Understanding Relevance Maturity in **Ecommerce**

Relevancy Maturity Helps Customers Find the Right Product Faster

Millions of SKUs and bad product information can make ecommerce search clunky—and customers don't buy what they can't find. There are ways to show each shopper what they want to keep them coming back for more. All it takes to level up your shopping experience is intelligent search and recommendations—letting AI do the heavy lifting.

Search is a deceptively easy concept—ask a question and get an answer. But the quality of that response has changed throughout the years as technology enabled more on-point results.

Still, shoppers often sort through the results to find the most relevant, and they just as often re-do the search. If Google has taught us nothing else, it's that if we don't find what we want immediately, we search and search again.

And now technology has given us a better way—providing relevant shopping experiences that go far beyond returning good search results to anticipating products people want and showing them before they ask.

> **Returning a list of products in response to a customer query is only the first step in relevance.**

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Personalized Shopping Experiences Increase Sales

Moving to the next step means automatically personalizing the journey for each shopper by using their site behavior to understand intent.

Understanding what people are searching is not a trivial task—traditionally all we had to go on was the search term shoppers used. But there is a lot of context around that search—where the shopper is physically located, what they've previously searched for, and what they previously bought.

In the 2010s, the best you could do in digital shopping experiences was approximate relevance on a small scale. Programmers could manually create rules based on personas, with results that were relevant-ish.

Rules have limits. Writing enough of them to be useful takes a lot of time and requires constant maintenance.

But the world has changed. Tech giants use AI and machine learning (ML) to show us that it's possible to create a shopping experience for a person, not a persona.

When retailers deliver relevance—when they give the right ecommerce experience to the right person at the right time—we engage more, buy more, and come back for more.

Our data shows:

43%
would **pay more** if they could find what they're looking for in just a few clicks.

73%
will **abandon a company** after only 3 unsatisfactory experiences.

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Reactive Search Can Be Correct *and* Irrelevant

With AI, you can overcome the issues of **siloed search** and **federated search**.

These search experiences are reactive, but they're seldom relevant and they're not contextualized or personalized.

With a unified index across data and content repositories—ranking those results based on relevance—you provide a continuous customer experience, powering an omnichannel configuration by connecting data from your CRM, PIM, or CMS to your marketplace platform.

A relevance platform can link disparate systems—your website powered by, say, Sitecore, your ecommerce platform is SAP/hybris, your customer community runs on Salesforce Experience Cloud, and your CRM system is ServiceNow— so that wherever a customer goes, she consistently gets a relevant experience that remembers who she is and what she likes.

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Siloed vs federated vs unified search

Imagine asking your friends for a shortbread recipe.

In **siloed search**, you have a friend who tracks magazine recipes, another friend who tracks cookbook recipes, and another who tracks online recipes. To find the best, you must ask each friend individually, get each friend's top recipes, and then sift through and compare all of them to find the one you're looking for. Do you go with the online recipe? Or the magazine, or the cookbook? You won't know until you read and test them all yourself.

In **federated search**, it's a bit easier. One friend has all kinds of recipes. But when you ask for the best shortbread recipe, your friend gives you three separate stacks and says, "I put the best recipes from magazines in the first stack; the best recipes from cookbooks are in the second. And the best online recipes are in the third." It looks easier than siloed search because you only had to ask once, but you're still on your own to figure out which is the best overall.

In **unified search**, one friend understands all of the recipes. When you say, "Give me the best shortbread recipe," your friend presents you with one list ranked by awesomeness. The first recipe is the most popular. The list includes magazine recipes, cookbook recipes and online recipes—and you can filter for something specific, like video tutorials. But importantly, the list is sorted based on how happy the recipes have made people, regardless of source.

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Responsive Search Gives Better Results Based on User Activity

Being responsive is the first step on the path to relevance maturity—the ability to show shoppers the right products at the right time.

AI and ML draw conclusions from data, which can make relevant results for cold-start shoppers complicated.

At Coveo, we've done extensive research on sparse data challenges. We look at what the user is doing within a session, akin to how a store clerk might observe a person in a store—picking up one thing, putting it down, choosing another.

