

Advanced search technology is key to a profitable “searchandising” site.



CASE STUDY

CHALLENGE

Sony wanted to ensure that all e-buyers—regardless of their interests—had a consistent search and navigation experience on both of its ecommerce websites.

SOLUTION

The company implemented Progress® EasyAsk's® advanced search and information-retrieval technology on its consumer and business websites.

WHY PROGRESS® SOFTWARE

EasyAsk has an open architecture, seamlessly integrates with leading Web infrastructures, and its search technology accesses both structured and unstructured content, ensuring customers find all their relevant and complementary information, regardless of its format.

BENEFIT

SonyStyle.com expects to double its conversion rates and dramatically improve customer service as a result.

Many consumer and business commerce sites have products with dozens of attributes and hundreds of categories. Offering a product-rich site gives merchandisers tremendous flexibility to cross-promote and shoppers a variety of choices—satisfying everyone's needs. The challenge is helping these shoppers find their exact item quickly while simultaneously providing merchandisers with an automated way to promote related items and increase the overall order size.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Sony Electronics—a world leading manufacturer of audio, video, communications and IT products for the consumer and professional markets—faced this very challenge. In addition it had to address the needs of two distinct shoppers: those using its consumer site, SonyStyle.com, and business shoppers browsing and purchasing on its B2B commerce site. Sony wanted to ensure that all e-buyers—regardless of their interests—had a consistent search and navigation experience on both sites.

By implementing EasyAsk's advanced search and information-retrieval technology on its consumer and business sites, Sony can now offer a consistent and seamless shopping experience as well as easily highlight its numerous products — 4,000 just on SonyStyle.com. It's “searchandising” at its finest.

Additionally, EasyAsk complies with Sony's complex business logic and rules on its B2B ecommerce site. With some 30,000 business partners and roughly 100,000 unique contracts, Sony can assure that all of their commercial customers will be able to search and receive pricing, promotions and products based on their specific contractual arrangements.

Key to EasyAsk's advanced search technology is its linguistics engine, which is based on natural language processing (NLP). Both business and consumer buyers are able to enter their specific phrase, such as “memory stick under \$150,” into the search field (see Figure 1), and the specific results may be even further sorted, for example, by “price” (high to low/low to high).

SEAMLESS INTEGRATION

Because Sony had been experiencing spikes in its online sales, the company had a requirement to migrate to a more efficient server platform. The company selected IBM WebSphere Commerce. Because of EasyAsk's open architecture that is J2EE and Microsoft .Net compliant, EasyAsk seamlessly integrates with leading Web infrastructures. In fact, EasyAsk has "Ready for IBM WebSphere Software" status for both IBM WebSphere Commerce and Portal. Additionally, EasyAsk's search technology not only accesses structured data (i.e., RDBM systems) but also unstructured content (i.e., graphics; Adobe PDF files; HTML and XML pages), ensuring customers find all their relevant and complementary information, regardless of its format.

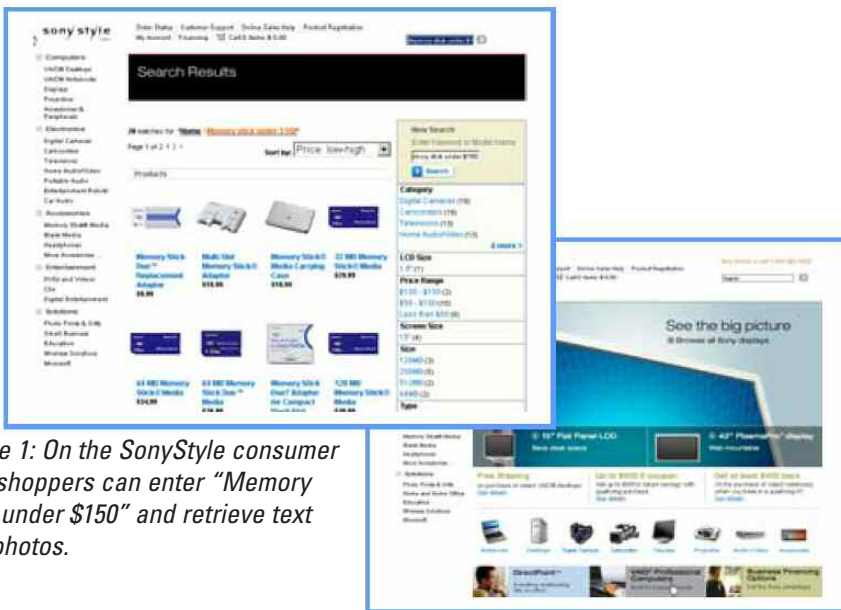


Figure 1: On the SonyStyle consumer site, shoppers can enter "Memory stick under \$150" and retrieve text and photos.

Figure 2: Advanced search and information retrieval bolster both Sony's consumer and business commerce sites.

ENRICHING THE SONY BRAND

Because of EasyAsk's Synchronized Search and Navigation technology, which easily handles SonyStyle's 700,000 searches per month, Sony has a full-featured dashboard that enables merchandising managers, without the help of IT staff, to quickly add new product definitions or create custom rules for better cross-sell and up-sell opportunities. SonyStyle.com expects to double its conversion rates and, equally important, dramatically improve customer service as a result. By enabling e-commerce customers—whether consumer or business—to quickly locate their products and related information via an advanced search capability, Sony is enriching its brand.

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"Our website's search function is critical for providing optimal customer service and ultimately reaching our online sales goals. With this in mind, we chose to upgrade our search and navigation engine to [EasyAsk's] much more sophisticated one."

— Patrick Vogt
Sr. VP & Sr. GM
Sony Electronics E-Solutions

ABOUT PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (Nasdaq: PRGS) provides application infrastructure software for the development, deployment, integration and management of business applications. Our goal is to maximize the benefits of information technology while minimizing its complexity and total cost of ownership.

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