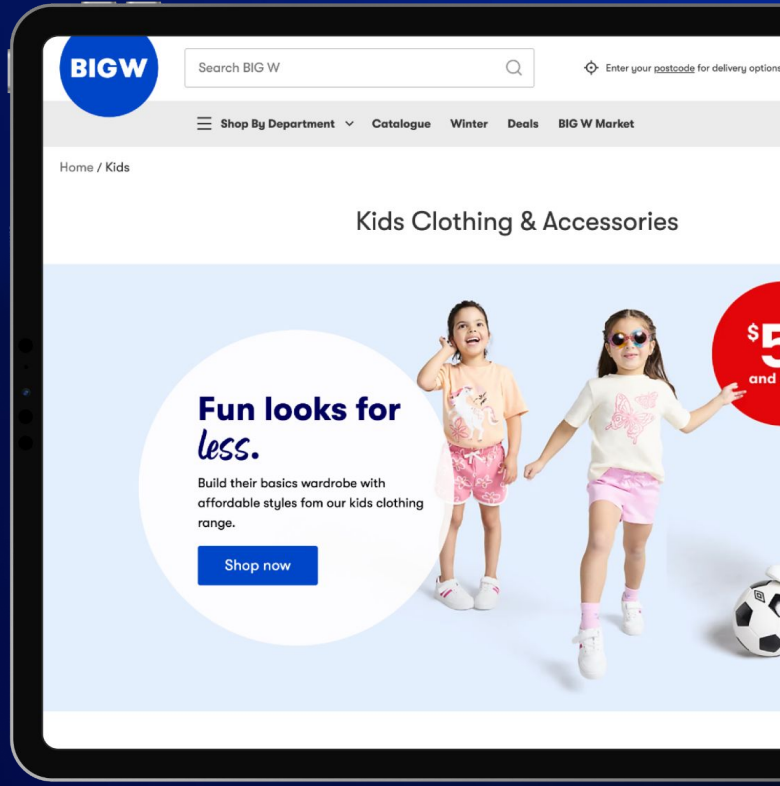
BIGW & algolia

Algolia helps BIG W achieve better search relevance and customer satisfaction after going headless



Company Profile

Name:
BigW

Use Case:
E-commerce

Headquarters:
Bella Vista, New South Wales, Australia

Algolia Customer Since:
2022

Feature usage:
Algolia Search API, Recommend, Dynamic Re-ranking, Query Suggestions, Rules, Merchandising Studio

Key results:

- Improved customer experience
- Faster and more relevant search results
- Easy and quick iterative changes
- Extensive integrations for future evolution

Key number plays:

- Reduced search exits +10%
- Increase basket size +4.7%
- Improved conversion from search +7%
- Improved NPS +4pts

“Digital technologies evolve quickly and trends change regularly, if we can’t keep up with the change, we lose relevance fast. A powerful benefit of Algolia is that with it we can see what’s happening real time, and quickly pivot, change, create new content and re-rank items accordingly.”

Nicole Shepherd
Customer Experience Product Lead, BIG W

Summary

When the hugely popular Australian retailer BIG W made the shift to headless commerce, it discovered its existing search engine was compromising the customer experience. It needed a robust search solution that could solve its problems today and meet its needs in the future. Find out how Algolia Search and a wide-range of features fit the bill perfectly, improving experiences, increasing conversions and basket size, and helping the BIG W team achieve CX iterations faster and easier.

For six decades, BIG W has been a trusted provider of everyday needs and more to countless value-conscious Australian households.

A division of the retail giant Woolworths Group, BIG W was founded in 1964 in Tamworth in New South Wales and has since grown to operate more than 170 stores across the country.

Woolworths developed the brand to provide Australian shoppers with a broad range of general merchandise products — from clothing and shoes to homewares, electronics, pet food, cleaning items, party goods, toys, and books — at low prices from a dedicated one-stop-shop.

During a rough patch of business in 2017, BIG W decided that it needed to become more distinctive in the market and invested heavily in online platforms and products to remain relevant as the digital channel grew.

“Most people in the retail space are quite aware that the majority of in-store purchases now start in an online environment somewhere, as customers are looking to get value, compare and actually make sure they're getting the right product before they purchase it,” says Nicole Shepherd, Customer Experience Product Lead at BIG W.

Shepherd was brought on board to lead a digital transformation that started with the re-platforming of the BIG W website into a headless React site. That was, of course, only the first in a long list of initiatives.

