Choosing the Right Website Search Tool

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An overview of best practice guidelines

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Website search is one of the most important aspects of an organization's public website. The quality and relevance of search results may determine whether a first-time visitor stays or leaves and customer loyalty will be enhanced through effective use of search.

Forrester Research recently reported that a majority (56%) of Web sites do not offer search that meets visitors' needs.

There are a few contributing factors to this problem. First, users' standards for good search quality are increasing – something referred to as the "Google effect". Because people are so used to getting good results when 'Googling' a term, those same expectations carry over to other websites.

Second, many organizations' websites have evolved over the years in a haphazard manner, creating a patchwork of web pages that is uncomfortably revealed when viewing search results.

Third, most companies don't (or can't) measure the effectiveness of their site search functionality. So determining whether an organization's site search is serving users well and where its shortcomings exist can be very difficult.

There are a multitude of website search vendors available for an e-commerce site and the process of selecting an appropriate vendor can be intimidating. Your organization should strive to find a vendor that meets the criteria meaningful to its specific situation.

This report provides an overview of how to effectively choose a website search provider.

Scope of this Report

This report is focused on eCommerce websites. It discusses the starting points for identifying potential search vendors, then highlights some important selection criteria to keep in mind. It outlines the process for selection and provides a sample scorecard to use in this process. Finally, it contains a template for developing a request for information questionnaire to be distributed to potential vendors. It is important to contrast this with "enterprise" search, which has a far broader scope and is beyond the discussion contained in this report.

Intended audience

This information is provided to assist organizations that are considering the selection of a new website search vendor.

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