

Woodcraft.com increases search revenue 34% with Google Commerce Search

WOODCRAFT®

At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Improve conversions
- Enhance the product search experience for visitors
- Reduce overhead related to search

What they did

- Implemented Google Commerce Search
- Took advantage of easy customization to promote product bestsellers and other categories

What they accomplished

- Increased search revenues 34%
 - Increased online conversions 27.7%
 - Reduced search refinements 37%
 - Enabled merchandisers to promote products and complexity
 - Went into the cloud to cut IT overhead and complexity
 - Tapped a continuous stream of new features from Google, without internal effort
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Company

Woodcraft Supply, LLC, is one of the nation's oldest and largest suppliers of quality woodworking tools and supplies. The Parkersburg, West Virginia-based company sells more than 20,000 products at retail stores in over 70 major metropolitan areas across the U.S., through two million catalogs distributed annually in all 50 states and 117 countries, and online at www.woodcraft.com. Woodcraft also offers educational opportunities through classes and demos at its stores, how-to videos and articles online, and project, technique and product features in Woodcraft Magazine, which publishes six issues annually.

Challenge

Until recently, many products on the company's e-commerce site were extremely hard to find. The company had been using a popular third-party solution for e-commerce search, but it was not meeting customer expectations. "Searches on basic keywords in our industry such as 'woodturning' weren't returning relevant products and information," says Nancy Miller, Vice President of Internet Sales and Development for Woodcraft. "We were receiving complaints from customers and even from our internal product managers saying that they couldn't find the right tools on the site."

Adding to the challenges of not meeting customer expectations, the old solution was costly and resource intensive to develop and maintain. Miller says Woodcraft found it an uphill battle to administer the system. When Woodcraft changed its data structure and worked with the third party provider to alter the search, the search rankings for even the most popular tools — table saws, for example — weren't appearing until the third page. Even with a dedicated employee to revamp the search function and revise data structures, the service just did not meet the customers' nor the company's needs.

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—Nancy Miller, Vice President of Internet Sales and Development, Woodcraft Supply

"Our old solution was complicated. It was difficult knowing how to structure product data to fit the right categories," says Miller. "To compensate for the complex administrative upkeep required, we paid for professional services to help us fine-tune results, but even that was inadequate."

Solution

Miller and her team looked at multiple providers for new online search, and chose Google Commerce Search because the service provided better results, improved rankings, and an intuitive administrator interface. And while moving into the cloud

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 include auto-completions, synonyms, advanced spelling, targeted promotions, and multiple customization options that 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 optimize your online product search experience and give customers the information they need to make purchases online.

For more information visit:

www.google.com/commercesearch

"With Google Commerce Search, site visitors are finding the information they need to make purchases online. Maintenance is significantly less, and functionality is significantly more than what we experienced in the past."

—Nancy Miller, Vice President of Internet Sales and Development, Woodcraft Supply

was not a primary requirement from the start, Woodcraft saw that a cloud-based solution like Google's would allow them to minimize resource requirements and remove IT complexity. "Every other e-commerce search provider out there offered similar, but fundamentally lacking solutions — except for Google Commerce Search," says Miller. "Google is much less complicated. We saw how it could alleviate administrative burdens and eliminate hardware and software maintenance because it would be hosted by Google."

Woodcraft implemented Google Commerce Search quickly, even with more than 16,000 products for sale online. The company had been using a Google Merchant Center data feed to allow shoppers to easily find Woodcraft.com products using Google Product Search or Google.com. They were able to use the same feed to power Google Commerce Search, which simplified the switch and eliminated the need for constant product database updates that would only affect search on the Woodcraft.com site. "We wouldn't have to constantly tweak our product data like we did before, and we found Google's user interface stunningly simple compared to our old solution," says Chris Brown, Systems Architect for Woodcraft.

Results

Miller notes that Google offered relevant search results out of the box, yet fine-tuning and customization to meet Woodcraft's unique needs made the results even more powerful. The Woodcraft team has been able to refine search to include features such as facets and attribute rankings that make finding products easier for customers. "The ability to sort by bestsellers and rank results based on the main tool was difficult even for our developers using our old solution, but with Google Commerce Search it was a straightforward sort function in the user interface," she says. "Our merchandising team can handle changes or promote products on their own using Google's e-commerce search."

During the initial phases of the switch to Google Commerce Search, Woodcraft ran Google and its old third-party solution side by side, making a direct comparison between the two. According to Miller, "Search refinements, which show the percentage of times a visitor searched again after immediately performing a search, were 27% on the third-party. With Google Commerce Search, that number decreased to 17%. Customers are finding products much quicker than before," she says. "Even more impressive, site visitors using Google's search convert to paying customers at a 27.7% higher rate, and contribute 34% in additional revenue."

At the same time as Google Commerce Search is positively affecting conversions and revenue, it is also reducing overhead for Woodcraft — the company plans to decommission physical servers as well as eliminate monthly database server software licenses. Maintenance costs in terms of personnel time are also lower. "We used to spend hours on end trying to solve problems with our old e-commerce search solution. And if we got a new feature set from the provider, a team of people would have to work to ensure that the upgrade would function correctly," says Brown. "With Google, we get a constant stream of new features and innovations that are just there for us — headache-free. We can trust that Google Commerce Search is going to work and constantly be improved."

From day one, Miller and her team began realizing returns from moving to Google Commerce Search. Their site has higher conversion rates, is more profitable, and they no longer hear complaints. "With Google Commerce Search, customers are finding the information they need to make purchases online," she says. "Maintenance is significantly less, and functionality is significantly more than what we experienced in the past."

