An Oracle Best Practice Guide
May 2012

Best Practices for Web Experiences
Introduction

The methods detailed in this best practice guide are based on Oracle’s experience with thousands of customer implementations and will help you deliver a high-quality Web experience to your customers while optimizing return on investment.

This guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the Web Experience Tune-Up Checklist. Assuming you have a reasonable working knowledge of Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Cloud Service, this tune-up should take around one and a half hours of focused time to complete. Time may vary, depending on the depth of changes that you wish to make to your configuration. We recommend that you read the guide and work through the checklist before reviewing the findings with your Oracle RightNow client success manager.
1. Make Customer Service Easy to Find

It may seem obvious, but if customers cannot locate a self-service area, then functionally it doesn’t exist. This lack of findability will not only frustrate customers but will also increase the use of more-expensive assisted channels such as the phone. There are three important steps you must take to ensure that customers can locate your answer content.

**Best Practice 1.1.** Prominently show a link to Support or Customer Service from your parent Website.

**Benefit.** Having a prominent link helps direct customers in need of support to the right place.

![Figure 1. Virgin Mobile Australia shows a top-level heading for Support, as well as a Search box on the home page.](image-url)

**Best Practice 1.2.** When performing a Google or Bing search with keywords for your products or services, answers from Oracle RightNow Knowledge Cloud Service should show up on the first page of the search engine results.

**Benefit.** If answers from the knowledgebase are indexed in Google and Bing, this will greatly increase the ability of customers to find your content, because many customers prefer to do a Web search before trying anything else.
Best Practice 1.3. In a main corporate Website search, this search functionality should return results for answer content from Oracle RightNow Knowledge Cloud Service.

**Benefit.** Many times visitors will type a support query into your corporate Website’s Search box. Instituting this best practice ensures that visitors can find answers to support questions, which will, in turn, improve self-service success rates.

2. Make Your Website Easy to Use

Companies with the highest self-service success rates and greatest ROI are ones that are able to make consumers feel self-confident, assured, and empowered with self-service. In other words, the usability of your Web experience is critical to its success.

**Best Practice 2.1.** Use the Support or Service home page in Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Cloud Service to serve as a landing point for all support information. In addition to a prominent Search box on this page, also show **either or both**

- A list of popular answers without requiring your visitors to search
- An image-based product or category chooser that then shows top answers within a grouping

**Benefit.** The better usability your Website has, the higher its self-service success rate will be.

*Tip: Answers often follow an 80/20 rule—meaning that 80 percent of visitors are after 20 percent of your Web content. In other cases, popular support information isn’t all that helpful and the customer should be guided to a product or a category first. Both cases are illustrated in the following figures.*
Figure 3. Travelocity shows a dynamic list of Top Articles without requiring a search.

Figure 4. FreeRealms groups its top answers together by type and displays visually engaging images appropriate for its brand.
Best Practices for Web Experiences

Best Practice 2.2. Branding within Support should be consistent with the rest of your parent Website and overall brand.

Benefit. Having a consistent look and feel helps to establish trust with the consumer by leveraging the relationship you have already established through your brand.

Figure 6. iRobot offers a seamless experience for accessing Support from irobot.com.

Best Practice 2.3. All Web links should be underlined.

Benefit. Usability studies have shown that consumers frequently fail to recognize links that aren’t blue and underlined.
Figure 7. Which piece of text looks more like a link? Blue and underlined is a Web standard.

**Best Practice 2.4.** Make sure that “Answers others found helpful” is displayed on individual answer pages.

**Benefit.** By utilizing the wisdom of crowds, dynamic content helps guide visitors to the most-useful information.

```
- Rebuilding your local cache
- Workstation and Network Data Collector (rtnfo bat utility)
- Uninstalling and re-installing RightNow 8.0 or later releases
- Index out of Range message
- Cached data used in reports
```

Figure 8. The standard related-answers capability in Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Cloud Service leverages the wisdom of crowds.

**Best Practice 2.5.** Implement a user interface that makes it clear how to correct the problem if visitors accidentally submit a form with incomplete data.

