Enhancing the B2B customer journey with Algolia

How 5 companies improved the B2B experience with faster and more relevant search

algolia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

B2B sellers of all sizes are facing the same challenges as they try to conduct business as usual — supply chain uncertainty, looming recession, labor shortages, and delays for reliably supplying repeat customers are among the top concerns. These conditions are pushing more B2B companies to shift revenue from in-person to online in order to meet buyer expectations.

In the move to an online way of working with buyers, B2B companies are finding search and discovery have a profound impact on ecommerce. But different relationship levels, product arrangements, content requirements, and user needs demand a rich, multifaceted approach to search in a B2B ecommerce environment.

With the right search and discovery solution leading their ecommerce experience, B2B companies can bridge the gap between in-person and online.

They can do this by continuing to honor the relationships buyers have come to expect from face-to-face interactions, demonstrating expertise by understanding buyers' businesses, and guiding them through a customer journey that increases revenue.

This eBook highlights the stories of five companies that improved their search experience with Algolia, the results they experienced, and how the Algolia Search and Discovery platform is helping them enhance the B2B customer journey and grow revenue.

INTRODUCTION

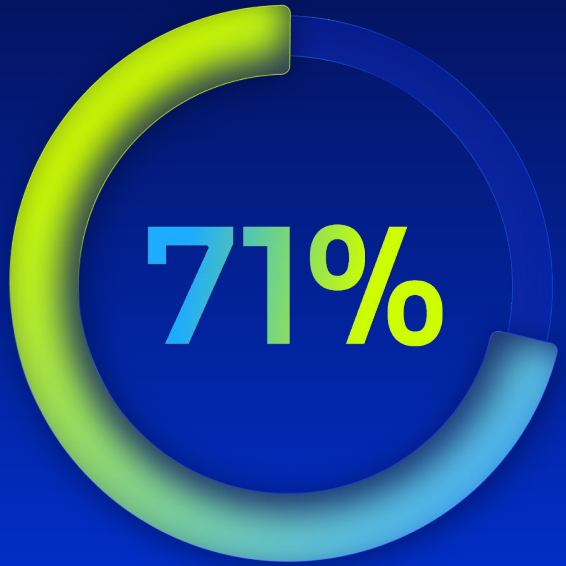
Let's face it — we all want to get our products in front of the right buyers, whether they are consumers, tradespeople, dealers and distributors, internal sales reps, or other businesses.

Compared with the business-to-consumer (B2C) customer journey, business-to-business (B2B) ecommerce is a different beast. What works in guiding website visitors to the right product on a consumer retail giant like Amazon, does not when you may have multiple levels of partners or business customers, each with access to different categories, products, and items with various pricing structures, licenses, or discounts.

B2B sellers certainly feel these differences despite their buyers becoming accustomed to the ease of convenience, navigation, and accessibility to a wide choice of products, not to mention expeditious purchase processes, that the B2C space provides.

It's complex to say the least. And with that complexity, B2B ecommerce companies must make it simpler for a sometimes incredibly wide user base to navigate and find exactly what they seek (and have access to). That comes from the search and discovery capabilities at the heart of their web or mobile experience.

Those who provide fast and relevant search results are quick to reap the rewards. That was the experience of these five leading companies around the globe who upped their online B2B game by improving search speed, relevance, and adding rich features like personalization — all without increasing the burden on their internal development teams. Businesses are recognizing the benefits of personalization, with 71% of retail leaders agreeing that it is key to their ecommerce strategy over the next year (Algolia Ecommerce Site Search Trends 2023 report).



of retail leaders agree that personalization is key to their ecommerce strategy over the next year.

swedol

The Right Tools for Improved User Experience

swedol

Swedol has been supplying a wide range of professionals and specialists with the tools, hardware, and gear they need for approximately six decades.

