



Onlinegolf.co.uk sales well above par with SLI Systems

Business problem:

Online Golf's prior search vendor wasn't providing a user friendly experience, limiting the company's ability to react to customer requirements

Solution:

SLI's intelligent Learning Search technology

Result:

The percentage of sales via site search has increased by 40%.

Flexibility and improved functionality of site search drives sales and conversions

As the name suggests, online sales are crucial to Onlinegolf.co.uk, the Essex-based provider of golfing and golf-related products and the largest Internet golf company in Europe. Since it was founded in 1999 its strategy has been extremely customer focussed and from day one that meant striving to understand how those customers shop and reacting with improved customer service and careful stock management.

As part of this strategy, Onlinegolf permanently keeps its massive warehouse stocked with more than 7,000 products. This, coupled with the close management of vendor partner relationships, helps ensure that customers are not disappointed by lack of product availability or slow delivery times.

Equally crucial as efficient fulfillment, however, is providing the right online experience for customers, and central to this is its search functionality. Until 2008, Onlinegolf.co.uk had been using Celebros but had begun to realise that this solution was not user-friendly, particularly from an administrative perspective, which limited the company's ability to react to customer requirements.

"It was increasingly clear that our on-site search system's poor integration was limiting us, both in terms of adding new functionality and information about customer search habits on the site," explained Lee Brown, Marketing Director at Onlinegolf.co.uk.

Integration of user generated content & video increases sales from site search

The company began exploring its options and eventually implemented Learning Search, a hosted site search solution from SLI Systems.

"Although filling a similar role to our previous solution, the ease of integration of Learning Search meant we were able to quickly add more functionality to the site, for example, displaying customer 'top-rated' items, plus the team at SLI have suggested extra ideas such as video links which help the sales process," said Brown.

"We have been particularly impressed by the effect of video on both site traffic and conversion rates," continued Brown. "Not only do video links embedded in the search results double the amount of video content viewed on the site, but customers who click on videos while searching are significantly more likely to buy the product than those who don't."

"SLI have suggested extra ideas such as adding video links to the search results, which help the sales process."

*Lee Brown
Marketing Director, Onlinegolf.co.uk*





SLI's Learning Search is integral to Online Golf's growth

As well as increased functionality and simple implementation, SLI's solution also offered search capabilities that learn from visitor behaviour (by tracking the search terms they use on the site and the resulting items they click on) to deliver search results based on popularity, providing the ability to track customer journeys in greater detail.

"Prior to implementing Learning Search we calculated that 10 per cent of our sales came via search," explains Brown. "Since we changed to SLI Systems that figure has risen to 14 per cent, which, although may not sound like a dramatic increase, is actually worth several hundred thousand pounds a year in terms of revenue."

The company currently reports revenues that have grown 30 per cent this year alone. Part of the reason for this sales increase is the new-found flexibility that Learning Search allows. Because Onlinegolf can now see patterns in what customers are searching for, it is far easier for the team to make small adjustments to the results those searches return, therefore increasing the likelihood of the customer finding what they are looking for or, if not, being presented with a viable alternative.

"This level of responsiveness allows us to tailor our sales based on our understanding of how customers shop. This means, for example, we can promote special offers on certain items, particularly around Christmas or other key times of the year for retailers," said Brown.

Looking ahead, Onlinegolf is planning major improvements to its existing site with even greater levels of functionality, particularly in relation to mobile devices.

"I can't reveal too much about the new site at this stage, but just as an example, we plan to make it fully compatible with the iPhone as we recognise how important it is to our customers to be able to shop whenever and wherever they want to," concludes Brown.

"The ease of integration of Learning Search meant we were able to quickly add more functionality to the search results, for example, ratings & reviews."

*Lee Brown
Marketing Director, Onlinegolf.co.uk*

About Learning Search

SLI's patented "Learning Search" intelligent search technology "learns" from user behaviour by tracking the search terms people use on a site and the resulting items they click on to deliver search results based on popularity. Learning Search improves the online experience for web site visitors and ensures the products people are searching for show up in the right searches - whether those searches are conducted on their own sites or on a web search engine like Google. More than 300 sites use SLI Systems' hosted search offerings including, Laptops Direct, Interflora, and Purely Gadgets, among others.

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