



Chemist Direct increases revenues by 42% with Google Commerce Search



At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Enhance the online experience of their customers by improving the ability to search for products

What they did

- Implemented Google Commerce Search to fix the latency and inaccuracy search issues whilst keeping the original identity of the brand

What they accomplished

- Able to save on expenditure, improve the speed and accuracy of the search results and therefore increase the volume of transactions on the site

Business

Chemist Direct is Europe's leading online chemist, providing over 20,000 health and beauty products and prescription medicines at the lowest guaranteed price but to the highest pharmaceutical standards.

The company was launched in November 2007 by British entrepreneur, Mitesh Soma with the help of his wife Krishna, a UK registered pharmacist. Chemist Direct aims to provide consumers with cheaper products by offering an online service that delivers to the door within 24 hours. By streamlining the supply chain and delivering to customers directly, Chemist Direct is able to cut as much as 90% off the average price of products available in local pharmacies. The company has more than 50 employees and a turnover in excess of £10m.

Challenge

As an online business, Chemist Direct (www.chemistdirect.co.uk) relies on its website to deliver the best possible shopping experience to its customers. Soma felt that in order to keep loyal customers and attract new visitors, the search system needed to be improved to become quicker, more accurate and easier to use.

"Our previous in-house system had a few latency and inaccuracy issues which we were resulting in customer frustration and abandonment," explains Soma. "In order to improve the online experience for our customers we wanted to speed up the time the search facility took to bring back results and also ensure the results presented were exactly what the customer was looking for."

Another aspect of search Chemist Direct wanted to improve was the misspelling capabilities. "We felt the search facility should offer relevant products even when typos were made. This feature can save the customer time by suggesting products close to the inputted word, which is especially important when specific names and brands are forgotten or misspelled," says Soma.

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Chemist Direct also wanted to improve the capability that allowed customers to search for products according to specific brands or prices, so that they only view the products which fall within their criteria, saving them time and increasing the chance of purchase.

In addition, Chemist Direct wanted to integrate Google Analytics within the search facility, to provide a comprehensive reporting platform that would allow it to analyse its customers buying habits and highlight any areas for further improvement.

About Google Commerce Search

Google Commerce Search is a hosted search service for your online store that brings the power and scale of Google's cloud computing platform to online retailers. Drawing on the speed and relevance of Google's search technology, Google Commerce Search increases online sales and usability by allowing customers to quickly and easily find exactly what they're looking for. Robust features including synonyms, advanced spelling, targeted promotions, and multiple customisation options make for a streamlined yet powerful online retail experience. Simple deployment and scaling, user-friendly analytic and tracking components, and enterprise-class support mean you can optimise your online product search experience and give customers the information they need to make purchases online.

For more information visit:

www.google.co.uk/commercesearch

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Soma began looking for an alternative solution after discovering that making these improvements to Chemist Direct's existing in-house search system would involve significant investment.

Solution

Soma set up trials with various search providers, but felt that they either didn't justify the expense or didn't offer the services that suited Chemist Direct's needs. However, he had read positive reviews of Google's offering so decided to take a trial.

"Having trialed Google Commerce Search, any reservations we had about moving away from our in-house system were well and truly banished," he explains.

The first phase of implementation took place in March 2009. "We decided to opt for a customised search option that caused minimal disruption and integrated with our previous search system. This meant that we were able to keep the original characteristics of the website but make improvements to the areas that needed it," explains Soma.

Benefits

As Google Commerce Search is a cloud based solution Chemist Direct is able to benefit from economies of scale and therefore save on hardware costs. It also means less time needs to be spent on maintenance or administration on an in-house system, which frees up the IT team to focus on more strategic projects for the business.

"The cost savings offered by Google Commerce Search are fantastic – it's 30% more cost-effective than doing our own hosting and in-house development, but it was the search improvements we were able to offer our customers that made this project such a success," explains Soma. "Customers can now search for specific symptoms like a headache and Chemist Direct will offer products to help with a cure. Customers can also search for promotions, giving them even better value for money."

To ensure the improvements made with Google Commerce Search were helpful to its customers, Chemist Direct allowed testers to experiment with the search options. "Our testers' feedback was all very positive. They found the search facility much easier to use and as a result spent more time on the site. We have also introduced a customer feedback section, where we can capture areas for further improvement," continues Soma.

"Thanks to Google Commerce Search customers are able to find exactly what they are looking for much more quickly. Our integrated reporting system shows that transactions have increased by 34% and revenue by 42% since deploying Google Commerce Search, which is superb," he continues.

The benefits Chemist Direct has experienced from using Google's search offering has encouraged it to implement further improvements.

"I always knew I had a winning formula when I started Chemist Direct back in 2007, but Google Commerce Search has taken us to the next level as a business. I'm always looking to innovate and improve and because search is such an integral part of a customer's online experience, I'm excited to see how else we can use it to help drive revenues moving forward," concludes Soma.

