

# COMPLETE GUIDE TO CORNERSTONE SUPPORT CONTENT

We're all consumers and we've all been there: you arrive home from work to find a box waiting on the porch. Inside is the new product you recently purchased, in this case a high-performance camera.

Now, if this is your first professional-caliber camera, you'll probably need help with basic setup and use. Like most other newbies, you'll glance at the quick start guide to figure out how to turn the camera on, adjust the focus, and change shooting modes.

If you're a seasoned photog, on the other hand, you already know the basics. So you'll likely rely more heavily on the user manual and any other content that will help you take your skills from novice to expert. How to set ISO, aperture, and shutter speed for night shots, for example. The right tripod to buy for nature photography.

And no matter who you are—novice, expert, or somewhere in between—you'll probably run into questions and issues along the way, such as lens and shutter errors, or problems with the battery or SD card.

## CUSTOMER JOURNEYS START WITH CONTENT

Buying a new camera is the beginning of a journey. Along the way, you're going to have questions and problems, and you'll turn to *content* to address them. Your level of effort and success along this post-sale journey will depend on the quality and findability of the content you need.

Your ability to find good content will affect the strategic and operational objectives of the company you bought the camera from, too. To drive down case/call volume through customer self-service, for example, content will play a central role by providing agents and customers the kind of content they need to help them on their journey. To shore up customer satisfaction (CSAT), Net Promoter Score® (NPS), and customer effort score (CES)—or to drive better return on investment for self-service initiatives—well-organized, easy-to-find support content will need to be part of the mix.

*It's about having the right content available for the different audiences who need it.*

Yet, supporting these objectives is about more than just making support content available in a knowledge base that customers use to answer questions and self-serve; it's about having the *right* content available for the different audiences who need it. That is, it isn't about the volume of articles available in the knowledge base (KB), but *the core group of articles that have the most business impact* and bring the most value to the people using them.

This body of content is known as cornerstone content.

## WHAT IS CORNERSTONE SUPPORT CONTENT?

In the world of post-sale support, an organization's cornerstone content is comprised of the foundational knowledge base articles, FAQs, and other help content that people (internal support agents, customers, or partners) actually use to be more successful. It's typically the content that closes or deflects the most cases, saves the most money, drives the most revenue, or prevents the most field calls.

*Foundational knowledge base articles, FAQs, and other help content that people use to be more successful.*

Think back to the new camera waiting on your porch. Were you the novice in that scenario? A product expert looking to take things to the next level? Or were you just a new customer encountering a problem? Cornerstone support content is usually organized around these basic "intents" that customers tend to have when they need help:

**How-to/FAQ**, addressed by content that helps customers get up to speed faster, or be more successful with a product or service, by giving them the answers to common questions and other information they need to set it up and use it more effectively.

**Break/fix**, addressed by content that provides solutions for specific problems that customers commonly encounter.

The importance of how-to/FAQ and break/fix content is underscored by Google's recent decision to add support for how-to and FAQ schema.<sup>1</sup> And because this content is so central to addressing the most pressing problems and points of friction along the customer journey, it often serves as a starting point for alignment around higher-level organizational objectives.

# HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR CORNERSTONE SUPPORT CONTENT

As much as there is to learn from an organization's cornerstone support content, identifying this important body of content means asking the right questions:

## 1. Who is your audience and what are they trying to do?

When answering this question, think about the broad range of needs that your customers have. You have new customers who need training in the form of FAQs, quick start guides, and even video tutorials so they can get up and running quickly. You have product experts who already understand how to use your product, but need things like product documentation and technical how-to articles to take things to the next level. Then there are your partners, who will need onboarding materials, integration guides, and other material to support their efforts.

Finally, you have customers from both groups that run into issues and obstacles that require troubleshooting guides.

On the other hand, you also have internal agents that need quick access to accurate, authoritative content in support of the customers they serve. This might include Tier 1 support agents searching for knowledge base content within the CRM interface, to use a common example.

All of these people might be the audience for your content.

## 2. Which topics are getting the most attention from people looking for help?

This might seem like a daunting task at first, but there are tools that can help. Web analytics tools will reveal a lot about which type of topics are being searched for and viewed most often by the most people. These tools can also reveal how people are searching for that support content, otherwise known as organic keyword research.

Why is this important? First of all, the support content attracting the most attention should be earmarked for regular updates. Ask yourself, what problems, issues, or points of friction are leading customers to search for this content? What problems does it solve? And how can you write and position the content so that it

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3. Which articles are saving your company money?

