Design and Development of a Customer Portal using Salesforce Experience Cloud

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# Problem Statement

In many organizations, external websites, portals, or communities must integrate tightly with business-process systems and data. Traditional web development platforms often lack seamless integration with CRM, user authentication, permissioning, and dynamic content driven by business logic.  
  
The problem is: how to build a website or portal that is fully integrated with Salesforce data and logic, supports role-based access, allows customization, is maintainable, and delivers a seamless user experience—without reinventing the wheel each time.  
  
Issues to address include:  
- Secure user authentication and authorization tied to CRM records  
- Dynamic pages and templates that draw directly from Salesforce objects  
- Easy customization and branding without heavy coding  
- Scalability, maintainability, and governance  
- Support for multiple user types (e.g., customers, partners, internal users) with different permissions

# Overview

Salesforce Experience Cloud (formerly 'Community Cloud') is a platform for building digital experiences — websites, portals, communities — that integrate deeply with Salesforce’s data, security, and business logic.  
  
Key features include:  
- Drag-and-drop site builder and templates  
- Page variations, themes, branding, and CSS overrides  
- Components, both standard and custom Lightning components  
- Security model using profiles, permission sets, sharing sets, and guest users  
- Navigation, page routing, SEO, CMS integration  
- Member management (registration, login, profile, roles)  
- Integration with Salesforce objects, flows, Apex, and APIs  
- Deployment and lifecycle (Sandboxes, change sets, source control)  
  
Using Experience Cloud, you can deliver a website or partner/customer portal that stays in sync with your Salesforce CRM and automates business workflows.

# Phases of Implementation

## Phase 1: Discovery & Requirements Gathering

This phase focuses on understanding the needs of stakeholders and end users. It involves conducting interviews, creating user personas, analyzing content requirements, and identifying functional and non-functional requirements. Security and integration needs are also defined.

## Phase 2: Solution Design & Architecture

In this stage, the overall solution is designed. It includes deciding the site structure, data model, security and permission architecture, navigation strategy, component strategy, and page templates.

## Phase 3: Environment Setup & Provisioning

The Experience Cloud site environment is provisioned. This involves assigning licenses, setting up development and testing environments, configuring domains, and enabling essential site settings.

## Phase 4: Theme & Branding Setup

Here, branding and design elements are configured. Themes are chosen or customized, logos, fonts, and color schemes are applied, and responsive layouts are set up to match the organization’s identity.

## Phase 5: Page & Navigation Construction

During this phase, site pages are created using templates and layouts. Navigation menus are defined, page variations are set up for different devices, and routing rules for clean URL structures are established.

## Phase 6: Component Development & Customization

Standard components are used where possible, while custom Lightning components or LWCs are developed if needed. Integration with Apex classes, flows, and APIs is also performed in this phase.

## Phase 7: Security & Access Configuration

The security model is implemented in this stage. Profiles, permission sets, sharing sets, and roles are configured to ensure that guest users, authenticated users, customers, and partners have appropriate access levels.

## Phase 8: Content & Data Integration

Content is uploaded and integrated into the site. This includes CMS content, static and dynamic resources, and Salesforce data. Record lists, forms, and approval flows are configured to enable interaction with Salesforce data.

## Phase 9: Testing, QA & UAT

Rigorous testing is performed, including functional testing, integration testing, and security validation. Performance testing ensures scalability, while User Acceptance Testing (UAT) collects feedback from end users for improvements.

## Phase 10: Deployment & Maintenance

Finally, the solution is deployed to the production environment. Ongoing monitoring, analytics, user support, and governance are set up. Continuous enhancements and change management processes are followed to ensure long-term success.