This allows us to offer highly personalized product suggestions, despite never having seen the shopper before. Even with no historical data, Coveo can start customizing and personalizing the shopping experience with the user's first click.

Nearly **70%** of **retail shoppers are new**—either because it's their first time on a site, first time visiting on that device, or first time since a cookie expired.

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We call this responsive search—we feed data about a customer's behavior to the ML models so it adapts as the customer does.

This allows you to recommend products automatically based on a customer's browsing and buying behavior, what's already in their cart, or what's often viewed and bought together. These tailored recommendations increase cart value.

AI looks at such behavioral data to learn what's working and what's not. It studies previous searches for a specific term and analyzes what products were satisfying to those who searched.

AI doesn't need to tweak rules—it adapts as it consumes more data, adjusting for who you are and what you like, and what has worked for other people like you in the past.

And central to a responsive system is to make search easy—giving you one place to search with useful features such as query auto-completion, query suggestion, intelligent navigation, and category selection and filters—helping customers zero in on the product that's right for them.

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Recommendations Give People What They Need Without Them Asking

But there is more to relevance than search. With search, you can't be helpful until someone asks. Enter the prescriptive phase of the relevance maturity cycle: **recommendations**.

You can benefit from recommendations that blend content and products to enhance the likelihood of conversion, as Machine Learning identifies correlations in content consumed over the course of previous successful buyer journeys. If a piece of content compelled one person to make a purchase, it will likely compel many others to do the same.
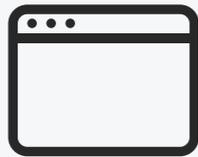
A **product page** is where shoppers can find detailed descriptions of a product and its features and can choose to add it to their cart or order it right away.

Cart recommendations allow you to recommend accessories or products frequently bought together.

Category page recommendations can be used to guide shoppers toward what they might want to buy, based on what you know about them up to that point.
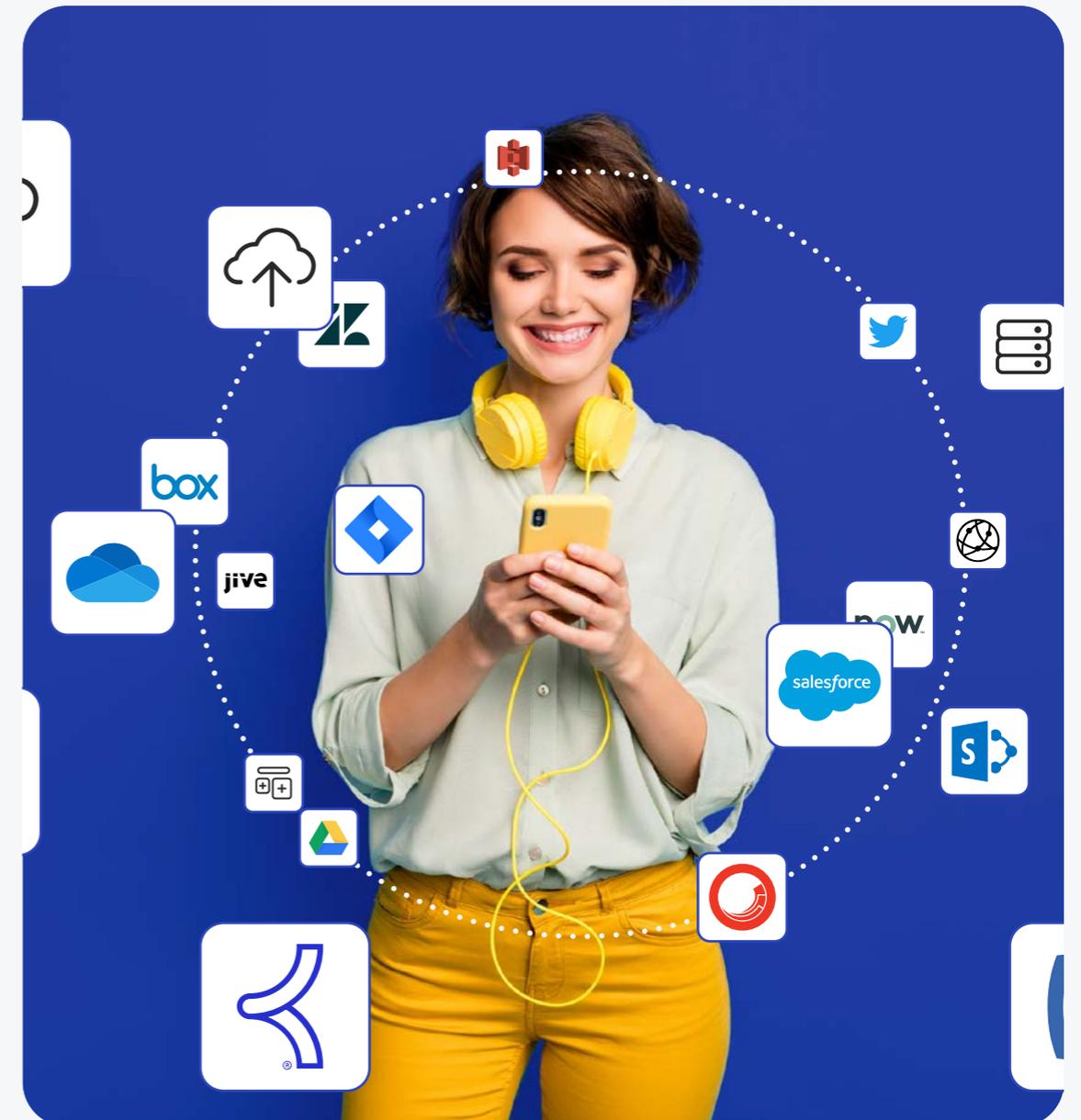
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Optimize Across Channels and Devices