4. Which articles are making your company money?

5. Where are your content gaps?

6. What content do your competitors have?

gives those people exactly what they need?

Additionally, by looking at the content people are searching for, you can examine the language they're using to look for it. This can lead to insights that help an organization refine and optimize content, or to identify content gaps—"blindspots" where an organization doesn't have the right content for something that a lot of people are looking for.

More on content gaps later.

### **How data around the most-viewed, most-searched-for content can lead to actionable insights**

Consider this hypothetical: a global software company specializing in enterprise data solutions is surprised to find that only 15 support articles are driving 40% of total user views across the KB, while the other 60% of total views are driven by a much larger pool of 500 articles. What's more, the company finds that a single how-to KB article is driving 17% of total views. One article. With this information, the company able to better direct its knowledge management resources to the content that matters most based on the data.

### **3. Which articles are saving your company money?**

Organizations can identify and "value" content based on what the consequences would be if that article was absent from the knowledge base. There might be articles that prevent calls to the contact center because they address a specific issue. Others might prevent a company from having to send a truck or technician out for a field service call.

Identifying articles that save money, or have the potential to save money if they don't yet exist, can be the result of extensive customer journey mapping, content audits, and content gap analysis. This includes scrutinizing high-volume, high-cost issues in the contact center—or potentially high-volume, high-cost issues—that could be or are currently addressed by self-service support content.

## An example of cost-saving cornerstone support content

Imagine that a consumer goods manufacturer finds that a very simple washing machine error code is generating 150 field service calls a month, with each call costing the company \$100. The company realizes that it does not have self-service content in place to address this issue, content that could be used by the customer to easily resolve the issue on their own (no field technician assistance needed). Search engine analytics also reveal that a high volume of people are searching for terms related to this specific issue, further highlighting this glaring content gap. The company's knowledge team quickly publishes content to help customers resolve this error code on their own. Since doing so, the company sees 50% fewer field service calls for this issue, saving the company \$5,000 a month or \$60,000 annually.

### 4. Which articles are making your company money?

Some support articles can be shown to *make* an organization money, or to help drive revenue-generating activities. For example, you might find that a support article is serving as the jump-off point for click-through to other parts of your website where users are converting (buying, booking, etc.). If an organization knows that a certain percentage of customers who book a paid consultation with a technician start on one of five support articles, they should consider those articles part of their cornerstone content and provide (and track) easier paths to booking these sessions.

Examining cornerstone content might also help organizations identify content that *could* make them money. It might make sense, for example, that a visitor to a given support article would also need to replace a part related to that issue. Adding the opportunity to do so on the support page, in the form of a hyperlink or call to action (CTA), can create a potential revenue generator for the company by giving customers something they actually need based on their reason for reading that piece of content.

## How adding useful CTAs to support content can drive additional revenue

Imagine that the “My mop won’t spray” article for a popular mop is driving a high volume of organic search traffic for a well-known consumer goods brand. While the article includes detailed instructions on potential fixes to the issue, the company finds that most customers facing this issue end up needing to replace the mop’s cartridge. As a result, the company decides to add a call to action (CTA) within the article that customers could use to order and replace the cartridge. This article now drives incremental revenue gains for quarterly mop cartridge purchases.

### 5. Where are your content gaps?

Put differently, do you have *all* the content that your audience (customers, agents, etc.) needs to be successful? What content is missing from the knowledge base that could help customers self-serve, save, or make the company money? What content are people looking for regularly but failing to find?

Examining gaps in your self-service content is another way to identify cornerstone content. To identify these content gaps, here are a few places to start:

- What are the top reasons that customers contact you?
- What are the top things that your customers search for?
- Which steps in the customer journey require the most effort for your customers to solve?
- Are there “tribalized” solutions that agents use to solve cases that aren’t captured in the knowledge base?
- Are there areas of content that typically lead to revenue-generating next steps (refills, upgrades, add-ons, etc.)?

### 6. What content do your competitors have?

Analyze your competitors’ support content too. What are the topics for which they provide content? Which of their content is attracting the most traffic from search engines, and for for what search language? Are your competitors earning traffic for branded

keyword searches that you, in fact, should own with your own support content? Assuming your competitors' customer journey is at least similar to your own, an analysis of their content might reveal important pieces that you're overlooking.

## WHY IS CORNERSTONE SUPPORT CONTENT SO IMPORTANT?

Cornerstone support content is comprised of more than just the KB articles that get the most clicks. Identifying this body of content can help support revenue, adoption, and loyalty while curbing costs in the contact center. It can empower agents to be more efficient in their service to customers. And it can help bring internal alignment around which resources should be devoted where.