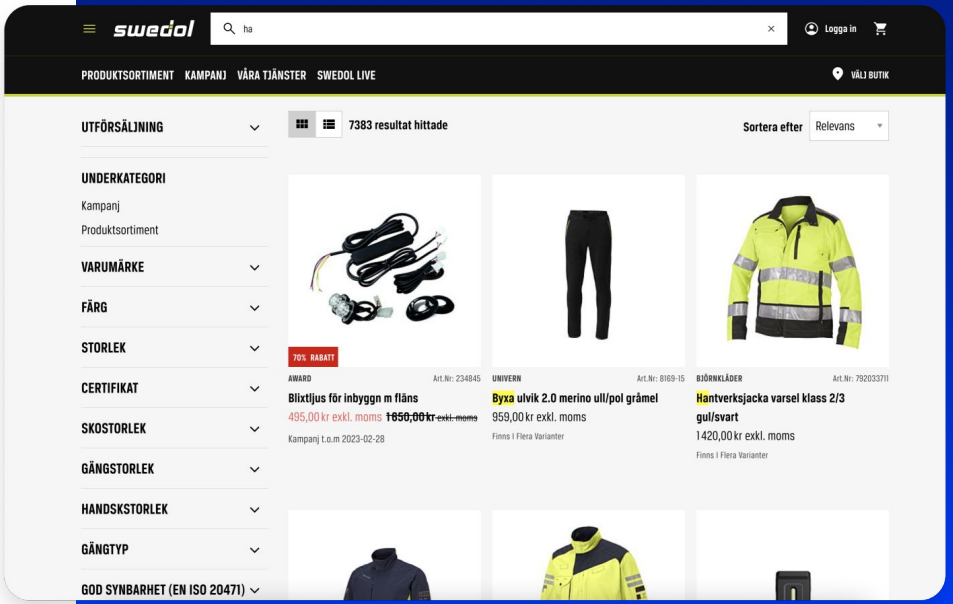
Today, operating through online stores that serve the entire Nordic region including 60 stores in Sweden alone, the company is committed to giving excellent customer service, and a customized shopping experience to businesses and consumers alike. Swedol prides itself in not just providing products, but guidance to its customers.

Key Results

+26%
MORE TIME SPENT ON THE SITE

+22%
HIGHER CONVERSION RATE

+7.5%
INCREASE IN SEARCHES



Challenge

To maintain its edge in customer experience and meet rising B2B buyer expectations, Swedol's Digital team knew it needed to ramp up its search experience. The lack of flexibility and relevancy its original search engine provided Swedol's customers and Sales team was "a terrible experience."

Poor ability to glean customer insights and trustworthy data; an inability to easily test, tweak, and optimize search; and a developer-heavy experience was an obstacle to Swedol's goal of becoming the number one player in B2B digital commerce within the Nordic region.

Solution

Swedol's business customers had to be able to search between a multitude of different product assortments, with each client having access to different assortments, prices, and specialty items, including various custom items designed for different user roles. Highly customized search results were critical to maintain this level of personalization.

This was solved by Algolia's fast indexing speed — seamlessly and quickly passing information to Adobe Commerce (Magento) — that better manages product assortments and displays only contract-specific items to the right B2B customer. By providing faster, more relevant, and a bespoke search and listing experience to its clients, Swedol offered the online experience B2B buyers expected.

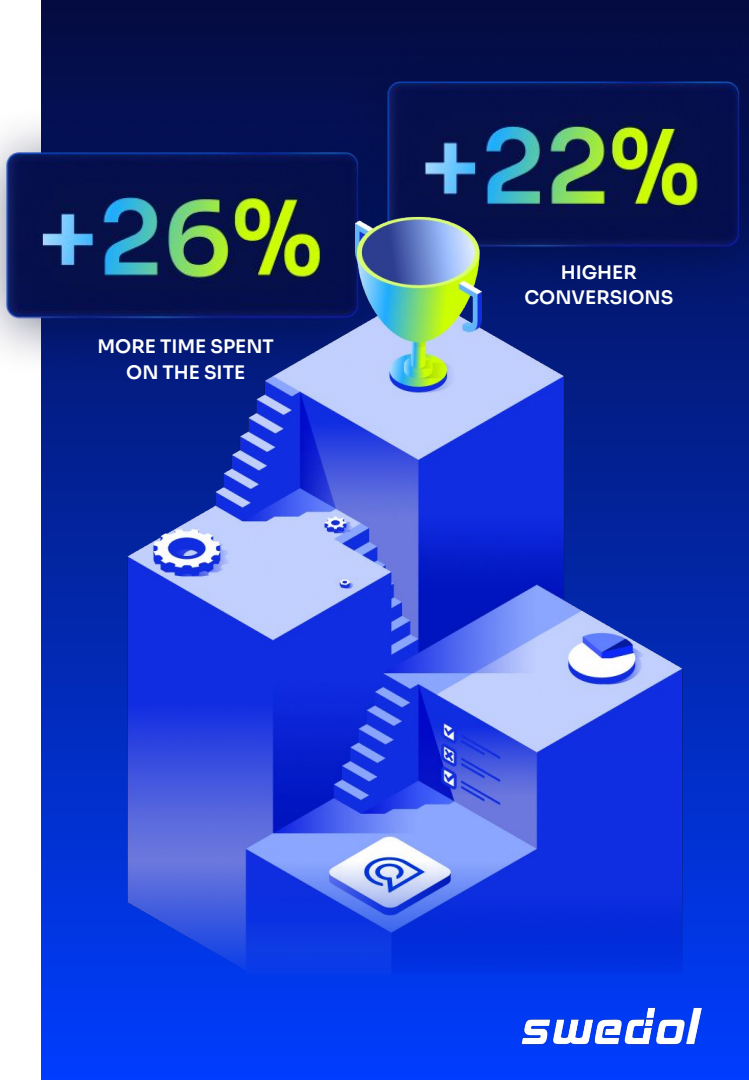
In addition, thanks to Algolia's easy-to-use, self-serve dashboard, less developer intervention was needed as Swedol scaled and grew its business.

