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## DreamForce 2012 All About Sharing Customer Success

– David Taber, CIO

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Salesforce.com's [DreamForce 2012](#) in San Francisco is, in many ways, just a logical extension of what everyone experienced last year. In some areas, though, there are key differences. What follows are three flash impressions from the first day of the tradeshow.

### DreamForce 2012 Impression No. 1: Size Matters

As I wrote a while back in [It's the Ecosystem, Stupid](#), when making technology platform bets, the sheer size and coherency of the partner and consulting environments does a lot more than indicate commercial vibrancy.

For customers, a healthy ecosystem means the technology will continue to grow in depth and scope thanks to add-on products and consultants' libraries). It also means the talent base needed to customize, extend, integrate and manage the core system will be widely available. (Of course, as I also wrote a while back in [CRM Talent Shortage: Here, Now](#), there's a chronic talent shortage in places such as the Bay Area and New York, but that's only because the growth of demand far outstrips the growth of supply.)

**News:** [Five Questions for Salesforce.com.com at Dreamforce 2012](#)

DreamForce 2012 conference feels like a city, or a weird mix of [Burning Man](#) and the old [Mac Expo](#), with its own TV station, radio channel and dozens of bands performing. With a registered attendance of 90,000, this year's DreamForce has more than doubled in size since last year, and it may well be the largest single-vendor tech conference in the United States.

For attendees, this is a mixed blessing. With 800 sessions, 350 vendors, 10 buildings and dozens of parties each night, it gets overwhelming. From Salesforce.com's perspective, though, that's the whole point.

### DreamForce 2012 Impression No. 2: The C-Suite Matters

Even though DreamForce 2012 is supposed to be a developers' conference, it's really focused on convincing the executive that Salesforce.com is the safe bet. The choice of testimonials and speakers couldn't make this more obvious, with internationally known names from Burberry, General Electric and Coca-Cola coming on stage and gracing the posters plastered all over downtown.

There's been a notable change over the last couple of years in Salesforce.com's own sales maturity, too. The quality of its sales thinking and execution, particularly in the enterprise sales organization, has become more sophisticated now that the company is working with more serious deals. This ends up affecting the depth of their best-practices breakout sessions—surely the result of some painful lessons

learned over the years.

The choice of DreamForce entertainment seems, as always, at odds with the C-Level demographic. The headliner concerts are the Red Hot Chili Peppers and MC Hammer and the Village People—no Michael Buble here—and the "ambient" noise in the building lobbies is techno and rave music.

**Feature:** [Best Musicians to Perform at IT Conferences](#)

### DreamForce 2012 Impression No. 3: Customer Success Matters

Salesforce.com is serious about being an agile shop. That has many implications across the engineering, marketing and sales domains. For example, it's harder to have big product launches. The initial release of any Agile product is fragmentary—the product will have quality, but by definition the initial release will be missing features. Big products will take several release cycles to really get it done. Even at three releases per year, which Salesforce.com does, that's at least two years, and it could be twice as long for the products Salesforce.com has acquired in recent quarters.

Consequently, Salesforce.com has to rely heavily on safe-harbor statements in order to make announcements. With that caveat, they announce early, sometimes before the feature is even in beta, but they also announce often—whenever they make a significant improvement to a feature that already existed, they re-announce it. It's a marketer's dream.

That said, the DreamForce 2012 keynote focused far more on advertising customer success stories than on new products. Here are the goodies:

**Marketing:** Salesforce.com formally anointed its Marketing Cloud, an agglomeration of features for social media (from the [Buddy Media acquisition](#)) and social measurement (from the [Radian6 acquisition](#)). In conjunction with Chatter, the new features will help social marketers target, listen to and engage audiences so they can publish and advertise in social media with real-time ROI measurements. The demo was very slick.

**Human Resources:** Salesforce.com also announced [Work.com](#), its nascent offering for recruiting, goal setting and performance management that came from the [Rypple acquisition](#). This is not a simple HR administration system, as it has the vision of leveraging social interactions to define goals, align teams around them, motivate individuals and measure high-performance organizations.

**Sales:** The UI for the CRM is now based on Touch, optimized for mobile devices. This is not merely a face-lift of Salesforce.com's prior mobile apps—it's a complete rewrite. Touch is perfectly timed for the explosive [shift from laptops to iPads in sales organizations](#).

**Service:** The SunLight federated search system expands the range and depth of document search results. Chatter communities for service have been oriented toward customer self-service communities that crowd-source fixes and workarounds in conjunction with internal service personnel. And Salesforce.com has added the [Desk.com](#) customer service offering for small and midsized businesses.

**Collaboration:** The engineers have been busy rewriting Chatter, adding APIs and features all across the system. In the winter release, Salesforce.com will introduce the ChatterBox file store system, although it's not exactly clear what's new there. Expect to see even more evolution in Chatter at next year's DreamForce.

**Infrastructure:** Touch/HTML5 is generally available, allowing much easier development and deployment of mobile apps for iOS, Android and even Kindle devices. The entire Salesforce.com system is being rewritten around Touch, both for mobile apps and the standard UI. This, in conjunction with [Force.com Canvas](#), will also make for a more seamless UI experience for integrated third party applications.

**News:** [Heroku Entices Enterprise Java Developers with Cloud Platform](#)

Finally, Salesforce.com also added Salesforce.com Identity, a social-based SSO built on standard naming services and protocols, and announced generally available Java support for the [Heroku](#) deployment environment.

In a keynote address with a length worthy of Bill Clinton, Salesforce.com pounded the message of trustworthiness, safety and innovation that would comfort any executive—provided he or she doesn't

work for Microsoft or Oracle.

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