

WHITE PAPER - The Most Powerful Practices to Guarantee Customer Success in Enterprise Business Software

INTRODUCTION:

Enterprise Application Software (EAS) has for a very long time been the focal point of IT teams' attention. These solutions are created keeping in mind the enterprise vision and goals rather than individual productivity. Because of this tendency to directly impact the performance of a business, EAS adoption and usage is a major focus in the industry.

Around this sentiment, every enterprise solution has a number of advocates or facilitators engaged in boosting user familiarity with its features and a deeper comprehension of the solutions that can be framed using the platform.

THE EAS FACILITATORS:

- **Customer Success Managers (CSMs) –**

These individuals are employed by the EAS vendors. Their primary responsibility is to ensure that users can make the most of the solutions provided by the software. They track metrics, inquire about the customer experience and coordinate with account administrators to prep existing clients to be receptive to potentially useful cross-sells and upgrades. In short, the objective of the CSM role is to optimally guide the business venture that is relying upon the platform provided to see tangible results by providing the necessary knowledge.

“As metrics driven SaaS becomes the norm, not the exception, businesses will rely more heavily on their CSMs and a proactive involvement on their part to spot churn threats and satisfaction indicators” – **Joel York, Chaotic Flow**

- **EAS Administrators –** These individuals are not employed by the vendor. They are either part of the in-house IT team of the business or are employed as 3rd party consultants. EAS administrators take the preliminary knowledge disseminated by the CSMs and build upon it to suggest tailored hacks or best practices to take the company closer to the objectives which had influenced the purchase in the first place.

Some of the motivations guiding both roles are identical. The end result is to create customer success and full utilization of the EAS. In 2015 and beyond, these roles will take on more weight because businesses will be assaulted by a larger offering of SaaS EAS solutions and the ensuing confusion (together with a remnant of the wariness ventures feel of

operating in the virtual ecosystem) will become a roadblock in the path of selecting the right platform and embracing it wholly for the desired outcome.

7 BACK-BREAKING OBSTACLES YOU MUST OVERCOME TO ENSURE CUSTOMER SUCCESS IN ENTERPRISE BUSINESS APPLICATIONS:

SaaS EAS customer success, as already defined, is the joint responsibility of the vendor and the business that has purchased the solution. Both entities make an investment of reputation, money and time in the endeavour and thus it is only natural that they strive to hit all the goals they set for themselves. Customer success can come if and only if employees understand the solution provided by the enterprise software, master all of its essential features and prefer to use it over cobbled together self-created workflows.

#1 There is Lack of Perceived Value by the User –

Implementing Enterprise Business Applications are all about perceived value. When a business makes the initial purchase, it does so based on hope of successful adoption. Subsequent renewals are decisions made on experience. Not all EAS solutions can generate results right away. Most of them need complete adoption and steady usage over a period of at least 3 to 6 months to reflect improvements.

The catch 22 situation is the fact that vendors may not have that time and they need to prove the worth of their software right away. Another complication is the reliance on self-crafted workflows. An employee who has been working with Excel sheets for 10 years may not like punching in customer information through a CRM, even though the automation and organization make it the more convenient option. Habits are again built over a minimum of 66 days and an EAS solution has to stick around and be popular to reach that level of daily commitment. Thus vendors must allure users with instant gratification through a process called activation in order to boost their 'perceived value'.

Real-life Illustration: This challenge is prevalent in software solutions, like in SharePoint Online, for example. There are a myriad collaboration tools in the market and SharePoint can display its true mastery when it is integrated with Microsoft Project for a 360 degree holistic approach to administrative tasks and information sharing. It is difficult for employees to understand the appeal of the flexibility that comes with SharePoint when they can share files easily and quickly through Dropbox.

Most SharePoint vendors stress on the collaboration aspect of the tool to draw in users and drive home the convenience and advantages of having the ability to create intranet portals for employee usage and extranet portals (websites) for the prospects and buyers. The UPS Store is a classic example of this challenge wherein their first outing with SharePoint was through the website and it gradually spread to document sharing and management as well.

#2 Complicated Navigation –

Most EAS solutions in the cloud try to keep it easy. This is especially the rule with companies like Salesforce. However for the tech giants who diversify into the virtual ecosystem out of a need to keep up with the market, the complexity in terms of navigation is not mitigated in the online avatar. It is a carry-over from the desk-bound on premise version. This confuses employees of SMBs who are not well versed with using large scale EAS platforms.