Results

Swedol has improved user satisfaction both inside and outside the company. The sales team no longer complains about limited search functionality, and clients are happy to be able to find what they need quickly and easily.

The results have been tangible. The upgraded fast and relevant search experience has customers spending more than 25 percent added time on the site, increasing the number of searches by 7.5 percent. Most importantly, this has translated into a more than 20 percent higher conversion rate, directly contributing to increased revenue.

Customers now spend +25% added time on the site for +20% conversions.



staples

Punching Up Search Speed and Relevancy

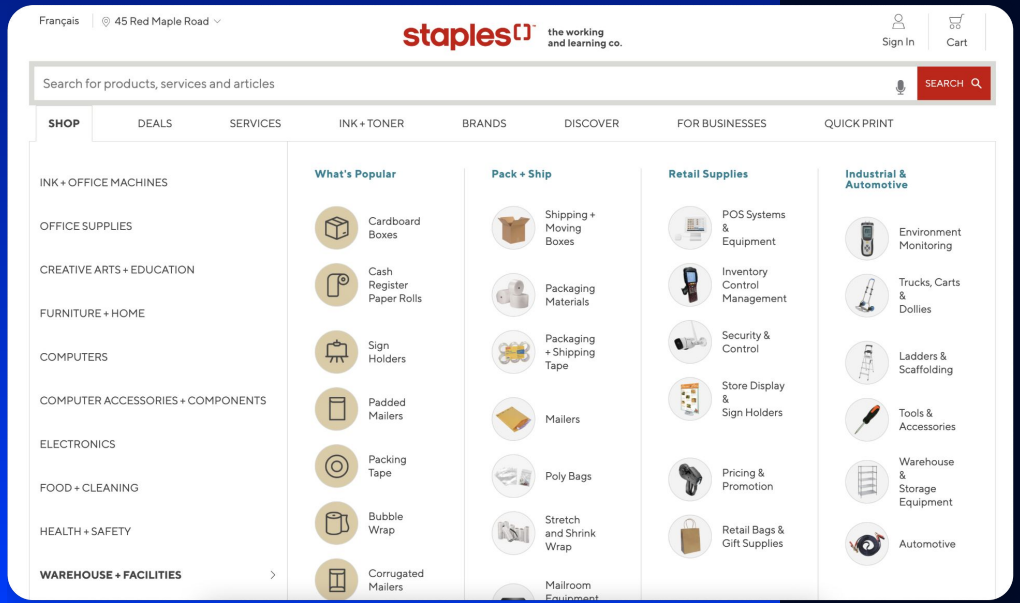
Key Results

65%

OF ISSUES ARE AUTOMATICALLY SOLVED THROUGH SYNONYMS

HIGHER

CONVERSION RATE USING AI AND DYNAMIC RE-RANKING



staples

Staples Canada sells technology, office and school supplies, furniture, tech services, and more as part of its mission to “inspire people to work smarter, learn more and grow every day.” It has a network of more than 300 stores across Canada, and a prominent online presence for both retail consumers at its Staples.ca site, and B2B buyers at its closed-login Staplespreffered.ca site.

