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Overview

Lonely Planet is one of the world's most successful travel publishers, printing over 100 million books in nine different languages. Lonely Planet enables curious travellers to experience the world sharing destination profiles via guidebooks, eBooks, an award-winning website and magazine, digital newsletters, blogs and a range of mobile and digital travel products.

The Lonely Planet website www.lonelyplanet.com is also a sophisticated e-commerce platform, supporting the sale of a broad range of online resources, including travel advice via the "World Guide", an online shop, and travel advisory services. The web site, launched in 1994 and ranks alongside Wikipedia and the CIA Fact Book as standard internet resources. As a result, ads on the Lonely Planet website command high prices.

In October 2007, BBC Worldwide acquired a 75% share in Lonely Planet, pledging to uphold Lonely Planet's commitment to independent travel, trustworthy advice and editorial independence. In 2011, BBC Worldwide went on to become sole shareholder of the company.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with over 450 employees and over 200 authors. In 2012, Lonely Planet also set up its first office in Gurgaon, India, publishing guidebooks for Indian travellers.

The Problem

With a rapidly growing base of dedicated traveler customers, an extensive but fragmented resource library, combined with an increase in competition from organisations such as TripAdvisor, Frommer's, Fodor's and Rough Guide, Lonely Planet needed to significantly improve online user experience to continue to grow its customer base.

Improved search, guided navigation, ease of access to the expansive Lonely Planet information library, relevant product placement plus supporting digital multi-channel retailing were considered to be key requirements in order for the company to meet its customer experience and revenue goals.

To stay ahead, Lonely Planet needed more sophisticated search technologies, including relevancy ranking and faceted search, as well as features aimed at greater user interaction and participation, including tagging and reviews. Further, Lonely Planet wanted a solution which once implemented, could be managed easily by in house IT.



Advanced search results delivered highly relevant content to travelers, improving customer retention & acquisition.

An integrated resource library with a feature rich scalable platform delivered highly competitive capabilities.

The Solution

After a strategic review with NetReturn Consulting to ensure the business's current requirements and growth objectives were aligned with a three year technology roadmap, the decision was made to deploy an improved global search capability, the Endeca IAP solution, which delivered enhanced global search functionality.

With NetReturn Consulting's integration expertise, the implementation of Endeca enabled the synchronization of data between multiple systems, so travelers could find important content from a single search, gathered from multiple Lonely Planet libraries.

In addition, online merchandising features of the Endeca product were also deployed to improve conversion rates for products and an increase in multi-product purchases. This solution enabled the achievement of this goal with the display of relevant Lonely Planet products along with search results content on the search results page.

The overall result ensured an enhanced customer experience, superior to competitor's offerings, solidifying Lonely Planet's ranking in the global travel guide market.

Business Benefits

With NetReturn Consulting's project management expertise, the solution was implemented on time and to budget.

Customer click-through rates to the Lonely Planet online shop from search increased by 3% and conversion rates (i.e. searchers who become buyers) increased significantly from 0.25% to 2%, well above industry average.

In addition, the enhanced site attracted 5% more users where researching travelers also spent longer on Lonely Planet website pages. These improvements were directly attributable to the enhanced search capability.

Further, this increase in site page impressions delivered an increase in related advertising revenue to the business.



Future proof technology which supports business growth & enables cost efficient workflows which can be managed by in house IT.