CASE STUDY

Pure Storage® (NYSE: PSTG) prides themselves on giving technologists their time back. Pure delivers a modern data experience that empowers organizations to run their operations as a true, automated, storage as-a-service model seamlessly across multiple clouds. Pure helps customers put data to use while reducing the complexity and expense of managing the infrastructure behind it. Since their inception in 2009, they've been pioneers in the data storage space, empowering their customers with new hardware and software solutions to transform data into powerful outcomes.

In recent years, this enterprise data storage company expanded into the XaaS space by developing Evergreen// One™ (formerly Pure-as-a-Service™) and, later acquiring Portworx®, both platforms that deliver storage and data management solutions for cloud-native applications. For many legacy storage companies, integrating an XaaS model into their existing structure can be tricky. Pure Storage knew they'd need new processes and methodologies to do it the right way right from the start – including an innovative, new Customer Success program. So, they partnered up with ESG for program management resources, strategy, and deliverables to help accelerate the creation of a CS organization that would harness, broaden, and scale their new program's capabilities.

HIGHLIGHTS

Business Challenge:
Pioneering a new Customer Success organization driven by a major XaaS transformation at data storage and management company, Pure Storage.

Objective:
Quickly and effectively build a new CS department to both fit into the existing infrastructure of the company and help take it to new heights.

Results:

▲72% improvement in CS maturity

▲90%+ growth in product usage

▼44% reduction in Time to Onboard (TTO)

▼33% reduction in Time to Value (TTV)

Wanted: A Partner to Help Guide the Development of a Brand Spanking New CS Organization

In November 2017 Pure Storage saw an opportunity to expand upon their existing business model by creating a new "as a Service" offering. The initiative began as an incubator within the Go-to-Market Strategy and Operations department. Rigo Rodriguez was hired a year and a half later as part of a small, six-person core team. His role was to focus on the customer experience side of the program. He had an extensive background in post-sales services and support, so he was excited to take on the challenge of building out a brand-new Customer Success strategy.

Rodriguez explains, "I was hired to essentially implement and scale a true Customer Success program, methodology, and delivery motion which, as you know, is more proactive, more consultative, and more strategically engaged than legacy account management." The new offering, Evergreen//One, took off quickly, proving to leadership at Pure Storage that pivoting into an XaaS business model made sense.

Evergreen//One was seeing triple-digit growth, and it showed no signs of slowing down. After the first year, it was time to bring the project out of incubation mode. Their CEO, Charles Giancarlo, announced that fostering and supporting the growth of Evergreen//One was going to be a top priority for the company.

At this point, Rodriguez had a rapidly-expanding base of Evergreen//One customers, but he was still a one-man Customer Success team. Fortunately, Joe Pinto, Chief Customer Experience Officer, joined Pure Storage around this time. Pinto had previous experience with Customer Success and understood how instrumental it is for scaling "as a Service" programs like Evergreen//One. Unfortunately, it was mid-fiscal year, and budget was hard to come by.

"Joe [Pinto] gave me some funding to get the help that we needed. The first phone call I made was to Sheik at ESG," Rodriguez recalls. "I didn't have much budget. I didn't have many resources. What I did have was enough to hire ESG."

> **"I think the thing that really sold the value of ESG to my leadership was the fact that they are practitioners of Customer Success. They don't just provide consultative guidance and direction. They're in the trenches with you, side by side, establishing and building relationships with all the internal stakeholders and implementing the program, the strategy, the tools – everything."**
>
> **- Rigo Rodriguez**

Quantifying and Designing the Customer Experience from Scratch

Coming out of incubator mode was a bit like jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire for the scrappy new program. Rodriguez had to convince his colleagues and leadership to embrace Customer Success and all of its benefits even though they were veterans of the traditional legacy hardware space. It's an ongoing process, but innovation takes time. Fortunately, ESG was there to help Rodriguez begin building the right foundation.

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The first step was taking the Customer Success Maturity Assessment. After all, you can't build what you don't know you need. The results – that Evergreen//One was on the low end of CS maturity – were not a surprise. "Everybody knew that we didn't have a CS organization at the time," Rodriguez explains. "We didn't have the infrastructure, the tooling, the processes, the policies to support an XaaS model. So, the follow-up question became, what are we going to do about this?"

The team at ESG worked with Rodriguez to answer that question, beginning with a key foundational step – customer experience design. This process involves clarifying customer segments and personas and then developing current and future state customer journey maps. These exercises provide a deeper understanding of both the customer's continuous journey with your company, as well as the internal processes that are in place to support that and where the gaps are that need to be addressed. Once you have the model, you can start continuously improving upon it.

The team answered questions like: Who's doing what? Where are the handoffs? What are the data and metrics involved? What are the checkpoints? What is the customer doing? They found that the many different customer-facing teams across the organization all had their own ways of doing things, their own definitions of CS, and their own tools for engagement.