Real life Illustration: Oracle PeopleSoft is a popular HCM (Human Capital Management) platform. It is used to recruit new talent, forecast future HR requirements and in short monitor the administrative tasks related to the workforce. A common grievance that keeps popping up with PeopleSoft is the confusing interface. A specific instance involves the salary details of various employees. Managers often expect to find this data under ‘Compensation’, but in some versions it is archived under ‘Workforce Administration’. It is also tedious to manage the customized reports library.

#3 High Cost of Employee Training During Onboarding –

Complete adoption can only come as a result of a full understanding of features and the ability to drive innovative solutions to unexpected problems. However for some EAS solutions the platform can manage a large number of activities and impacts many divisions across the business. The features list is rich and often difficult to grasp.

There are only a limited number of 3rd party instructors and certified trainers in the market who can impart the needed knowledge confidently. And hiring them is expensive to say the least. Businesses with tight budgets struggle with online videos and user guides undermining the productivity of the teams all across the board.

Real life Illustration – SAP AG has entered the SaaS market quite late and has a real dearth of certified and validated trainers capable of walking a venture through an all-in-one package like ByDesign. Since ByDesign offers end to end integrated solutions, this means that the company goes through a slump in most of its major departments until the employees can master the software on their own.

#4 Low Knowledge Retention–

Employees using business software typically have a low knowledge retention level. Unless the information is continuously complemented and reinforced with the help of content or onscreen guidance till the new neural pathways set themselves into habits. More importantly not all users assimilate information at the same speed. Those who master a solution are sometimes reluctant to

“61% of human resources executives and line of business managers surveyed rated ‘Capturing and transferring knowledge from those who have it to those who need it’ as a top workforce-related challenge” - **Aberdeen Group**

pay it forward, especially if they are requested to help peers. As a result some sections of the workforce tag themselves as prepared to adopt the platform completely while others lag behind causing all around frustration and loss of productivity.

Real life Illustration: This issue is particularly glaring in the case of a relatively easy to grasp application like Salesforce. It is one of the most widely used CRMs because of its simple, intuitive interface and a plethora of useful features. Employees who are tech savvy, especially the millennials tend to master Salesforce within a shorter period of time as compared to their senior counterparts. Their familiarity with SaaS applications and smart devices gives them a head-start.

#5 Low Productivity During Onboarding –

Onboarding is a delicate time for both the business and the vendors. A small mistake at this juncture has the potential to result in cancellation and wasted of time and money of both parties. In fact experts say that users take the decision of ‘adopting or rejecting’ a SaaS application during the onboarding process itself. Poor onboarding support and lack of available training can lower productivity significantly and frustrate users. CSMs must offer EAS administrators with all the right resources to make on-boarding as smooth as possible. This includes comprehensive customized demos, chat and phone support. Sometimes employees end up depending upon peers to master a new solution and with no proper platform to document answers to queries and clarifications to confusions, they constantly bother them with requests for help. This is disruptive behaviour and sours the attitude of users towards what they perceive as a bothersome deployment.

Real life Illustration: SuccessFactors is a talent management SaaS application that works wonderfully well with the HCM offering from SAP to bring employees and managers from all divisions of a business to the same page. Without the integration to the HCM module of an ERP, the full potential of SuccessFactors in creating a unified ecosystem of easily accessible information and business decisions is not realized.

However this integration is quite tricky. IT departments have a tough time handling and prepping existing data for migration to the unified system. During this period, employee productivity also falls as the integration creates a massive dashboard with a plethora of confusing options. The best solution is a phased approach to onboarding where small groups of test users experience the new system and suggest tweaks to make it more user-friendly. A phased roll out eliminates the risk of a business wide operational stalemate.

#6 Poor Predictive Analysis Results in Higher Churn –

This challenge is active solely on the vendor side of the equation. SaaS has matured. Customer retention and revenue is no longer the holy grail of judging customer success. Other important KPIs like the achievement of activation, regular use, recommendations and business growth of the customer are also considered when judging the probability of renewal.

The following areas should be closely monitored for signs of churn:

- Usage
- Support Requests
- Training availability and access
- Net Promoter Score

However some vendors may not update their approach and they ignore important risk indicators like a sudden drop in software usage. When no corrective action is taken and the CSMs are not authorized (or empowered) to reach out to the EAS administrators with an offer of support, churn is the inevitable result. The vendor loses business and the company loses faith in EAS solutions. This is detrimental to the image of the whole industry.

Real life Illustration: SugarCRM is an open-source codebase that is customized to create niche specific applications. Thus many small companies use it to create products which can serve the needs of a particular industry. These ventures do not spend time setting up CSM capabilities or workflows that are triggered by signs of distress. Fit Sales was a CRM solution built on Sugar that suffered heavy losses and fell out of business because of its inability to predict churn, offer solutions and build customer success.

