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Vape Superstore improves customer journeys with Algolia Search, Personalization and Recommend



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– Ed Swain, director of Easytek Ltd. and managing director of Vape Superstore

Summary

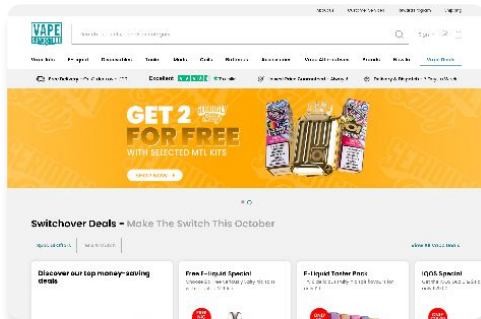
One of the leading vape stores in the UK, Vape Superstore has unique needs. It can't advertise traditionally, meaning it needs to engage with consumers on a personal level and provide a great customer journey with lightning fast search. With an eye on helping customers move from cigarettes to vaping, providing relevant, personalized search results that meet their individual tastes is essential. Algolia Search, Recommend, Personalization and AI Reranking has helped them do that, increasing relevancy and ultimately revenue.



Use Case:
E-Commerce

Headquarters:
London, UK

Customer Since
2022



Key Results (Qualitative)

- Faster, more relevant search results
- More personalized customer experience
- Increase in SEO through speed and other KPIs

Feature Usage

Search API, Recommend, AI Reranking, Personalization

Key Numbers

- Average search speed of 2 milliseconds
- 35% increase in conversions
- 5% increase in average order value

The Challenge

- Cumbersome and slow search platform
- Massive amount of product SKUs (7,500+)
- Unable to use paid advertisement

The Solution

- Fast, responsive Search engine
- Recommend and Personalization features
- Support from Algolia CSM and system integrator partner
- Analytics to refine product and merchandising choices

The Results

- Faster, more relevant, Search experience
- Improved customer experience and engagement
- Increased conversions and average order value
- Better SEO through improved website performance

Founded in 2015 by four former smokers with digital marketing and e-commerce experience (Easytek Ltd.), **Vape Superstore**, has a goal of helping cigarette smokers make the switch to vaping.

Originally online, the store was created to be a specialist vape shop bringing a large selection of electronic cigarettes, hardware, and e-liquids to UK customers, the enterprise has since expanded its product line and presence into several brick-and-mortar stores throughout London.

Today, the business carries more than 7,500 TPD (Tobacco Products Directive)-compliant products from over 150 brands and provides friendly, personalized recommendations and guidance for its customers —

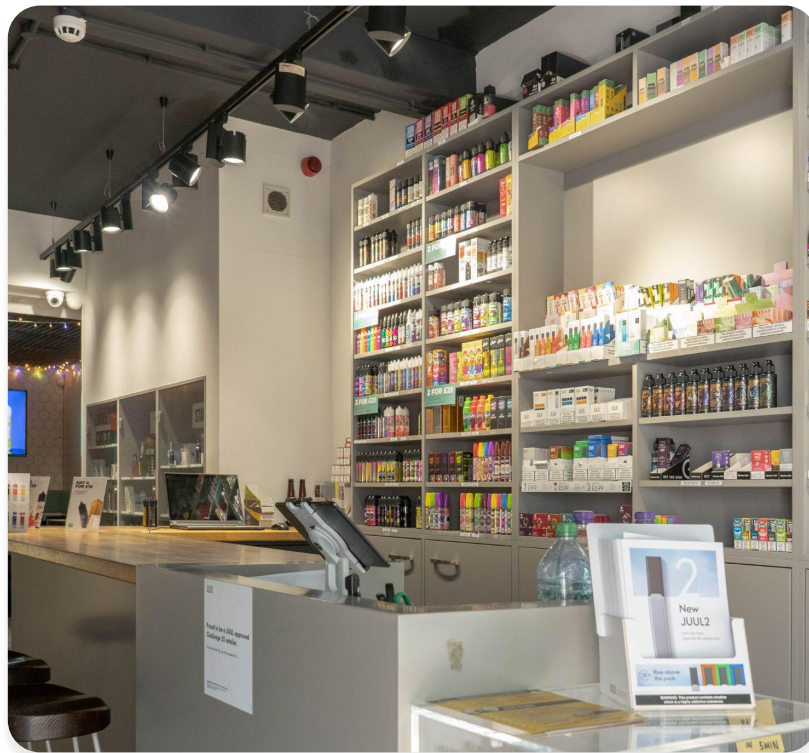
from veteran vapers to newer customers transitioning to a healthier alternative to conventional cigarettes.

“Our background was digital marketing and SEO, so we built the website in 2015 and then went into physical retail,” says Ed Swain, director of Easytek Ltd., managing director of Vape Superstore, and one of the company’s owners. “It’s been eight years now and we’ve basically built strength on strength and become one of the leaders in the UK.”

To continue to build on their leadership, Swain has worked closely with Dan Judd, Head of Digital for Vape Superstore since 2018. Responsible for the brand’s online communications, website content, social media, and email campaigns, Judd says the company takes educating the consumer seriously.

“Our job is to educate customers that may be at very different stages in their ‘quit smoking’ journey—to cut through the jargon that you find in this industry, so they can find the best product that’s suitable for them.”

With its hands-on approach and several site improvements, the company was recently nominated for the UK eCommerce Awards 2022 in the category of B2C eCommerce Website of the Year.



Making finding products easier for customers

Engaging and attracting new customers to the store is the number one priority. “When they land on our website, we need to make it as seamless as possible and — from the entrance to check-out — minimize the steps that it takes to purchase the product,” Judd says.

The Vape Superstore customer journey is continuously being improved through content, product descriptions, and product placement. One of those improvements came when it migrated to Shopify Online Store 2.0 in 2022, during which the business simultaneously adopted Algolia for Search.