**Benefit.** The Ask a Question form in Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Cloud Service utilizes a dynamic usability-tested form that reduces customer abandonment by 40 to 50 percent (in comparison to earlier releases of the product).

Figure 9. The out-of-the-box Ask a Question page in Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Cloud Service helps reduce customer abandonment.
Best Practice 2.6. For complex products or services, give customers the option to engage in an interactive Q&A-style text dialogue to gather service or support information and then guide them to the right information.

Benefit. Offering this functionality improves self-service rates for issues that typically require expensive one-to-one human interaction.

Figure 10. Oracle RightNow Guided Assistance Cloud Service provides an interactive way to direct your customers to the right information.

3. Understand the Issues Your Customers Have

The better you understand the problems your customers are trying to solve, the better chance you have of offering them an effective Web experience.

Based on extensive user and market research, Oracle recommends that in addition to any customer goals you identify that are specific to your business (detailed later in Best Practices 6.1 and 6.2), you understand that customer goals for self-service can ultimately be distilled down to two objectives:

- **Find Information**: The customers are looking for self-service and want to locate some information or perform a function that will help them do so.
- **Get Help**: The customers feel they have a problem that can’t be resolved with self-service, and they need a knowledgeable human being to assist them.

Best Practice 3.1. Make it easy to achieve both objectives: find information and get human help.

Benefit. The deeper your understanding of your customers’ goals, the better experiences you will be able to provide—while reducing costs.
Figure 11. This design mock-up incorporates prominent support for both types of customer goal: find information (Search and Most Popular Answers) and get help (Ask a Question and Contact Us).

4. Provide Clear and Readable Content

Ensure that your content is easy to read (written in plain language) and to the point. Web users are notorious for quickly scanning and flipping between pages, trying to quickly locate the “information scent” of the knowledge they are after.

Breaking up content with graphics, visual diagrams, videos, thumbnails, bullet points, and inline bolded text to enrich your content often has the effect of forcing the user to glance at these elements when scanning, and this will increase their engagement.

**Best Practice 4.1.** Provide answer content written in plain language, at or below an eighth-grade (age 12 to 13) reading level.

**Benefit.** If you target lower reading levels, it will be easier for your content to be understandable to a global audience. If content includes technical, company, or legal jargon, customers won’t be as likely to avail themselves of self-service and will use an assisted channel instead.
Best Practices for Web Experiences

Figure 12. Write content in plain language so that it is more easily understandable to a global audience.

**Best Practice 4.2.** Optimize answer content with formatting and organization to make it easy to read and scan.

**Benefit.** Web visitors often skim text rather than carefully reading it. The more you design your content to take advantage of this principle, the higher self-service rates you will achieve.

Figure 13. Streamline formatting so that content is easy for customers to skim.

5. Offer Multichannel Choice

Offering a unified experience across multiple channels is important not only to the customer experience but also to your bottom line. Consider the nature of each channel when determining where it can be used most effectively.

**Best Practice 5.1.** Provide several channels for customers to choose from. Offer channels to your customers based on your service objectives, so they can select their preferred way of communicating (e-mail, phone, chat, or screen-sharing).

**Benefit.** Providing multichannel choice results in a better customer experience.
Best Practices for Web Experiences

Figure 14. The reference implementation of Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Service groups all available contact channels so that customers can select the one that best serves their need.

**Best Practice 5.2.** Do a Web audit to ensure that only your preferred contact entry points show up.

**Benefit.** Your customers will reach the entry point channels you want them to use and not circumvent these points and go directly to second- or third-tier entry points. Providing proper support for the get-help objective will minimize the possibility that your third-tier support numbers (or personal phone numbers) will get exposed to the Web.

Figure 15. Proactively offering assisted support removes any incentive to circumvent the channel.
Figure 16. Gethuman.com is a directory where customers gather to share direct Tier 2 and 3 support information. Want to talk to a human at Comcast? Just press # at each prompt and ignore the voice prompts.

Best Practice 5.3. Offer appropriate channels for the nature of a customer’s specific inquiry.

Benefit. Right-channeling customers frees up agent resources to focus attention on issues that require one-on-one interaction, improving overall first-contact resolution and the customer experience.

