It is time to take search out of the box. Most businesses today agree that search is the single most important part of a website experience. So why does it typically get ignored—with performance lagging far behind other features?

Despite plenty of evidence that search is essential to driving conversions, it is often an afterthought owned by IT web designers rather than marketing. This contributes to a largely unsatisfactory experience for users: More than 50 percent of online shoppers abandon purchases if they can’t find fast answers to their questions, and 75 percent drop a company that wastes their time online.¹
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An Opportunity to Move out of the Box

Search has become a natural behavior for users of all ages and backgrounds (thanks to the internet and its many search engine providers). But ever since widespread use of search came on the scene, it has remained essentially the same. There have been enhancements, including location-based results, images, and even video. But any query still starts with the user typing key words into a small box in hopes that it pops up with useful content.

But there is absolutely no reason to keep search “boxed in.” New technologies and solutions enable you to deliver personalized content to customers in innovative ways that achieve tangible business results. The search box can of course stay—but you can offer much, much more.

There is a huge opportunity to improve search to connect a customer’s intent with the right content. Every time someone types a few words in a search box, you have the chance to gain important insights into how a consumer views, uses, and thinks about your website. Providing relevant answers to visitor-initiated queries is just the beginning. New search innovations proactively use visitor information and search behaviors to provide predictive insights into what content or actions consumers may want. Other innovations deliver location-based information about nearby events. By mapping search accurately and precisely to relevant content on your site—while also supplementing that with personalized content—you achieve the difference between a good website and a great one.

Why Marketers Should Own Search

If your business is like most, your marketing team understands customer preferences and the market landscape better than any other group in the company. After all, it’s their primary responsibility to do so. So why is search so often delegated to IT? This is probably because, historically, search engines were technically difficult to manage and understand. But today’s enterprise and website search technologies have evolved to such an extent that creating and managing the search experience can now be accomplished by non-technical marketing team members, with the support of IT on an as-needed basis.

The results that someone sees, and the overall look and feel of what is on the site, are all a very important part of the customer experience. Search, whether through a box or dynamically integrated into the site, is integral to helping guide customers on their journey through a website—whether they are looking to find more information about a product or service, make a purchase, or request post-sale support for a product or service. Poor results lead to frustration and a bad experience, which means lost opportunity. And lost opportunity translates into lost revenue and reduced customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Marketers—not IT—should “own” search for one very important reason: They have the greatest stake in its overall success. Armed with deep knowledge of customers, their behavioral patterns and their ever-changing whims, marketers can focus clearly on how website search is working, how it can be customized, and how and when “out of the box” search functionality can be applied. New approaches enable marketers to make search a more integrated and seamless part of a visitor’s experience. Because the marketing team has a great deal at stake if search doesn’t perform well, they will work hard to continually improve it and deliver relevant content to users.

More than 50% of online shoppers abandon purchases if they can’t find fast answers to their questions, 75% drop a company that wastes their time online.¹

The search box is often an afterthought, left collecting dust with IT...
Relevancy + Results = Revenue

Understanding the “three Rs” required for search excellence isn’t rocket science. It’s a pretty simple formula: Relevancy + Results = Revenue.

If you give users relevant results—in context—you are bound to achieve higher revenue. Whether visitors to your site are looking for general information or a very specific one-word answer, if they don’t locate what they need immediately, they are likely to abandon your site—typically within eight seconds or less. Search is crucial in determining whether or not visitors will spend more time on a website and eventually make a purchase or take a desired action. If website visitors cannot find what they need, they are far less likely to become prospects or customers.

And if post-sale inquiry experience is really bad for customers, they will quickly move on to another vendor. When online customer service fails, 75 percent of consumers move to another channel. That forces retailers to develop new channels, at $22 million a year per channel.²

And today, few individuals want to guess the sequence of key words that unlocks the information within your business—in those enterprise data systems and sources that may be part of, or support, your web presence. Instead, they want to go beyond key word search and have you offer relevant suggestions, probable answers, and actionable information.