- ✓ Understand and align business objectives
- ✓ Use resources more efficiently
- ✓ Help agents be more productive
- ✓ Identify root cause and inform product improvements
- ✓ Understand your audience and entry points

### Understand and align business objectives

An organization's cornerstone content can be the key to understanding how to go about executing strategic and operational objectives, at least as they relate to post-sale customer support. How is this content tied to what you're trying to do? More specifically, how is the content you have—or the content you've yet to create—supporting or sabotaging these business objectives?

And, finally, if it's not serving an identifiable customer need, nor can it be tied to a broader business objective, should it be considered cornerstone support content at all?

### Use resources more efficiently

Where should you be devoting time and other resources for content creation and maintenance? When moving to a new knowledge management platform, for example, is it necessary to move over all fifteen thousand articles in the database, which can significantly broaden the scope, cost, and timeline of the deployment? Or is it wiser to focus on the thousand or so articles that are regularly used, updated, and make the most measurable impact on the customer experience?



## Help agents be more productive

Think back to content gaps: when you have content for the cases that agents see most, or for the cases that usually require the most effort to resolve, you give agents the resources they need to serve customers faster. This starts with identifying the right cornerstone content, capturing the right content where gaps exist, and equipping agents with that content by making it easily findable in the channels they already use.

## Identify root cause and inform product improvements

Some articles might capture a high volume of traffic but still lead to the initiation of a contact center interaction because they cannot be resolved through self-service. Data around these articles and the issues they entail can be used to identify the root causes that drive a high volume of case submissions. This data can help inform (and make the case for) product improvements that might alleviate the issue at its source.

## Understand your audience and entry points

Finally, digging into cornerstone support content will reveal a lot about who the audience is for your support content. Customers? Support agents? Partners? All three? You'll get a better understanding of their entry points, too, from search engines and the marketing site, to the CRM, product forums, and within the product itself. Understanding audience and entry points can highlight blindspots or assumptions, because sometimes the content you assume you need to create or maintain isn't necessarily what the end-user wants or needs.

*How is the content you have, or have yet to create, supporting or sabotaging these business objectives?*

## WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CORNERSTONE SUPPORT CONTENT

First and foremost, it's important to keep tabs on cornerstone content by keeping it regularly updated. Moreover, it's important to revisit web and content analytics for these articles frequently to look for new trends. Are customers, support agents, and partners finding and using this content? How, when, and where?

It's also important to look at where cornerstone support content is located and managed (or, if it doesn't yet exist, where it *should* be kept), as well as who is in charge of managing those channels. Is your cornerstone content located in a community forum? The knowledge base? Within the CRM? A random OneNote document? Whose responsibility is it to ensure customers, agents, and other stakeholders get the most out of that content?

***Are customers, support agents, and partners finding and using this content? How, when, and where?***

Finally, it's important to consider what place cornerstone support content should have within your broader information architecture. What content links to your cornerstone pieces, and how is it organized within a broader collection of related or sequentially managed content? This will help maximize findability both for your customers and for internal and external search engines.

Essentially, tending to your cornerstone support content is about working towards a data-driven system with your content as the mechanism to achieve company goals. Typically, this is the foundational content that helps make your customers more successful. In doing so, it helps support your broader business goals, such as elevating customer self-service, making agents more efficient, and improving customer experience overall.

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*Read our MindTouch-sponsored whitepaper by Lori Bocklund, President of Strategic Contact and experienced industry veteran, as she explores the ties between new self-service entry points and a strong foundation rooted in knowledge management.*

## THE POWER OF A KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

READ THE WHITEPAPER

## ENDNOTES

1. <https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2019/05/new-in-structured-data-faq-and-how-to.html>



### HEADQUARTERS

101 W Broadway, Ste 1500  
San Diego, CA 92101  
USA

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### WEB

[mindtouch.com](http://mindtouch.com)

### SALES / SUPPORT

(619) 795-8459

### ABOUT MINDTOUCH

MindTouch offers an enterprise-grade, AI-powered knowledge management platform that includes functionality for customer self-service, agent assistance and departmental knowledge for organizations of all sizes and industries. Focused on the customer experience, MindTouch is trusted by more than 340 companies worldwide to deliver knowledge when it's needed, where it's needed and how it's needed. The result is faster, more consistent and more personalized customer service, along with increased operational efficiencies. MindTouch was founded in 2005 and is headquartered in San Diego, California. [www.mindtouch.com](http://www.mindtouch.com)