World Bank improves intranet usability while reducing search solution maintenance costs by 5x with the Google Search Appliance

THE WORLD BANK

At a Glance

What they wanted to do
- Improve search functionality on an intranet spanning hundreds of content sources
- Improve overall relevance and search interface
- Lower TCO by reducing maintenance for search solution

What they did
- Integrated the GSA with their intranet data repositories and user interface

What they accomplished
- Produced more relevant search results
- Provided multiple language support
- Reduced maintenance costs by 5x

Organization

The World Bank Group is one of the world's largest sources of financial assistance for developing countries. Its 8,000 employees in Washington, D.C. and 2,000 field staff work to raise living standards in poor countries around the world with technical assistance and a wide range of loan and grant programs. In doing its critical development work, the World Bank produces a vast array of research and data used extensively by organizations across the globe, including universities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Challenge

The Bank's global reach is reflected in its intranet, which hosts hundreds of independent websites with more than 200,000 files on 445 servers, all of which are maintained by some 400 internal content providers around the world. All 10,000 Bank employees have access through an intranet home page which provides a comprehensive picture of the Bank's online resources and consolidates internal and external organization-wide communications.

The World Bank intranet contains documents in all the standard business applications and in every format from HTML to PDF. Loan officers and economic development specialists, technical experts and field staff all use the World Bank intranet to locate myriad project documents, case studies, health and environmental reports and complex financial data.

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—Maria Dolores Arribas-Banos, Intranet Project Team Leader and Information Management Officer

Using a prior search tool, World Bank intranet users made about 1,500 queries a day – but according to surveys, they were not satisfied with the results. The previous search application made it difficult to access all sites across the network, or return useful results on environmental assessment policy, education project details, or poverty statistics. "Before, you pretty much had to go to each individual repository to find something," says Intranet Project Team Leader and Information Management Officer Maria Dolores Arribas-Banos.

"Not only did our users have to cope with a poor search tool," she says " But they could not conduct e-business efficiently. Add in the cost of overall site maintenance, and the fact that the volume of information on World Bank's sites doubles each year, and we had a major headache."

About Google Search Appliance

With the Google Search Appliance (GSA), the search experience shared by millions across the globe can be harnessed by your individual company with specific enterprise enhancements that make searching easier, intuitive, and customizable. Ready to index most enterprise content right "out of the box," the GSA turns your company's intranet or website search engine into a system that is as relevant and reliable as Google's - with the same ease of use.

For more information visit:
www.google.com/enterprise/search

Solution

Looking for a new solution, the team signed up to test the Google Search Appliance (GSA). The initial setup took less than one hour, and even indexing a tiny sample of five intranet pages demonstrated how much content the Google Search Appliance uncovers, reported Arribas-Banos. "A big portion of our site had not been updated in a long time. The need for cleaning up the content became very evident."

During a month-long trial, the Bank's web team explored such Google Search Appliance features as interface customization, so users see search results in the same look and feel as the rest of the intranet. Beyond this integrated interface is a search engine that integrates seamlessly with the existing network. "Our employees don't have to pick among a bunch of incomplete or incomprehensible search repositories. Now they can search the whole intranet, or narrow their search to a particular section," says Arribas-Banos.

Since the World Bank materials are often available in a number of languages, Google's ability to easily handle content searches and indicate which content is available in which languages is a big advantage. Users can also toggle back and forth through language versions, which makes the search results and the intranet more relevant and productive.

Since users already knew and liked Google, deploying the GSA throughout the organization was painless. Several organization-wide email messages informed the staff of the switch, and the web team offered a few demonstrations. No formal training was necessary.

Benefits

The Google Search Appliance has proven to be a cost-effective search solution for the World Bank, reports Arribas-Banos: "It takes no time to set up, and requires no developer resources." Not only does the World Bank spend less time on search administration, but it also spends less money. She estimates that the GSA will cost the Bank less than one-fifth what the prior search tool would have cost for maintenance alone.

As the number of documents on the network continues to grow at a considerable pace, the Google Search Appliance easily handles double the number of user queries per month over the old system. The web team can focus on other initiatives instead of fixing search-related problems, says Arribas-Banos. "Search was a huge win. People actually called us up to say how well it was working, which was a pleasant surprise."