

# Customer self-service: you're already doing it

Building your knowledge base on a solid foundation you didn't realize was already there.

As companies graduate into new stages and phases, competitive product features, ambitious revenue goals, or profit margins may overshadow the need to scale customer service alongside an expanding customer base and more complex business operations.

The start of a new chapter for your business is a great time to scale your customer service in a smart way; this white paper seeks to demonstrate how and why. It'll prove that you and your agents already partake in the activities needed to offer great self-service every day. By working smarter, not harder, you can transform those those efforts into a great self-service strategy.

A Gartner report, [Knowledge Management Will Transform CRM Customer Service](#), estimates that CIOs can reduce customer support costs by 25% or more when proper knowledge management discipline is in place. For starters, online self-service and proactive notifications have a demonstrated ability to deflect calls from a contact center, according to a Forrester report titled [Win Funding For Your Customer Service Project](#). Improving the delivery of contextual knowledge to either an employee or a customer **reduces a provider's answer time by 20 to 80%**. Furthermore, a substantial knowledge base results in a 35% reduction in the time it takes to train a new customer support representative, according to the Gartner report.

Investing time and resources into building a self-service infrastructure can be daunting; some even think it's unrealistic. Support leaders foresee self-service entailing a mountain of writing, strategizing, and maintenance.

For a self-service initiative to succeed, workstreams will indeed be modified. Expectations will be set among leadership, and someone in-house must be tracking its relevance and success for both customers and employees, communicating with

stakeholders across the business. It'll take consistent investment, including driving customers and employees to the knowledge base via links within tickets, in order to truly reap the rewards. In an article for the *Harvard Business Review*, Michael Redbord, VP of services and support at HubSpot, recommends dedicating a full-time person to building that knowledge base and providing customer-education support. Maybe that person is you?

**But for organizations with a mature—and still-maturing—customer service operation, the foundation has already been laid. We'll show you how you're already:**

1. Writing knowledge base articles
2. Determining which knowledge base articles to write
3. Designing great experiences
4. Hiring the right people for the job
5. Identifying subject-matter experts
6. Using content from your burgeoning knowledge base to help customers

## Myth

**I don't know who should write knowledge base articles.**

**Our agents are way too busy to write, research, or update knowledge base articles.**

**We receive a broad range of questions from our customers every day. We don't know which topics to start with.**

**I don't know how to create a great self-service experience for our customers.**

**I don't know how to approach hiring that supports self-service efforts.**

## Reality

Building your self-service operation is a matter of centralizing the know-how that's already in-house. You know who your subject-matter experts are. They walk customers through pain points and complex issues, lending personalized expertise from each tier. They're your project management team, often spotting potential roadblocks before you hear about them or customers experience them. They're your sales associates who, in the course of managing your customers, field wish-list requests from your key accounts. These touchpoints are a wealth of customer and product information.

Your agents write knowledge base articles all the time—they just exist as internal responses to open tickets instead of self-service content. In fact, your agents might be writing way more than they need to as they respond to repeat queries coming in day after day. [Analyzing your tickets](#), which are teeming with data, is a great way to start. The responses agents write in tickets can, should, and often are converted into knowledge base articles in a few simple steps.

It is a big project. But self-service content is everywhere if you know where to look. Take advantage of the opportunity to populate your knowledge base with the content that your team already identified as known questions or concerns; self-service just takes these ideas a few steps further. For example, pay special attention to [one-touch tickets](#)—the ones resolved with a simple response—and your commonly used public macros. This content already exists and can be published quickly on your growing knowledge base.

Many of the [best practices that your customer service team deploys every day](#) also work for self-service. Making information easy to find, using on-brand messaging to describe the product and any challenges therein, and the importance of empathy all apply, whether you're assisting a customer or designing a functional, helpful knowledge base.

Many of the skills you're already looking for—and [cultivating](#)—in support agents are transferable as you build a knowledge base. Great writing skills, empathy, and patience, for example, are all qualities that individuals on your team must possess in order to succeed. Who among the group has demonstrated the best writing skills or a proven panache in communication style? Has anyone expressed a desire for stretch assignments or moving up or within your organization? Those may be good people to help lead the initiative.

## OK, I'm listening. What's next?

Above all, keep in mind that this is a marathon, not a sprint. A knowledge base is a dynamic representation of the ebbing and flowing customer needs that, with forethought and planning, scale alongside your business and your evolving customer base.

Try Guide — the smart knowledge base that taps your in-house know-how and puts it to work.

[zendesk.com/guide](https://zendesk.com/guide).