And they should be able to enjoy those experiences across platforms. A fully mature relevance platform remembers you and your journey. It persists and works for you on any channel.

Since people's experiences are connected along their lifecycle, a relevance platform gives people what they want (search), what they need (recommendations), and what they will likely need next (personalization). Each interaction picks up where the last one left off, and since the AI is constantly learning, shopping experiences are constantly improving.

The goal for any retailer is delivering 360° of relevance. The Coveo Relevance Maturity Model is key to achieving that goal.
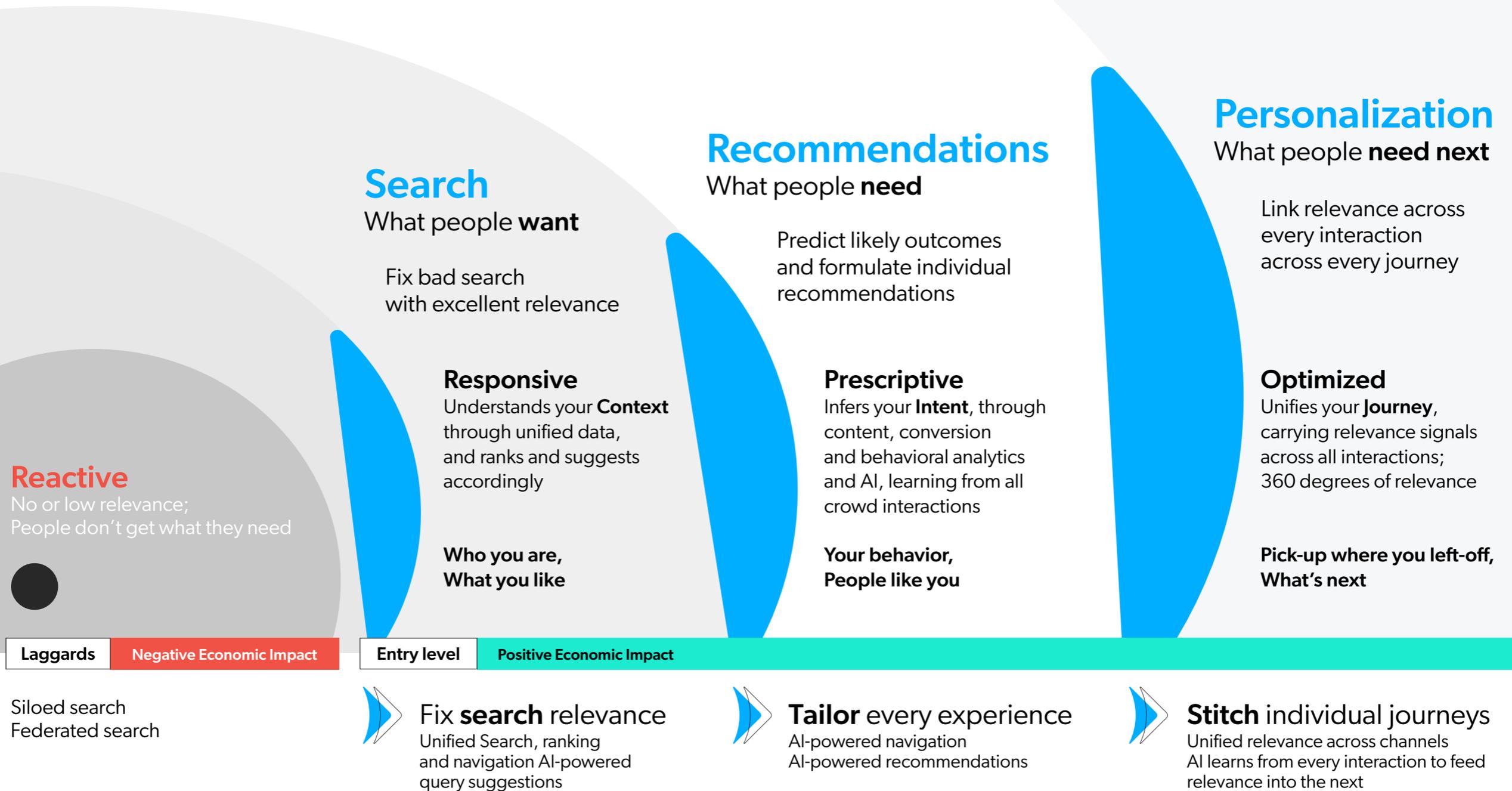
What a relevant experience feels like:

▶ It understands who you are and what you like

▶ It follows your journey

▶ It can recommend the most contextually relevant solutions

▶ It can deliver a relevant conversation

▶ …and carries the thread

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Coveo Relevance Maturity Model™

Relevance starts with fixing **Search**, then grows into **Recommendations**, then into **360° Personalization**.

Search
What people **want**

Fix bad search
with excellent relevance

Responsive
Understands your **Context** through unified data, and ranks and suggests accordingly

**Who you are,
What you like**

Recommendations
What people **need**

Predict likely outcomes and formulate individual recommendations

Prescriptive
Infers your **Intent**, through content, conversion and behavioral analytics and AI, learning from all crowd interactions

**Your behavior,
People like you**

Personalization
What people **need next**

Link relevance across every interaction across every journey

Optimized
Unifies your **Journey**, carrying relevance signals across all interactions; 360 degrees of relevance

**Pick-up where you left-off,
What's next**

Reactive
No or low relevance;
People don't get what they need

Laggards	Negative Economic Impact	Entry level	Positive Economic Impact

Siloed search
Federated search

Fix search relevance
Unified Search, ranking and navigation AI-powered query suggestions

Tailor every experience
AI-powered navigation
AI-powered recommendations

Stitch individual journeys
Unified relevance across channels
AI learns from every interaction to feed relevance into the next

Understanding Relevance Maturity in Ecommerce

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The Coveo Relevance Cloud

Unlike a point solution—e.g., a product that only fixes search—a relevance platform joins up digital experiences and delivers relevance wherever you need it.

It gathers interaction data from every digital experience a customer has and converts that into relevant, intelligent experiences wherever the customer goes next. A relevance platform joins silos together to unify user experiences along an entire journey.

The Coveo Relevance Cloud can be used to deliver AI-powered, unified search experiences; and it can grow to deliver search, recommendations, and personalization anywhere a business needs it.

Contact us for an objective evaluation of your search and digital experiences, or register for a free trial of Coveo to discover how quick and easy it is to bring AI into your search experiences.

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The Relevance Company

Learn more about Coveo

Coveo is the world's leading cloud-based relevance platform. The Coveo Relevance Cloud™ uses applied AI to deliver relevant experiences in all digital interactions, from search to recommendations to personalization.

Contact us