#7 Poor Communication between EAS administrators and CSMs – As a broader version of the previous problem, inadequate interaction between EAS administrators and CSMs may also destroy chances of customer success. The job of an administrator is to tailor the information provided by the CSM and set up an adoption and innovation program centred on the EAS solution. If this communication is not as expected, employees will never know how to optimally leverage the software and the vendor will be in the dark about user problems and adoption challenges.

Real life Illustration: Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online is another CRM solution that is considered a behemoth in the market. Its users strongly appreciate its flexibility, but latency (delays) has always been an issue. Upgrades do not reach all customers simultaneously and

there is a lag between the improvements made to the software and its introduction and adoption within a business. Since many independent contractors sell Dynamics licenses and they aren't all fastidious about customer success management and communication, inadequate interaction remains a potential point for disenchantment.

10 MOST POWERFUL PRACTICES TO GUARANTEE CUSTOMER SUCCESS IN ENTERPRISE BUSINESS APPLICATIONS:

#1 Activate users early on –

'Activation' in SaaS refers to the practice of showing quick tangible returns to the user. As already discussed in the challenges chapter, most EAS solutions need at least 6 months to start providing return on investment. However vendors must brainstorm a list of 'small win' milestones a user can achieve soon after or during the on boarding itself. According to a psychological study by Nir Eyal the sooner users invest some time and see returns (positive interactions) with a product, the better are the chances of a continued association and thus renewal. Activation obviates the issue of lack of perceived worth and hooks a client early on.

Practical Example: Microsoft SharePoint has a wonderfully innovative way of activating its users. It instructs its contractors and vendors to stress on the collaborative human aspect of the software rather than the pedantic management side. The first action users are encouraged to take is set up an intranet portal and create repository of training content centred on MS SharePoint itself. The ease of access and clear organization not only improves adoption, it is a 'wow' moment for users who becomes 'invested' in the advantages provided by the platform.

#2 Provide a Comprehensive List of Resources –

An important part of any successful vendor strategy is being helpful and contextually relevant. An issue with SaaS on boarding and adoption is unavailability of guidance and training. Expert consultation comes at a steep price tag and the lack of material to turn to frustrates many users. Providers at the very least should have a repository of guides, videos, short blogs and FAQs to give clients a starting point of cognizance. If possible they should also compile lists of 3rd party support bodies that can hold group trainings in crunch time and increase awareness of the features and provisions of the purchased system. All these efforts concentrate on increasing the probability of adoption through self-service.

Practical Example: Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online does a beautiful job of providing a comprehensive supply of training material to users. It offers e-learning sessions [here](#) and other documents [here](#).

#3 Real-Time Support is the Key –

Sometimes despite the best content and training, live support from the original vendor is needed to troubleshoot critical issues and enquire about upgrades or up-sells. Thus customer support through live chat and email are a pre-requisite to customer satisfaction and success. Vendors should invest in software like Zendesk, [WalkMe](#) or Help Scout to improve the rate of closure of support tickets, maintain queues and get back to prospects and clients within 24 hours flat.

Practical Example: Oracle PeopleSoft has a very strong history of reliable live support. At the 2012 **Oracle OpenWorld**, the story of how 4000 managers were shifted from cobbled together compensation solutions to the software was accounted and it focused on the excellent live support offered by the company amongst many other positives.

“Increasing customer retention by 5% increases profits by anywhere between 25% and 95%” – **Bain & Co.**

#4 Take Pre-Emptive Action to Reduce Churn –

Big data crunching yields business intelligence insights.

Like all other industries, the SaaS domain is not immune to the imperative of making better informed decisions. Pre-emptive actions include monitoring a user account for churn triggers, putting email sequences in place to congratulate milestones or offer help around challenging issues and in general ensuring that the software is being leveraged in a way that best suits the niche of the client. If adequate care is taken to resolve problems before the user becomes aware of them, renewal is a given. Vendors make the mistake of assuming that the buyer cycle corresponds closely with the provider cycle of **marketing-purchase-renewal**. In reality it involves several additional steps and can be best represented as **decision-purchase-on boarding-adoption-ROI analysis –renewal** and the provider has to support each and every phase.

Practical Example: Some SaaS ventures like UberConference and Buffer use Kissmetrics to track user interaction and behaviour. They are enterprise applications that have amped their game plan with the help of big data analysis and smarter decisions.