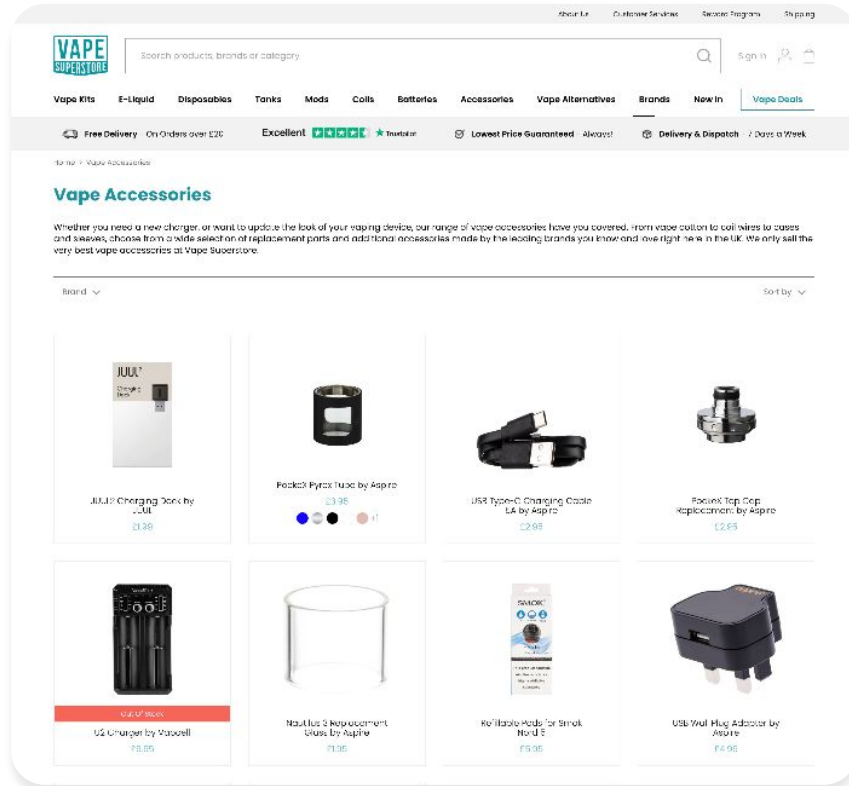
After deploying the Search platform with the support of Algolia and partner Karmoon, the company saw the benefits of Algolia “straight away” Judd says.

The deployment was seamless and was completed in less than two weeks, after which the company began to tweak and refine the solution over another three to four weeks.

With 7,500 product SKUs and competing with the likes of more general online retailers like Amazon, Vape Superstore needed a solution that would help customers find the product they sought as quickly as possible. “Our previous search provider (Boost & Search Filter) served its purpose, but it was quite cumbersome, quite slow, and not as accurate as Algolia in terms of search relevance.”

“Algolia allows us to focus on and refine search speed and relevance a lot more.”

Improving performance across the website



In addition to adopting Algolia for Search, Vape Superstore deployed AI Reranking, Personalization, and Recommend. Its migration from Nosto for merchandising and recommendations to Algolia provided a more smooth, customized experience and faster load speeds, which are vital in engaging consumers in a sector like vaping products where paid advertising is not allowed.

“The vast majority of our traffic comes from search, so ensuring the site is quick — quick to load — and has all the key metrics ticked off from Google’s perspective is important. And we’ve seen a big improvement from using Algolia,” Swain notes.

Judd adds: “Algolia is powering the website, and it allows the website to be fast and reactive, which is a core metric in Google’s eyes.”

“From a marketing side, we work very closely with the brands that we sell, and they regularly put on promotions for their products, and with Algolia we can boost their product ranges to get the best return on investment.”

Dan Judd
Head of Digital for Vape Superstore

Algolia has been implemented on the website’s home page, on its search bar, on trending items, and on product category pages, managing sorting and filtering. Algolia Recommend is also being used to suggest items to add to the cart during check-out, and the company is currently looking to implement the feature in its email campaigns.

In addition to the performance improvement, Algolia helps the company’s merchandising team to recognize products that aren’t selling well and sort them appropriately to give them a boost as needed.

The store has seen quantitative improvements thanks to customers being able to find products more quickly and easily, and the upsell opportunities that Recommend and Personalization provide.

Within six weeks of deploying Algolia, Vape Superstore saw the average search speed drop to only 2 milliseconds, conversions increased by 35 percent over the previous search platform, and average order value grew by 5 percent.

During the deployment and beyond, the Vape Superstore team “leaned heavily” on their Algolia customer success manager (CSM) to refine the solution to meet the company’s unique requirements and fine-tune Personalization.

Meeting customer-specific tastes

When it comes to the results the store has been experiencing, Judd says Algolia's Personalization feature is a real stand-out, having played a big role in driving conversions by helping customers navigate through the company's vast product catalog.

"For example, we have over 2,500 e-liquids, so being able to personalize the results for customers is a huge bonus," Judd says. "There are so many different flavors, and we're able to meet a specific customer's tastes."

Meeting customer tastes runs both ways. The company has started using reporting and in-depth analytics capabilities of Algolia to make data-driven decisions around the types of products to carry and enhance the selection range.

"It allows us to make more informed decisions," Swain says. "That's something we've just started playing with, but we are already starting to see where we can tweak and adjust and amend things to improve our offering."

Taking advantage of additional Algolia features has been quite seamless for the team at Vape Superstore, thanks to the platform's ease of use and the partnership the two companies have formed.

“We see it as a partnership, as opposed to a software purchase,” Swain says. “You can go out and buy any number of different types of software but by working in partnership with Algolia, there’s more interest in us being successful.”



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