Challenge

Staples Canada carries more than 20,000 SKUs, and search functionality is essential to navigating them easily and efficiently. With such a wide variety of items on its sites, connecting the right customer with the right item is critical.

Staples Canada serves two distinct customer groups: frequent buyers who know what they need, and sporadic shoppers who need guidance towards existing products. It was a challenge that the team's legacy search solutions could not keep up with.

A panoply of manual tools — including spreadsheets — and some relatively modern solutions could not provide the visibility nor the level of control Staples Canada needed.

staples

staples

Solution

The Product Management team recognized that, to meet the needs of its diverse customer base including B2B clients, it had to have a solution that was not just smart and fast, but flexible enough to give them control over the relevance and search results.

They sought out a best-in-class search experience and found Algolia. Algolia's Search and Discovery tools gave Staples Canada the perfect mix: not too manual, not too automated, and with a strong roadmap for scaling and implementation. The platform provided Staples Canada with the visibility into customer queries it needed, showing areas on the site that needed investigation or improvement.

After early success, Staples Canada expanded its use of Algolia, adopting other advanced features such as Rules, AI, and Personalization to increase the relevancy of search results, automate, and provide transparency — further helping its customers find the right products from its thousands of options.

Results

Staples Canada saw immediate results, with increases in key metrics such as add-to-cart rates, click-through rates from results, and, importantly, revenue. The implementation of advanced features improved the company's results.

The addition of Dynamic Re-ranking, for example, resulted in a double-digit improvement in conversion rates.

Algolia features like Synonyms and Dynamic Re-ranking also helped Staples Canada's Product Management team uncover and quickly resolve any problems on their sites.

Algolia also helped Staples Canada respond to the unexpected challenge of the pandemic in 2020. The ecommerce team saw an influx of new customers overnight, and a rapid shift in buying behavior. Having a dynamic search allowed them to stay flexible and get the right products into B2B buyers' hands as work environments changed quickly.

hagergroup

Powering Digital Transformation

hagergroup

Hager Group has been a leading name in electrical manufacturing, supplying electrical tradespeople with everything they need to install electrical systems in residences, and commercial as well as industrial buildings in more than 100 countries.

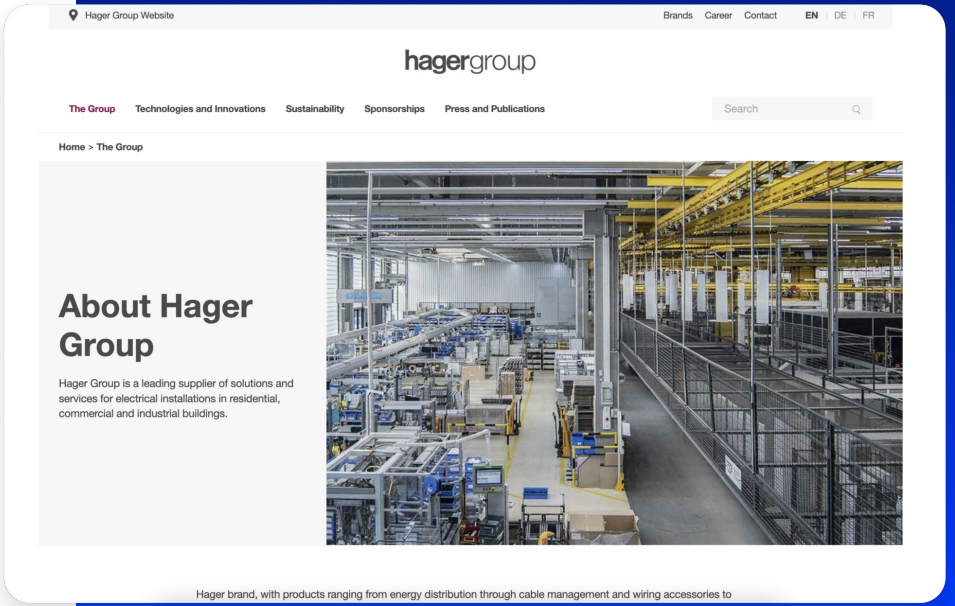
All of Hager Group's products are sold through wholesalers, which the company's Sales and Marketing teams support by creating a strong customer journey, leading buyers to the perfect product.