#5 Take Genuine Interest in a Customer’s Business Growth –

Customer satisfaction and success is not a narrow, blinkered approach to the relationship between a vendor and a buyer. Focusing on onboarding and adoption may lead to the folly of believing customer success is not intimately related to the customer’s business growth. The job of the CSM is not to make the users ‘happy’. It is to ensure that users regularly hit all their desired milestones and achieve consistent business expansion. Even if an account is otherwise healthy, customer satisfaction best practices call for a one on one meeting with

the administrator to enquire about Year on Year growth and offer suggestions to improve the value through better utilization of the platform.

Practical example: SAP Services Portfolio is a complement to its cloud ecosystem of ERP, CRM, SCM and HCM solutions. Its main objective is to consult with users on improving business growth and EAS adoption. By introducing this add-on (value added service), SAP is clear about its intention of providing a roadmap to ByDesign, SuccessFactors and other cloud users for maximum satisfaction.

#6 Provide Onscreen Guidance – A major obstacle in the path of customer success is incomplete or unsuccessful adoption of the solution by the workforce. One of the visceral reasons behind this is complexity of navigation and a clunky user interface. Providing on-screen guidance in the form of customized walk-throughs around user pain points is an effective way of boosting usage.

Practical example: SAP AG has recently acquired a number of SaaS platforms and its retinue of vendors struggle to provide adequate support in terms of using the solutions without hiccups. Many of them suggest the use of onscreen guidance tools like [WalkMe](#) to familiarize their users with the SaaS dashboard and then point them in the direction of the features they need to leverage to succeed.

#7 Look Out for Upselling Opportunities –

Some vendors rely on CSMs to pitch product up-sells to clients and even set targets which need to be achieved.

This is a flawed approach. The sole job of the CSMs

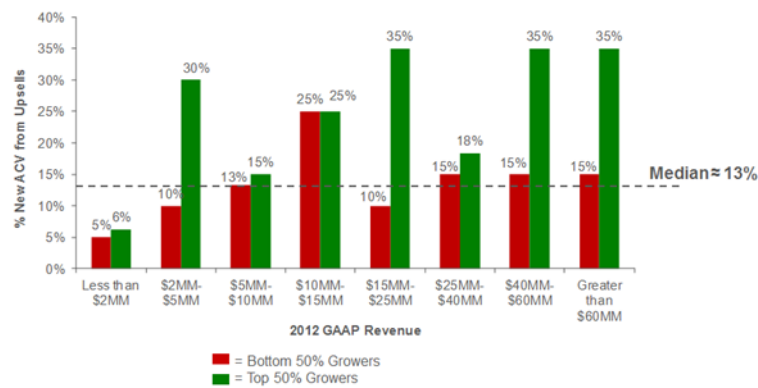
should be to provide able support and be on the lookout for opportunities to improve adoption. Upselling and cross-selling should be assigned to the account administrators who are tasked with gathering insights from CSMs and shortlisting the modules and services (either as a package or stand-alone) that can help build on the foundation created by the existing package. It is not just a question of increased revenue for the vendor. In most cases, the trajectory of a business naturally demands more features and sophistication as the venture expands. Thus clients benefit fully too!

To further drive home the importance of upselling, the [Pacific Crest Survey of 2013](#) found that SaaS companies which focused more on upselling grew faster than their peers.

“Upsells matter! It is 50% easier to sell to existing customers than to new ones.”

- **Marketing Metrics**

Are the Fastest Growing Companies Relying More on Upsells?



#8 Provide Upgrade Support –

Upgrade support is non-negotiable. User experience with SaaS updates generally border on disappointing. Sometimes the servers crash. Sometimes the updates are prolonged affairs requiring several days of booting and re-booting the client side to properly reflect. Vendors (and contractors) generally feel harassed during upgrades when they must be on the look-out for glitches within their own system. However it is important that they find time and set up a schedule to warn users of the pending upgrades and also deploy a support team on alert to quickly handle incoming troubleshooting requests.

Practical Example: SAP ByDesign users appreciate the synchronized upgrades they receive from the vendors. The norm is to schedule the upgrade sessions of a number of businesses over a weekend and deliver the lot when the activity is at the lowest. This way the vendor IT team is not unduly stressed and can extend support to all those who request it.

#9 Create a culture of Customer Success Management – If a provider concentrates on customer success superficially, the support teams will pick up this mentality and their interactions with the users will be cursory at best. Together with a genuine interest in business growth of the client, an organizational culture of customer success excellence is required to ensure complete client satisfaction. Gamification around this concept like rewarding CSMs with the healthiest account(s) and organizing CSM-EAS administrator mixers is going above and beyond what is a required and setting a precedent for the staff to follow.

