Nomura improves information sharing across its global workforce with the Google Search Appliance

NOMURA

At a Glance

What they wanted to do
- Improve the usefulness of the global intranet to enhance information sharing

What they did
- Selected the Google Search Appliance to power intranet search

What they accomplished
- Established a scalable and cost-effective enterprise search infrastructure that provides useful and relevant results to users to improve information sharing across the global workforce
- The GSA search function is now the default way for staff to find company information, with the number of monthly global searches increasing from 8-10,000 search queries to 500,000, peaking at close to 12,000 queries in an hour

Business

Nomura is a leading financial services group and a pre-eminent Asian-based investment bank with an international network spread across over 30 countries. Based in Tokyo and with regional headquarters in Hong Kong, London and New York, Nomura employs approximately 27,000 staff worldwide. It offers services to its clients through three business divisions: retail, asset management and wholesale, including investment banking.

Challenge

Like many multinational organisations, Nomura has struggled to efficiently organise and share information across dispersed geographies, a challenge that increased following the 2008 acquisition of the Asia Pacific and EMEA franchises of Lehman Brothers, which presented the momentous task of integrating numerous IT systems and trying to combine information across multiple sources for productive data sharing. The company decided that a global intranet would be the most efficient way to share its numerous documents, presentations, spreadsheets, organisational charts and other internal data sources amongst its staff.

"With the help of the Google Search Appliance, we have not only transformed information access across the organisation leading to increased productivity, but it has also proved to be highly cost-effective and scalable."
—Nick Wadge, Head of Portal and Web Architecture

Based on OpenText Portal, Nomura's intranet portal utilized an existing search engine for its search function. However, even after the expense of a full custom integration, the service had substantial problems. "In our organisation, we have a repository of approximately 150,000 documents, presentations, charts, spreadsheets and PDFs, which staff need to be able to find quickly and easily in order to do their jobs. While the intranet is the perfect portal for accessing them, unfortunately its search functionality was very weak and users either did not receive relevant results or none at all. We knew something was very wrong with the system when we consistently received on average only 300 searches a day from 27,000 employees," explains Nick Wadge, Head of Portal and Web Architecture of Nomura.

Solution

Having realised that knowledge management across the business could be improved by updating the intranet's search capability, Nomura issued a competitive tender after thoroughly investigating the available market options. Following the tender, Nomura selected the Google Search Appliance (GSA). "The Google Search Appliance stood out from other offerings on the market. We found the proposition of a cost-effective and simple solution very appealing. It was also very easy to install. We had the service up and running in less than a week and it immediately started returning useful search results," says Wadge.

After a pilot programme, which resulted in very positive feedback in terms of ease of use and configuration, Nomura started on the broader rollout. After an extensive period of testing, the IT department was confident that the product worked well from a technical perspective.

Nomura has a highly resilient, multi-data centre environment, for which the GSA is particularly suited. "We bought seven appliances for our various environments. However, as we only have one running at a time and the others are used for failover - which means that if one data centre or appliance fails, another will immediately take over, reducing downtime - we only require one production licence. This has made the system highly cost-effective," notes Wadge.

The GSA crawls the global intranet, the global technology Wiki and two other technology Wikis. The launch of the new search function went extremely smoothly. The natural relevance of the GSA was immediately apparent with great results being delivered without the need for extensive fine tuning. Using the GSA's term expansion capabilities, Nomura was able to provide a comprehensive list of keywords, banking terms and synonyms that allowed their users to search in terms that they use everyday. "The GSA worked very well straight out of the box without us needing to make adjustments or spend much time on its upkeep. We have found other search products far more complex to install and run in the past so we were really pleased to be less dependent on technical support from the provider", explains Wadge.

Benefits

To encourage staff to use the intranet to find information, the company consciously applied a similar look and feel to the Google consumer search engine for its corporate intranet, playing on the familiarity factor of the Google Search bar, with useful features such as spell check and keyword matching. Even though the new search function has only been live to staff for a short while, the use of the intranet has already increased considerably. Whereas in the past the company recorded on average 8-10,000 search queries per month, this has now risen to 500,000 search queries, peaking at close to 12,000 queries in an hour. Furthermore, through analysis of the site traffic it was found that the accuracy of the search has vastly improved with 98% of users finding the results they need on the first page of listings.

As part of the intranet revamp, Nomura also decided to integrate staff contact details into the intranet search using the LDAP connector for the GSA. With the help of the GSA, users now receive relevant results for several types of personnel queries in one place. This helps bring the globally dispersed organisation closer together, giving team members more insight into who they can contact in the organisation when they need expertise in a certain area. Previously, finding a contact in the organisation could be a real problem as there were multiple address books and calendars from a variety of legacy office communication systems.

"Google is in a league of its own in terms of ease of use, speed and accuracy. In the days before the Google Search Appliance, we had no overview of what data we held on our systems, and no way of indexing it. Now, with the GSA's customisable filters, we can sift through corporate data, weed out the outdated information and promote the most relevant and helpful results. This improves information flow between our global workforce and ultimately helps staff do their jobs more effectively," says Rohit Nanda, Head of Business Engagement, Nomura.

Another area where the new search function has had a positive effect is internal communications. The communications team was very frustrated when its news items used to disappear from the intranet after a short time, never to be seen again, as the old search engine did not pick the items up. With the GSA, the

newest and most relevant web pages are much more visible so the team is satisfied its communications are now reaching a wider audience in the company.

Many employees have voiced their satisfaction with the improved search, including Nomura's European Head of Infrastructure, Terry Learmouth: "I've been highly impressed with the improvements to the search, which have made it much easier to find any documents or web pages that I need, without it being a time-consuming process."

The IT team has had numerous requests from other departments to extend the use of the GSA for their own content. "While it has proved simple to deploy and manage, the GSA still provides advanced sophistication and functionality, which means we have the capability to potentially manage all these requests, even when they relate to indexing large quantities of diverse data. It is also easily scalable; all we would have to do is increase the licence and adjust the capacity, meaning additional expenditure is minimal, as other search solutions can be removed," notes Nanda.

"With the help of the Google Search Appliance, we have not only transformed information access across the organisation leading to increased productivity, but it has also proved to be highly cost-effective and scalable. Our experience with the GSA has given us a positive experience of exactly what we can achieve with effective search and, as a result, we are now looking at how we can use search in more innovative ways, including for our client-facing services, as well as working towards context-sensitive searching," concludes Wadge.