Key Results

20K+
PRODUCTS PER SITE ARE BEING SUPPORTED

FAST AND RELEVANT
SEARCH OF COMPLEX TECHNICAL PRODUCTS

HIGH PERFORMANCE
THAT SUPPORTS CUSTOMERS WORKING ONSITE IN THE FIELD



Challenge

To improve that customer journey, Hager Group decided to completely rebuild their digital channels — consisting of 25 different websites that display catalogs and content, as well as a mobile application for electricians in the field.

But this is not your typical ecatalog. Dedicated to an audience of tradespeople, the information on these digital channels is complex and highly technical. Hager Group needed a way to make it easier for customers to surface relevant information but also needed the search platform to be usable by the Marketing team supporting its B2B partners.

Solution

Hager Group's digital business solution leadership recognized the investment in developing an in-house solution would be costly and selected Algolia as the search platform for its new web solution.

Algolia provided Hager Group with a quick-to-implement and easy-to-use solution out of the box that met its needs for an extremely positive user experience. Algolia Search APIs integrated smoothly with Hager Group's existing ecommerce platform (Adobe Commerce powered by Magento), contributing to a simple implementation.

Importantly, the solution was extremely scalable, able to provide search and discovery for the company's more than 20,000 different products per country.

Results

As expected, Algolia sparked the improvement in customer experience Hager Group was looking for. Importantly, the number of steps customers required to get to the correct product was reduced, showing that even complex trade products could be quickly found with the right search solution.

Additionally, because of Algolia's dynamic results feature, electricians and other electrical tradespeople are often able to find exactly what they are looking for before even seeing a results page.

Hager Group's new search experience delivers high performance and fast results.

Algolia Search APIs integrated smoothly with Adobe Commerce powered by Magento.

ergodyne®

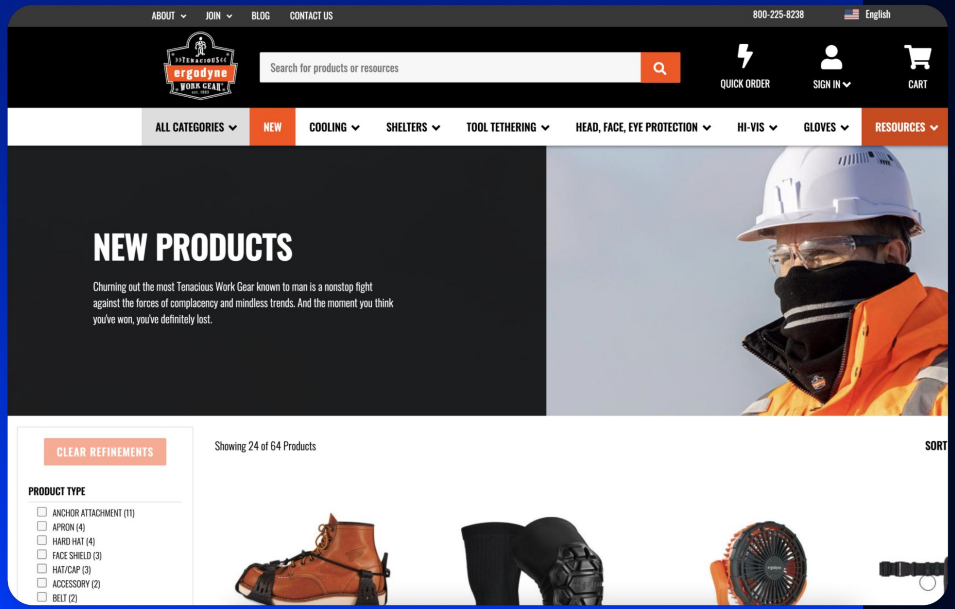
A Safe Bet on Best-of-Breed Search

Key Results

190%
INCREASE IN GLOBAL SEARCH INTERACTIONS

500%
INCREASE IN CLICK-THROUGH RATES

100%
IMPROVEMENT IN NO RESULTS RATE



ergodyne®

Ergodyne is an innovator in workplace safety gear, providing protection, promoting prevention, and managing the elements for industrial workers.

The company has an ever-growing line of products dubbed “Tenacious Work Gear”, which it provides mainly through a network of authorized distributors and wholesalers.