Laundry lists just aren’t acceptable any more. Matching based on concepts and ideas is important to unlock the information within the organization that will best help its customers, e.g. “PC” also means “laptop,” “computer,” “desktop,” “notebook,” “netbook,” etc. A successful search solution should identify relevant content from across all of a company’s available systems and sources, including product catalogs, collaboration and messaging platforms, company databases, social channels, third-party websites, and more. It should do that without having to maintain a reference of terms or synonyms; instead, it should do so automatically, based on concepts and ideas.

Relevant Search Results Increase Sales

According to eConsultancy³, nearly a third of website visitors will use the search box, with each showing a possible intent to purchase by entering a product name or product code. The influence of effective, relevant search on the consumer’s decision journey and a brands’ bottom line can be dramatic:

• Higher revenue and conversion rates—When customers can find what they need faster and more easily, the likelihood that they’ll buy—and buy more—substantially increases.

• Increased site usage—A useful website that’s easy to navigate goes a long way in bringing back visitors and getting them to register.

• Improved customer loyalty—if you invest in your customers, they will invest in you with their time, information, brand loyalty, recommendations, and ongoing sales.

Effective, relevant search brings results

30% of site visitors will use the site search box, and site search users are more likely to convert than the average visitor.³

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² CMSWire, Make the Customer the Focus of Online Experiences, David Roe, April 16, 2014.
Relevant Search Results Decrease Costs

The impact of search doesn’t stop at the “moment of purchase” in the consumer’s decision journey, but instead becomes a critical tool to help brands secure the loyalty loop while reducing operational costs.

More customers are moving to self-service digital channels to find information and resolve their issues. They don’t want to speak to an agent. This is good news for you, since phone calls tend to be the most costly form of contact in the customer service industry. Make sure that you present the information they need in a way that helps them quickly resolve their problems – so they don’t have to call an agent.

Providing relevant search results is one important way to accomplish this.

ROI: Measuring the Effectiveness of Search

Website search directly affects the key website performance metrics that most companies care about. Sites that provide consumers with intuitive and contextual search capabilities see dramatically better consumer engagement and conversion, including longer average time-on-site, more repeat visitors, and increased page views per visitor.

Likewise, effective search directly reduces cost. When customers can help themselves 24/7, regardless of your business hours, they reduce the service load on your team, which brings down the cost of service overall.

Consumers are eager for better search experiences. Sites that are best able to adapt to their needs will win the most valuable prize of all: their attention.

The OpenText Approach

OpenText SiteSearch goes beyond keyword-based search to deliver a complete, relevant and personalized consumer experience by helping you to automatically unlock key ideas and concepts in all of your information, structured and unstructured.

Based on advanced mathematical principles and augmented by more than 170 patents, our rich search technology interprets key concepts present in virtually all forms of content within the context of an application or website page, helping consumers to find the answers they seek by detecting patterns and relationship between data.

With OpenText SiteSearch, you can understand and act on documents, emails, video, chat, phone calls, social media, and application data at the same time and faster than ever before. Because we know information is fragmented across a variety of repositories, OpenText SiteSearch streamlines information processing across networks, the web, and the cloud. We help you deliver the most relevant results to your consumers wherever it is.

Key features that enable the best solution to customize and optimize the online search customer experience:

- Conceptual search
- Contextual search
- Customization of the search experience
- Automatic query guidance
- Faceted navigation
- Profiling and personalized recommendations
- Broad device support

4 Forrester blog, Your Customers Don’t Want To Call You For Support, Kate Leggett, March 3, 2016.
Sample Use Cases

Consider these three real-world examples of an advanced search platform in action.

**Use case No. 1: Health insurance provider**

A health insurance provider was trying to help connect its subscribers directly to providers through its Find a Doctor site. The provider wanted to do more than deliver a list of hundreds of doctors near a subscriber's zip code. It really wanted to tailor that experience to the health plan and characteristics of the subscriber and provider, such as provider type, medical specialties, certifications, hospital affiliation, spoken languages, and gender.

It also wanted to provide a single method to manage all the content in various repositories and make it appropriately accessible based on being inside or outside the company, whether the visitor was logged in or not. The insurance provider sought to ensure secure content stayed secure, while also allowing for seamless management for the people who maintained the content or the systems.

By taking a unifying approach and deploying OpenText SiteSearch and OpenText™ TeamSite, the organization now delivers better experiences on various parts of the website, subscriber portal, and the intranet. The solution lowers operational costs and enables content to be created once and accessible wherever appropriate.