Figure 17. Doing a search on Google is a way to locate contact information for a company.

Figure 18. British Telecom allows customers to use only the contact channels appropriate for the nature of their issue.
6. Capture Customer Feedback About the Web Experience

To provide a superior customer experience, it is important to have a deep understanding of the audience you are serving and be able to detect when there is a change in audience members’ behavior and take action.

**Best Practice 6.1.** Offer the opportunity for answer feedback when a customer views an answer.

**Benefit.** This feedback mechanism enables you to improve or remove content that is not valuable.

![Figure 19. This answer asks the customer if it was helpful or not.](image)

**Best Practice 6.2** Use surveys to capture customer feedback about their Web experience.

**Benefit.** If you are not gathering feedback at the moment of interaction, you are ignoring valuable customer feedback that can help you improve internal business processes and policy.

![Figure 20. The reference implementation of Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Cloud Service includes a placeholder to solicit general customer feedback about their experience.](image)

7. Optimize the Performance of Your Website

Long load times for individual Web pages have been shown to increase the visitor abandonment rate. Make sure that any customizations you make to your customer portal do not negatively affect Web performance.

**Best Practice 7.1.** Make sure your customer portal pages have responsive Web performance.
**Benefit.** High Website performance reduces your overall Website abandonment rate.

**Analysis and Recommendations**

- **Best Practice 8.**
  - **Benefit.** High Website performance reduces your overall Website abandonment rate.

- **Best Practice 8.1.**
  - **Benefit.** This will result in fewer customer password resets online and over assisted channels.

---

**8. Deliver a Personalized Experience**

Make sure to take into consideration information that you already know or that can be automatically retrieved for a given customer’s current situation and state of mind.

**Best Practice 8.1.** **Use e-mail addresses instead of usernames for registration.**

**Benefit.** This will result in fewer customer password resets online and over assisted channels.

---

**Figure 21.** A report from Websiteoptimization.com shows that this Website has several red warnings (low performance) and needs improvement.

**Figure 22.** BigFish Games asks for an e-mail address in order to login.
Best Practice 8.2. Consumers should have to log in only once to access support, product, corporate information, and other content.

Benefit. Not having to re-enter a password improves self-service rates, by removing a barrier to accessing support information.

9. Ensure That Your Website Is Accessible

The importance of information accessibility is often overlooked. True accessibility means support for a variety of browsers as well as assistive technology for people with disabilities. Good accessibility will ensure that your Website can be used easily by the highest-possible number of people.

Best Practice 9.1. Make your Website as accessible to and usable as possible for people with disabilities (meet the technical standards of Section 508/Web Content Accessibility Guidelines [WCAG]).

Benefit. Besides helping people in the 15 percent of the world’s population who consider themselves disabled take advantage of self-service, organizations that provide accessible Websites can avoid the experience of several organizations (such as Target and Rite Aid) that have been sued for poor Website accessibility.

Figure 23. Salesforce.com has accessibility errors on its Website. These errors make it more difficult for people with disabilities to interact with the company.

Best Practice 9.2. Consider offering a mobile (smartphone) Website experience to your customers.

Benefit. Everyone who uses an iPhone, Android-based device, or newer BlackBerry has a touch-friendly experience designed specifically for their device. This improves their self-service success rates.
Figure 24. The reference implementation of Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Cloud Service automatically shows smartphone visitors a version of each customer portal page with optimized download speed and easy touch interaction.

**Best Practice 9.3.** Improve accessibility by ensuring that your Website looks consistent in Firefox, Internet Explorer, Chrome, Opera, and Safari.

**Benefit.** If your Website looks poor in a customer’s browser of choice, that person is more likely to give up on self-service.

**Conclusion**

Now that you are familiar with Oracle RightNow Web Experience best practices, we recommend that you use the Web Experience Tune-Up Checklist to perform an assessment of your Website against these best practices and discover where you have the greatest opportunities for improvement. The Tune-Up Checklist can be found in the RightNow Community or by request through your client success manager.

Please note that these best practices are intended to be used as rules of thumb. If you have customer research or firsthand usability testing that suggests a different approach, your data should supersede these recommendations.