Challenge

Ergodyne's B2B model makes managing customer web experiences tricky since traffic comprises a wide range of support distributor partners ranging from mom-and-pop shops to large global distributors all searching for both product and content. The website must also make content available to independent sales reps and end customers like safety specifiers, small contractors, and others.

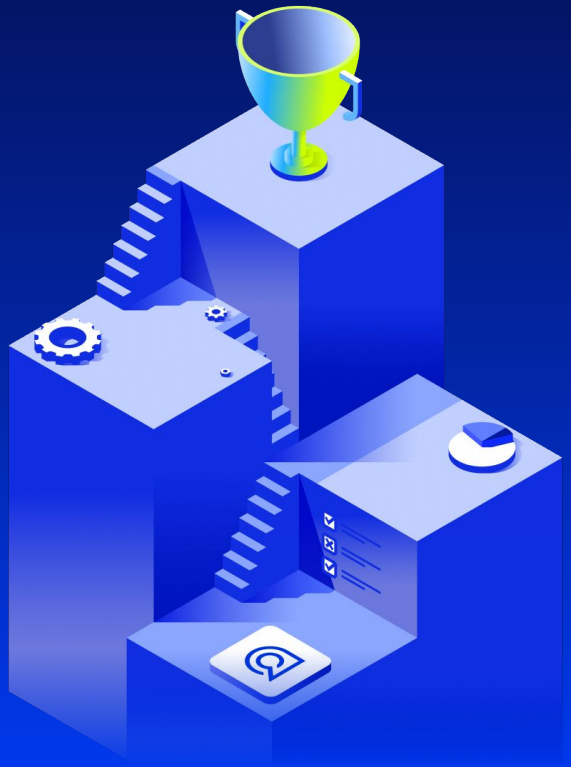
In 2016 the company re-platformed its ecommerce site on Magento using Solr for search functionality, but quickly decided it needed a solution better able to handle multifaceted search capabilities for its incredibly wide audience segment range without investing too heavily in internal development.

In short, it needed both product and content search results for a wide variety of end users without placing an inordinately heavy burden on developer resources in terms of configuration and changes.

Solution

The company reviewed the market and selected Algolia Search primarily due to its strong feature set and cost-effectiveness. Quick and easy to implement, it took the work of optimizing search off the small Digital Marketing team.

Algolia quickly provided more relevant search with faster results, able to handle diverse marketing content and a wide array of products. Algolia's fast indexing and speed allow Ergodyne to serve up results for items that can include more than 500 different levels of pricing quickly and efficiently.



Results

The value of search for Ergodyne's B2B operations is clear.

Between 35 and 45 percent of all its site visitors are using its global search navigator to find what they are looking for.

But, for Ergodyne, the primary goal of search is to give those visitors more than just fast product result listings.

Within months, the company saw positive internal feedback, and huge improvements across several KPIs including search interactions, click-through rates, and a reduction in "no result" rates. And, it's been able to make information available to its distributors with bespoke content based on their access levels, so they get the exact information to serve their needs.

ergodyne®

Building on a Stainless Reputation for Customer Service

Damstahl®
stainless steel solutions

Active across more than 10 countries, Danish stainless steel wholesaler Damstahl has a commitment to customer service, sharing knowledge, providing flexibility and quick delivery, as well as contributing to its customers' value chain.

