty*



Source: TSIA 2014 Benchmark.



A similar trend can be found with customer loyalty, i.e., the percentage of existing customers who say they plan to continue purchasing from you. In *Figure 9*, customer loyalty scores are sorted according to email resolution times. Top performers for email resolution time also have the highest customer loyalty rates. Companies with the lowest email resolution times have the lowest customer loyalty.

While there is not a formula to determine the impact of KM spending on customer satisfaction and loyalty scores, an effective knowledge management strategy leveraging unified search does have direct impacts on the metrics which influence and drive the customer experience. TSIA member and Coveo customer case studies of successful KM implementations are typically accompanied by an increase in satisfaction scores, sometimes overall satisfaction, average satisfaction with assisted support, and/or satisfaction with self-service.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What's stopping organizations from embracing unified search as part of their KM strategy, when the returns are so obvious and so large? Such reluctance limits organizations from achieving both higher levels of success and cost-savings through increased customer self-service and agent proficiency. Many companies say they are reluctant because they don't have a complete understanding of what precisely may be stored in their disparate systems; and a unified search solution might expose sensitive or inaccurate information.

Fortunately, with the right solution, this proves less a challenge than many believe. First and foremost, IT teams and management should only consider unified search solutions that honor the security models of each and every system indexed. If the solution cannot do this, it is not adequate. Beyond this, companies can successfully address common concerns by following a few straightforward steps:

1. **Eliminate security by obscurity.** Index all of the systems used in your service organization, including those managed by product management and product development. Using a sandbox environment, run scripts against the unified index designed to uncover unsecured, sensitive information. Delete or apply the appropriate permissions to the sensitive information before making it available via search.
2. **Identify the level of content curation.** It is fairly easy with a unified search solution to identify the source and level of curation of each piece of information, either by explicit user endorsements (such as likes) or through symbols that identify whether the information has been curated or is in-progress.
3. **Encourage crowd curation.** Communicating the reasons for agent contributions to curation, for example enabling agents to link relevant information to a customer case on the fly,

increases participation (and is a key element of KCS). When users of the knowledge benefit, they will participate more because they know that they also benefit from the efforts of others.

4. **Trust employees to think.** People rarely take information at face value if they understand the consequences of using the wrong information, are unaware of the information source, or know that information has not been vetted. Plus, peers trust peers and will value their content. Bottom-up messaging, created by peers, is often perceived as more valuable than top-down. Don't worry if there is a self-declared but unskilled pundit among your employees. Peers recognize that, too.

## ABOUT COVEO

Coveo provides search solutions that deliver actionable, personalized knowledge to every employee, support agent, customer, and website visitor. Recognized as the Most Visionary Leader in Enterprise Search by Gartner in 2014, Coveo's Search & Relevance technology unlocks the full value of intranets, customer service applications, and websites by securely connecting, consolidating, and analyzing in real-time an organization's diverse knowledge streams, and providing users with unified search, dynamic 360-degree views of information, contextual content recommendations, and automated expertise finding.

Over [700 customers](#) worldwide use Coveo to unify knowledge and make it actionable. With corporate headquarters in Quebec City, Canada, U.S. headquarters in San Mateo, CA, and offices around the world, Coveo and its network of certified systems integrator partners deliver search-driven knowledge solutions to organizations across every vertical and in every geography.

Coveo is a strategic partner of [Salesforce.com](#) and Sitecore, and has been recognized by Gartner as a leader in its [2014 Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Search](#). For more information, please visit [www.coveo.com](#), and follow us on the Coveo [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on support channel preferences and incident cost by channel, see, "The State of Unassisted Support: 2014," June 26, 2014, by John Ragsdale.