KCS at Avaya:
Where Everyone Can Publish

The Direct to Publish Program

Leadership at Avaya was aiming to make the self-service experience on the Avaya customer portal best-in-class. To do that, the Avaya knowledge base needed to provide the most accurate, timely content possible to customers. However, when this strategy was established, there were many gates in place preventing completed content from getting published to customers. These gates created a huge backlog of completed articles that were not getting published.

With these environmental considerations in mind, the KCS team attended a KCS Leadership Workshop provided by Greg Oxton, Executive Director of the Consortium for Service Innovation and David Kay of DB Kay & Associates. During this course, it became apparent to Mike Runda, Client Services SVP and President, and the KCS leadership team that removing barriers to publishing KCS solutions would offer many benefits while presenting few risks.

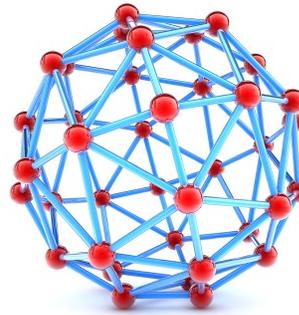Mike Runda demonstrated unfaltering trust in Avaya engineers to make the right decisions when creating and publishing knowledge. He challenged the KCS leadership team to put the Direct to Publish program into effect within six weeks. According to Mike Runda, "Our online support experience is all about making it easy for our users to get the right information when they need it. I know that my team has deep expertise in our technology, so the trick is to rapidly get that knowledge out of their heads and into the hands of our partners and customers so they can quickly find solutions to their issues and our team can stay focused on finding new solutions to thornier issues."

Publishing is really the engine that makes KCS valuable to your customers, so it is an important component of the KCS implementation. With this program, the Avaya KCS leadership team granted 4,500 global engineers the right to publish after requiring them to complete refresher training that included information about permissions, workflow and accountability.

Critical Success Factors

At Avaya, the following elements are in place that helped make this transition go smoothly:

- Executive belief in the value of content and trust in the judgment of support engineers
- Author name is visible to customers
- Mature workforce with long history with KCS
- Long history of knowledge management
- Use of a service request/case resolution methodology called ADM (Avaya Diagnostic Methodology) with embedded knowledge capture
- The current process wasn't working well

At Avaya, having ADM in place really helps streamline and align the integration between incident management and knowledge management.

Direct-to-publish programs require trust in the workforce.

Motivations
- Desire to improve the self-service experience
- Backlog of completed content not visible to customers
- Complaints about the process

Success Factors
- Explicit Executive encouragement
- KCS team willing to explore new work flows
- No tool changes required

Action Triggers
- Executive leadership challenged team to make changes
- KCS Leadership Workshop

About Avaya

Avaya is a privately held global provider of business collaboration and communications solutions, providing unified communications, contact centers, networking and related services to companies for all sizes around the world. The international headquarters is in Santa Clara, California.

About the Consortium

The Consortium for Service Innovation is a non-profit alliance of organizations focused on innovation for the support industry. The Consortium and its members have developed the KCS methodology over the last 18 years, and are committed to developing innovative ways to deliver customer support.

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Monique Cadena is one of the KCS Managers and says, based on her experience, "When engineers follow the Avaya Diagnostic Methodology, they ensure consistent troubleshooting and solve loop capture simultaneously. This provides a consistent format that is easy to understand by any employee, client or partner."

Overcoming Concerns

As with any significant change, there were worries about putting this into action. One primary concern was that allowing everyone to publish would lead to the deterioration of the quality of the knowledge base.

As this program was being rolled out, members of the KCS team found themselves defending the decision frequently. Many times, they reinforced the message that these changes fundamentally required everyone to trust the engineers to do the right thing. The maturity of the engineers and their skills with KCS validated that this trust is well placed. It is important to note that Avaya isn't experiencing substantial issues related to quality in the knowledge base at this time, but continue to be proactive in addressing these concerns.

The Training

Each engineer consumed a 12-minute training module that contained very straightforward information reinforcing previous trainings, notifying that they would be publishing directly and required each to actively "opt-in" to accept the responsibility.

Reiteration of these messages happened within many other avenues, such as team meetings, through managers, KCS leadership team and the Support executive team.

The Role of Coaching

Prior to this program, Avaya hadn't implemented the coach role. However, KCS Coaches are now being identified to proactively monitor the knowledge base quality and quickly address issues that are found.

Avaya is finding it feasible to use existing KCS Coaches to continue to mentor engineers and monitor for knowledge base quality, regardless if solution reviews occur before or after publishing takes place.

The Results

This program has successfully supported the strategic objectives around knowledge base vibrancy and quality.

Here are the benefits that Avaya has experienced:

- Content is available to customers within 24-36 hours after publishing
- No backlog of knowledge reviewing/publishing activities
- Engineers publish and update as they resolve their cases
- Knowledge quality improved, despite concerns it would deteriorate
- Knowledge participation rates remain high
- SMEs and publishers are available to work on other KCS activities like the evolve loop efforts
- KCS solutions meet the "sufficient to solve" criteria
- On the rare occasions when issues arise with a KCS solution, they are fixed as detected
- Slight improvement in the fixing rates within the workflow, however, issues with reporting make validating this difficult
- No complaints from customers about non-English speakers creating content that isn't understandable

Final Thoughts

For those considering a direct-to-publish model, here are some final thoughts of encouragement.

- Remember that KCS content has to be "sufficient to solve," not perfect. It is easy to over-engineer the processes to detect a very small number of KCS solutions with issues.
- It is easy to stay convinced that you can incrementally improve the existing process when it might be best to revamp the whole process.
- Reaching the decision to take this step is the hardest part. A paradigm-changing experience such as a KCS Leadership workshop can help align your team.
- Use your coaches to help address the few exceptions that arise after you open publishing to all engineers. They can coach the few engineers who will struggle.