Rodriguez says, "Off the top of my head, I'd say we had six or seven different platforms that touched our customers from different perspectives. We needed to work on establishing a single source of truth. Each organization had their own tools and processes, so we needed the ability to manage our customer lifecycle and customer engagement. We needed better visibility."

They needed to consolidate their customer engagement tools and processes into one easy-to-use Customer Success platform that could scale with their growing CS capabilities over time.

Customer Success Platform Implementation

Deploying a new technology platform is easier said than done. When you're wrangling so many different departments outside of your own, getting everyone on the same page can be a significant challenge. First, Pure Storage's fledgling Customer Success organization needed to put foundational processes and strategies into place to showcase their value to other teams.

"We needed to put forward a framework that we could take to our colleagues in other departments. Otherwise, we'd just end up spinning our wheels," explains Rodriguez. "I see it as our responsibility to set the direction in terms of what we want their impact on the customer experience to be based on our engagement model, our methodologies, and the things that we want to accomplish in Customer Success."

In February 2021, Rodriguez was able to expand his team. He hired a CS Operations Manager, then Program Managers and CS Coordinators. With more operational assistance and ESG, Rodriguez continued piling on the building blocks of Pure Storage's Customer Success strategy.

Implementing the new CS platform took some trial and error. The first tool didn't work out, and the team was forced to pivot to one that would be a better fit in the long run. Then, gathering the right data from across different departments and source systems became the next and most significant challenge.

ESG assisted with large-scale data clean-up and integration into the CS platform. Part of this process involved helping to identify the metrics that would matter most to their Customer Success organization. Then, ESG captured those metrics in the new system, established baselines for comparison, and created playbooks and methodologies for ongoing tracking.

Evergreen//One CSMs also needed proactive notification systems to drive efficiencies, evaluate trends, and improve customer engagement across the lifecycle. ESG developed automated playbooks for these systems and configured them in the CS tool.

Working together, ESG and the Pure Storage Customer Success team laid the groundwork for streamlined digital communication that can scale as their customer base continues to grow.

> **"ESG has been 100% dedicated to helping us stand up this tool. We did not have the resources or the subject matter expertise to have done this ourselves. It would have taken us so much longer to identify and apply the resources that we needed. They did a phenomenal job helping us keep up momentum on this project and work through the issues we faced along the way."**
>
> **- Rigo Rodriguez**

After a 72% Increase in Customer Success Maturity, Scaling is the Next Step

Looking ahead, ESG will continue to work with Pure Storage to scale their Customer Success program to meet the demands of their flourishing customer base, focusing on Digital CS strategies and expanding the CS program beyond Evergreen//One to the Portworx customer base.

"Our 'as-a-Service' offerings are a top priority for the company," says Rodriguez. "Between Evergreen//One and Portworx, we have nearly five times the number of customers we started with – demonstrating exponential growth. Through this whole process, we uncovered a number of gaps and opportunities for optimization we had in our infrastructure. This digital strategy is what we need to really start filling in those gaps."

A few of the new Customer Success capabilities in development that will benefit the CS organization:

- Clear customer segmentation and tiering into high touch, medium touch, and digital-first engagement models
- Measuring and monitoring KPIs like Time to Onboard, Time to Value, churn, health scores, and renewal and expansion opportunities
- The ability to query customers by product, health risk, and other critical data fields

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- Customer journey maps with built-in notifications at key stages of the lifecycle
- Customer health dashboard with customized alerts and mitigation strategies to proactively address potential product utilization issues
- Expansion opportunity tracking for CSMs to foster and then pass on to the sales team
- Automated notifications of significant customer events like delayed onboarding, support ticket creation, escalations, and upcoming renewals
- Proactive CSM and Manager dashboards to highlight customer accounts and opportunities to connect

The next stage of Pure Storage's evolving Customer Success strategy focuses on deploying advanced CS engagement and zeroing in on the metrics that influence customer value. We're developing additional workflows and a pilot for Customer Success planning. We'll be implementing advanced Digital CS strategies like complex automated alerts, more playbooks to empower CSMs with expansion and feature adoption training, and tracking new metrics like Value Realization and Renewal Impact.

ESG performed a second Customer Success Maturity Assessment at the end of 2021. Pure Storage's CS organization maturity score increased 72% from where they were at the beginning of the relationship.

"There's a huge effort underway right now to do an operational analysis of the program that spans the entire company," says Rodriguez. "We're looking at all of the functional units that touch this program, and we're identifying the delivery, operational tools, and infrastructure opportunities that exist. A lot of this was already highlighted in the Maturity Assessment that ESG did in the beginning. Every time somebody looks at it, they're like, oh, right. They pointed this out. Now that we have this new system and these new processes in place, we can get everyone aligned behind them."

We're proud of our progress and looking forward to seeing what we can accomplish together as we continue our partnership with Pure Storage.