



# Extreme KCS

## How Extreme Networks Improved Loyalty and Won the Top Spots on Customer Web Searches with a Disciplined, Data-Driven Approach to KCS® and Communities

### **The Challenge**

Extreme Networks faced a challenge in 2014. They wanted to improve their online content to empower their customers and provide self-help tools and a platform for customer collaboration. In addition, Extreme wanted to bolster its internal knowledge base and foster an environment where technical assistance center (TAC) engineers were passionate about contributing knowledge.

### **The Approach**

Knowledge is the key enabler of the self-service experience. After researching methodologies that could help improve their service experience, Extreme decided to adopt the Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS) methodology, an industry best practice for capturing, structuring, reusing, and improving knowledge in the support workflow. Selecting a proven methodology helped Extreme to reduce risk and the time to see results.

Extreme chose to employ KCS practices comprehensively.

They invested up front, dedicating a senior program manager, engaging an experienced KCS consultant, staffing a week-long process design workshop with global in-person participation, investing in coaching, and carefully managing change.

Extreme's approach to KCS was data driven, harvesting all the analytics they could from their systems, and then investing in creating offline processing to get the rest of the data required. During the process, Extreme regularly shared the data with their executive team and program stakeholders, using high-level dashboards and detailed drilldowns.

Extreme gained synergy by rolling out KCS and communities together, capturing KCS articles from community discussions, just as they do from support cases. Program manager Ryan Mathews notes, "We can watch customers consuming knowledge in the communities, and see knowledge base articles 'going

viral' in real time, which drives the team's positive morale and encourages them to do more with KCS."

As more support was delivered through these Internet-based channels, the Extreme team began to revamp the support site. They employed a user-centric design to build out their new portal and remake their customer's service experience. They brought in a KCS consultant who facilitated a workshop in which stakeholders developed personas and then prioritized approximately 80 tasks they wanted to accomplish on the site. They selected the most critical tasks to be zero clicks away—directly on the portal—while some were one click from the portal, and infrequent tasks required more clicks. The journey continues as Extreme's "KCS Leverage" work is well underway and focused on reducing customer effort.

### **Secrets to Extreme's Success**

Moving to a self-service experience that relies on empowering customers through

“For our Service Team to support our company’s technology roadmap, we needed to eliminate repetitive cases so our team can focus on more value added issues. With KCS and customer communities, we have made great progress on this challenge. We’re providing a positive alternative to opening a case, giving customers the information they seek in an easy to find and efficient way—all while improving customer and employee satisfaction.”

— Joe Novak, SVP Global Service and Support, Extreme Networks

knowledge gained in communities and from KCS is a big change for most organizations—it’s not easy. Extreme’s experience was no different. Some individuals and groups took to KCS quickly, while others took a wait-and-see attitude. Ultimately, the whole team came on board. Extreme’s knowledge base owner, Susan Verona, puts it this way, “The more we felt the positive impact of KCS, the easier it was to get people to adopt.” Extreme credits much of their success to utilizing the following KCS’ techniques:

- *Team KCS with customer communities.* As their KCS program ramped up, Extreme’s employees began contributing more resources into their peer support communities, led by Extreme KDEs (Knowledge Domain Experts). “When we started investing in communities, the posts moved from ‘log files and cries for help’ to real conversations,” notes Mathews. The communities have seen a 110% year over year growth rate since the release of the KCS knowledge base.
- *Implement Process Integration Indicator (Resolution Quality Index) measures.* Quarterly, Extreme engineers (led by the Coaches) check a random

sample of cases to see that the KCS Solve Loop process was followed correctly, they ensure articles were accurately reused, or were correctly captured. By spot-checking each other’s cases, Extreme team members saw firsthand the importance of reusing, capturing, and updating content in the workflow, making the team firm believers in the process.

- *Open up the knowledge base and communities to the Internet.* Many B2B companies restrict knowledge base and community access to those who log in to the support site. That’s a barrier in a world where most users start with an Internet search—and don’t want to choose between knowledge and communities. Mathews said it took leadership and a leap of faith, “It made people a little nervous, but we decided we have to own the first page of Internet search results when

people are searching Extreme Networks topics. We had to shift from focusing on what could go wrong, to what could go right.”

Things are going right. Since making the change, fewer and fewer cases have been opened that can be resolved with published articles—even with a growing customer base, TAC case volumes have dropped 20% year-over-year. And, 70% of support site visits come through an Internet search. This means that people are self-solving, reducing their effort and keeping the Extreme Global TAC (GTAC) focused on high-value cases.

### The Results

- Extreme Networks is serving more customer demand for support while reducing its GTAC caseload. Self-service sessions more than quadrupled in FY2015, and customer community sessions sharply increased as

“One of the things I’m proudest of is how KCS helped our team truly embrace the concept of continual improvement—they see us move forward every day. Customers can, too. We’re never done, so we always have an opportunity to get better.”

— Ryan Mathews, Senior Manager of Service Operations and KCS Program Manager, Extreme Networks

## About Extreme Networks

Extreme Networks, Inc. (EXTR) delivers software-driven networking solutions that help IT departments everywhere deliver the ultimate business outcome - stronger connections with customers, partners and employees. Wired to wireless, desktop to datacenter, Extreme supports 20,000-plus customers in more than 80 countries, delivering 100% insourced support. Founded in 1996, Extreme is headquartered in San Jose, California.

## About the Consortium for Service Innovation

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 20 years, and are committed to developing innovative ways to deliver customer support.

Case study developed by DB Kay & Associates for the Consortium for Service Innovation.

well. Assisted support is handling a smaller and smaller fraction of support interactions; 4% of customer support interactions as of mid-2016, down from 9% the year before.

- Customers love Extreme's new focus on findable, usable content written for the customer, whether by GTAC engineers or other customers in the communities. Over 80% of customer feedback on knowledge articles is positive. Surveyed customer satisfaction with self-service is high and increasing. Over 85% of support customers report very low customer effort, and recent Net Promoter Scores ("NPS") match the highest reported in a [2015 study](#) by the Tempkin Group.
- Assisted experiences are increasing in value— "moving from known to new," as the KCS Practices Guide says. Reduced contact rates show that customers are reserving valuable assisted support cases for when they're really needed.

### **What's Next: Enhancing the Customer Experience**

Extreme is continuing to improve KCS and the customer experience it delivers. Some key goals for the coming year are to roll out:

- *Consultative knowledge, driven by value-added interactions.*

With communities and self-service taking care of the routine issues, the GTAC can focus on higher value, business-oriented interactions—not technical break-fix and how-to, but consultative interactions where customers experience Extreme as a trusted partner.

- *Core personalized content delivery on the website.* While a web search is a great entry point, Extreme would like to deliver experiences that are tailored to each customer's installed products and interests. Their new Extreme portal will include an improved search engine that is continually tuned for customers and content.
- *Better customer experience ("CX") analytics.* The support team is partnering with their counterparts in marketing and digital design to better take advantage of Extreme's investments and expertise in using web analytics, heat mapping, and A/B testing technologies to continuously improve the support site experience.