Practical Example: Salesforce is a premium example of a SaaS company that is serious about customer success. It has taken a step in the right direction by celebrating the growth and achievements of its users at the Annual Dreamforce events and is looking to kick things up a notch by providing an interconnected mobile ecosystem to its users in the form of the Salesforce Customer Success Platform.

#10 Be Serious about SLAs –

SaaS vendors have a very bad reputation around avoiding the duties enjoined upon them by SLAs. Customers walk into a relationship with a certain degree of mistrust and if the actual agreements confirm their suspicions, they tend to jump the fence and revert to on premise solutions or opt for a better provider. These are unfavourable scenarios. SLAs can be turned into an opportunity to shine by being different from the crowd. Make sure that your agreements:

- Look out for the interests of the users as well
- Cover the availability of support and services in great detail
- Promise to inform the users of security breaches and make amends for the same
- Talk about the upgrade schedule(s) in place and the level of support during that critical crunch period

Practical Example: SAP AG and IBM together collaborate on SLAs. They even have a standard SLA framework that can be leveraged by all cloud ventures interested in creating agreements that are fair and relationships which persist.

5 TRIED AND TESTED TOOLS TO IMPROVE ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE ONBOARDING & ADOPTION:

Customer success is evaluated in two stages: On-boarding and adoption. On-boarding creates the first impression and adoption is 'key' to generating desired results. The following list is a comprehensive compilation of software solutions and tools which can improve EAS onboarding and adoption.

WalkMe –

[A very powerful tool, WalkMe](#) is a solution that offers onscreen guidance called WalkThrus, to ensure that employees and customers successfully complete their enterprise software tasks. Contextual guidance is delivered to the right person, at the right time, which accelerates onboarding and ensures long-lasting adoption. It can point new users to the features best leveraged within their niche, guide them around complicated navigation menus and offer insights or additional productivity tips through balloons. It supports both on-boarding and adoption.

Intercom –

An innovative CRM app which finds relevance on the vendor side of the equation, Intercom allows a SaaS provider to create detailed buyer personas of users to guide and inform customer success managers.

SAP Jam –

Even though this product is largely limited to SAP users, businesses that leverage other SaaS EAS solutions in conjunction with SAP can also benefit from Jam. It is a virtual community of peers, experts and trainers exclusive to a particular company. A major challenge during onboarding is a dip in productivity because of non-uniform knowledge assimilation and disruptive questions. SAP Jam allows employees with support requirements to connect with available experts within the organization who can answer their queries and provide hands on assistance to boost productivity.

Measurely –

Measurely allows SaaS vendors to judge the viral factor and effectiveness of their onboarding and adoption content through social signals and other relevant data. Armed with this knowledge providers can disseminate information that is of actual use to clients and can help EAS administrators better perform their jobs. Both perceived value and employee knowledge retention is improved as a direct result of using Measurely.

Userfox –

This is an email marketing and nurturing tool especially designed to help SaaS onboarding and adoption. It allows vendors to send friendly drip emails which welcome users and guide them to relevant content (created with Measurely). Providers can quickly assemble nurturing or adoption email sequences as well defining '*trigger events*' (say a potential churn risk sign) to kick start certain workflows (content to better adopt the software and maybe an offer of a support call).

CONCLUSION:

SaaS EAS solution vendors need to bring their A game to the on-boarding and adoption process. Churn is an insidious enemy which can erode revenue slowly and surreptitiously till the venture has no hold in the market despite a steady stream of new clients. These customer success mandates should help CSMs and administrators work together to boost adoption and renewals.

About WalkMe

[WalkMe](#) is a guidance and engagement platform that drives customer success by instantly reducing customer effort levels and churn, dramatically accelerating onboarding and adoption, and promoting new services to existing customers. WalkMe helps SaaS providers to expand revenue and ensure that customers continually and increasingly receive value from your SaaS product.

WalkMe gives SaaS providers an indispensable tool to onboard trial users and to "be there" with existing customers. Leveraging the WalkMe real-time guidance and engagement platform, SaaS providers can ensure their have an instantly simple user experience on their software.

Through a series of interactive tip balloons overlaid on the screen, tasks are broken down into short, step-by-step guided instructions, which help users act, react and progress during their software usage. As a result, SaaS providers can feel assured their customer will be able to focus on what they want to do using your software, and free from the confusion of how to do them. They can also empower their customers to self-task successfully even through the most complex processes.