THE ASPECTS OF PERSONALIZED SEARCH and Why They Matter to the Customer Experience
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When shopping, the Search box conveys the notion of simplicity, yet it is one of the most complex and intelligent features on a site. Due to this misconception, it is frequently abused and misused. Often, shoppers enter queries that are too detailed or too vague, resulting in the common ‘no results’ error message, simply because they truly do not understand how complex a search engine’s processes are. Commerce Search is the card catalog to everything a brand or retailer has to offer, and if it isn’t, it should be. However, many search engines do not consider the aspects of Search, nor do they have the ability to overcome the complex challenges of Search.

When users Search, they ask, and essentially demand, that search engines respond to them as if they understand who they are and what they mean from a string of letters and words. With this in mind RichRelevance solves for the complex Commerce Search challenge by considering and understanding the three essential aspects of the multi-dimensional query.

**ASPECT 1: THE USER**

The first challenge of Search is to understand who is conducting the query. One might think that understanding this aspect is unnecessary given that the query tells a search engine everything it needs to know about what a user is seeking, but consider how infinitely more relevant a set of results could be if a search engine was able to understand elements of who is sending that query. Regardless of whether the user is logged in, anonymous, or new, it is still possible to understand who they are as it relates to the site they are visiting. At the very least, it is possible to identify that the user is unknown or anonymous. To understand and consider the foundational aspect of who the user is requires knowledge of the individual user’s previous behaviors, views, known affinities, past purchases, add-to-carts, clicks, etc. By leveraging this clickstream data a search engine is able to consider each unique user and the intent of their query.
ASPECT 2: THE QUERY CONTENT

With the user in mind search engines can better digest and analyze a query as it’s deployed, by inspecting the details or content of the query. When the query content is analyzed and understood it enables the search engine to consider a variety of components inclusive of but not limited to: query length, attributes included, entities included (i.e. gender words), specificity of adjectives used, etc. With the ability understand The User (Aspect 1) and build upon that context with a granular understanding of the contents of a query, Search can best determine the set of results to return and how personal that set of results should be.

ASPECT 3: WISDOM OF THE CROWDS

While every retailer or brand has a product and/or content catalog with varying numbers of attributes, they also have unique and insightful data about how users interact with their content or products. An intelligent search engine should be able to track and store supplemental data about every item within a catalog and add this data every time a catalog indexes. This data is referred to as ‘Wisdom of the Crowds’ and is comprised of things like, the number of times a product or piece of content has been clicked, the frequency an item is viewed, how often it is purchased, how often it is searched for, trending items, etc. A search engine can use this supplemental data to understand the most frequent behaviors of the users of that particular store and how they interact with the catalog. When this aspect is considered, query results and the ranking of the items returned are more refined and relevant.
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THE MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

As commerce shifts to a user-centric and customer driven experiential environment, approaching complex problems like Search requires solutions that consider and leverage various aspects and data. This shift in consumer behaviors and retailing drives the need for a search engine that considers the various aspects of a query in addition to how an individual consumer actually experiences the technology. With so many aspects and considerations, it is unfair and inappropriate to use a success metric that only considers a single aspect. To align with these considerations it is essential to measure the success of the overall customer experience. For example, Findability, is a metric that truly depicts how successful a searching experience is, by considering click distance and query volume Findability offers an insight to the multi-dimensional experience rather than just the single aspect of purchase conversion.

CONCLUSION

Since Search is such a complex technology it can only be successfully solved for by having an in-depth understanding of the aspects of each query: who the user is, what they are querying and how the content available to be returned is interacted with by that store's users. These different aspects are used by RichRelevance's Search solution, Find™ and are fundamental to providing powerful and accurate search results and a customer centric shopping experience. After these aspects are considered Find applies 3 layers of personalization, to ensure that all returned results are as relevant as possible for both the user and the query. To learn more about Find™ please visit our website www.richrelevance.com/relevance-cloud/find/.

ABOUT RICHRELEVANCE

RichRelevance is the global leader in omnichannel personalization and is used by more than 240 multinational companies to deliver the most relevant and innovative customer experiences across web, mobile and in store. RichRelevance drives more than one billion decisions every day, and has generated over $20 billion in sales for its clients, which include Office Depot, Costco, Marks & Spencer and Darty.

Headquartered in San Francisco, RichRelevance serves clients in 42 countries from nine offices around the globe. For more information, please visit www.richrelevance.com