Improving the search experience

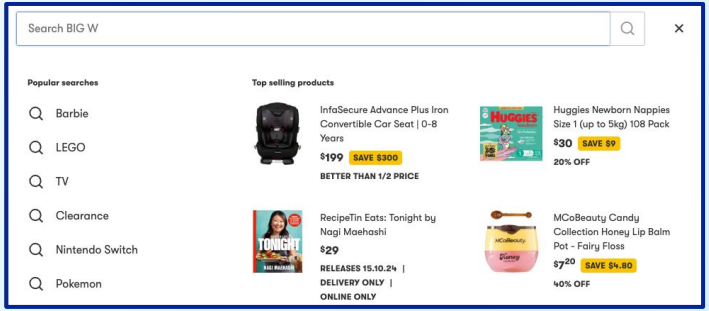
The company had moved its tech stack to a headless commerce platform, using React on the front end and Adobe Experience Manager (AEM) to power content.

As BIG W continued to test and evolve the website with customers at the center, faults in the search experience became apparent. Search was significantly impacting customers' ability to shop the website, and it became the next priority on Shepherd's list.

"You would look for blue socks, and you'd get some things that were blue, and you'd get some socks," Shepherd says. "And then, maybe if you were lucky, on about the fourth or fifth page of the search results, you'd get a pair of blue socks. So, it was a pretty dire experience."

With plenty of feedback on its poor search experience, the BIG W team knew they needed to improve, and given the small team — only about one-tenth the size of its parent company — they had to find a robust solution that could answer their needs today and in the future, with minimal ongoing tech investment.

"We asked ourselves, what did search actually mean for BIG W? And then went out to quite a few players in the market to assess how closely we thought they could meet BIG W customer needs not just for today, but as a partner that would grow with us for the future," Shepherd says.



Quickly improving customer experiences with Algolia

BIG W chose to adopt Algolia Search holistically across the organization's website.

Since its backend was built on Hybris, BIG W originally used Solr, but made the switch to Algolia in 2022, over approximately six months — three months on the initial build and a progressive rollout over the next three months.

The experience of a true partnership with Algolia has been a real plus for Shepherd.

"We've all seen those companies that come in and go, 'Our product does this, and dances, and brings cake to your birthday...' And then you purchase it, and suddenly everyone disappears," she says. Not the case with Algolia, she adds.

"We're never going to be search experts, so partnering with people like Algolia who are living and breathing it every day is really, really important to us."

Algolia powers BIG W's product listing pages, all search results, browse and navigation. Once implemented, BIG W also then tested and implemented Algolia Recommend, leveraging recommendation carousels at key decision points across the website and app. Its ease of use and strong, clear user interface allow the BIG W team to quickly iterate new customer experiences.

The entire team, including merchandising and product teams, can easily and quickly make any changes necessary.

After implementing Algolia Search and Recommend, the retailer added other key features to its stack, including Dynamic Re-ranking, Query Suggestions, Rules, and Merchandising Studio, and is investigating the use of Revenue Analytics and AI Personalization.

On a path of continuous improvement, the retailer is in the early stages of other e-commerce platform changes, and Shepherd notes how valuable Algolia's wide range of integrations will be to such evolutions.

After initial deployment , Big W saw some impressive results:

- ➔ Reduced search exits +10%
- ➔ Increase basket size +4.7%
- ➔ Improved conversion from search +7%
- ➔ Improved NPS +4pt

That said, the improved customer experience and search relevance have been the key benefits that Big W has seen from its implementation.

"The biggest impact of Algolia is that when a customer is looking for blue socks, they get blue socks," Shepherd says. "That's what we need to focus on. We can refine all the bells and whistles as we go."

"Digital technologies evolve quickly and trends change regularly, if we can't keep up with the change, we lose relevance fast. A powerful benefit of Algolia is that with it we can see what's happening real time, and quickly pivot, change, create new content and re-rank items accordingly."

The challenge

- ➔ Complete re-platforming of the website.
- ➔ Poor customer experience from search.
- ➔ Small web development team.

The solution

- Algolia Search and a wide range of features
- Six-month iterative rollout
- Deployed in numerous locations across the website
- Integrated with Shopify Plus
- Out of the box AI re-ranking, Personalisation and A/B testing
- Searchandising capabilities
- Strong partner relationship

The results

- ➔ Faster, more relevant search
- ➔ Quicker and easier CX iterations
- ➔ Increased productivity
- ➔ Reduced search exits +10%
- ➔ Increase basket size +4.7%
- ➔ Improved conversion from search +7%
- ➔ Improved NPS +4pt
- ➔ Commercial insights

Algolia experts can help you take your site experience to the next level.

Get a customized demo from our search experts today.

Schedule a demo