**Challenges:**

- Subscribers couldn't find relevant content (for example, a doctor).
- Multiple data silos and disjointed capabilities kept information walled off.
- The management of content—new and updates—was cumbersome.

**Solution:**

- Deployed OpenText SiteSearch and OpenText TeamSite

**Results:**

- More personalized “Find a Doctor” results (e.g., nearby, in-plan)
- Better answers that increased customer satisfaction
- Sub-second performance, extended across intranet, Microsoft® SharePoint®, public site, and online customer portal
Use case No. 2: Large technology company

Customer support is a complex business for large tech companies and very important to customer experience. Customers can interact in multiple ways, including customer portal, phone, and community forums.

Owners of internal customer support systems wanted to expose some of the content to customers so they could answer questions or concerns themselves, via self-service. For a customer service function like support, the time it takes to resolve a customer’s issue means real money—not only for the tech company but also for the customer. And if a customer can answer his or her own question on the website, without a technologist’s help, the cost of that service drops dramatically and customers are satisfied and remain loyal.

Challenge:

• Connect disjointed, multiple internal/external information silos
• Integrate customer support, internally and on the web
• Provide answers faster, with fewer clicks

Solution:

• OpenText SiteSearch and TeamSite

Results:

• Joined disparate data sources (like Jive®, Bugzilla™) in a single platform for website and online support portal
• Provided the ability for customers to solve questions online, with fewer clicks, eliminating costly support resources
• Increased customer satisfaction, lowered cost of service
Use Case No. 3: Large healthcare provider

A very large healthcare provider with hospitals, clinics, patients, and vast amounts of medical content is a recognized innovator in connecting its patients with content that promotes healthy living.

But its former process required medical content creators to maintain large amounts of tags and reference data, which had to be updated as new research or healthy living practices were developed.

The provider needed to simplify this cumbersome, manual process to keep up with the volume of new and changing content, campaigns, and promotions. The organization chose SiteSearch to improve its targeting efforts. Now, patients quickly get the information that suits their needs and lifestyles, so that they are inspired to take positive actions regarding their health.

By promoting healthy lifestyle content to certain higher-risk populations, the provider is able to improve outcomes for patients and is seen as a partner in making people’s lives better.

Challenge:

• Simplify complex, costly manual tagging process to drive content
• Reduce resources needed to maintain tags
• Provide targeted content on health topics to educate patients

Solution:

• OpenText SiteSearch

Results:

• More explicit targeting of health topics shows customers promoted content (for example, how to stop smoking or new ways get fit)
• Dynamic content generation allows new content to self-categorize and present or promote to customers based on its relevancy
• Customers are more satisfied
Five Key Steps to Reinventing Search

1. Think out of the box.
   Take search out of the past by using data to automatically deliver personalized, highly relevant content to every user.

2. Find the right search solution.
   Choose a comprehensive and proven platform that delivers contextual search, faceted navigation, automatic query guidance, personalization, and other key features—and has the capability to do this dynamically (requiring far less day-to-day maintenance of the site).

3. Make the most effective use of data you gather.
   Use customer data to help personalize the website experience and enhance loyalty.

4. Evaluate and monitor the “three Rs.”
   Continually evaluate the success of your search platform, measuring and monitoring the three Rs: Relevancy, Results, and Revenue.

5. Get IT and marketing to work as a team to enhance search.
   Make your marketers the owners of search and involve IT as key supporters of the technology platform that powers search.

It’s Time to Get Search Right

Improving the search experience is one of the most important issues facing businesses today. It is priority No. 1 for marketers who want to use search to drive conversions, gain customer loyalty, build brand awareness, and ultimately increase revenue.

OpenText SiteSearch helps businesses deliver relevant results, in context, leading to more conversions and higher revenue. We help you take search “out of the box”—both literally and figuratively—personalizing every user experience based on valuable data gathered from queries and website interactions.

Talk with us about how you can meet the search challenge and:
• Get the tools to search, promote, and personalize search results
• Increase conversion rates and enhance the customer experience
• Meet evolving customer expectations by delivering relevant, expected content
• Connect users to content more effectively through all channels

Learn more at http://engage.opentext.com/products/teamsite