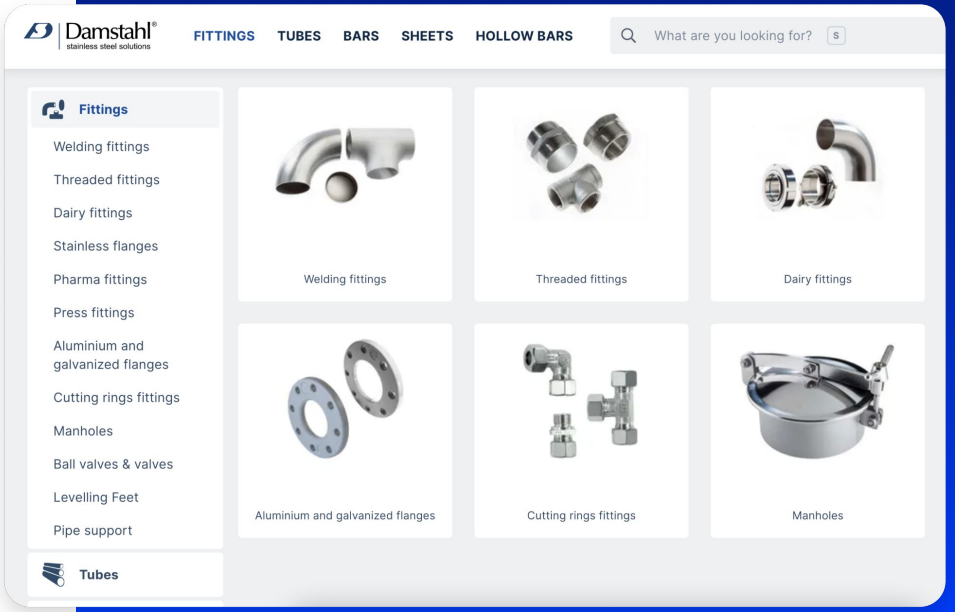
When it launched a new B2B ecommerce site, it had the goal of expediting the purchasing process of buyers from a range of steel-using industries including dairy, fruit processing, automotive, oil and gas, and pulp. And it worked. Since its website launch, and adding robust search to their online experience, the wholesaler has seen an increase in both gross profit and market share.

Key Results

60%
FASTER ORDER PROCESSING OVER TRADITIONAL ERP SYSTEM

IMPROVED
GROSS PROFITS AND MARKET SHARE

SEAMLESS
INTEGRATION WITH ERP AND PIM SYSTEMS



Challenge

In the age of digital commerce, competition in the steel industry is fierce. Damstahl's new ecommerce platform had to be customized and scalable to take on contenders.

Traditionally, finding the right product or fitting among the company's more than 18,000 items can be a tedious process for a buyer, and Damstahl designed its ecommerce platform to change that.

> The Digital and Marketing Operations team mantra: "making orders online should be easier than emailing or calling us."

In addition to improving customer experience, the platform needed to serve as a helpful tool for Damstahl's sales reps to better understand customer interests.

Solution

To make it easier to expand and customize its digital ecommerce presence, Damstahl deployed a “composable” platform, a modular approach allowing it to take advantage of leading solutions.

When Damstahl customers had been finding product searches difficult, this modular approach allowed the company to easily upgrade to a search engine that would accommodate the specific needs of stainless steel buyers: Algolia.

The adoption of Algolia has given Damstahl flexibility critical to its industry. For example, customers struggling with item numbers can add their own through Algolia, integrating the new entry on the backend with Damstahl’s ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) and PIM (Product Information Management) systems.

Results

Like other B2B ecommerce organizations using Algolia Search and Discovery, Damstahl quickly saw improved performance metrics. The company experienced increased market share and revenue and noted that profits are higher for web orders than traditional offline orders.

The online system also enabled Damstahl's sales reps to process orders 60% faster than when they enter orders into Damstahl's traditional ERP system.

But all that is just the beginning for the stainless steel company. In its bid to improve customer service Damstahl is looking for more innovative ways to improve customer service and help its sales reps by giving them easier access to the data they need to serve those customers better.

CONCLUSION

Whether an exclusively B2B company like Hager Group or one that must juggle to meet distinct needs of B2B and B2C customers simultaneously like Staples Canada, getting the customer experience right is essential. Helping customers find what they're looking for — in omnichannel or hybrid B2B ecommerce environments with all their associated complexities — is the only path to sustained success.

Slow search, complications around item numbers, challenges in getting technical details, and not getting the data appropriate to the customer or partner ends with closed browsers, abandoned carts, and money left on the table.

As Algolia customers Swedol, Staples Canada, Hager Group, Ergodyne, and Damstahl found, getting search and discovery right with a partner that has a level of expertise few others can match can pay rich dividends.

Build an excellent B2B ecommerce experience — powered by lightning-fast search that quickly leads customers, partners, and sales reps to what they need — and the result is an improved online experience, increased search traffic, higher conversion rates, more click-throughs, and, ultimately, greater revenue.

Do you want to power up your B2B ecommerce experience and see results like the organizations examined here?

Contact Algolia to learn how to build search and dynamic digital experiences that are fast to implement; customize, personalize, and optimize; and that maximize ROI.

REQUEST A DEMO

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