

CUSTOMER STORY



IFT Boosts Website Performance with Coveo for Sitecore



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Customer Story: IFT Boosts Website Performance with Coveo for Sitecore



COMPANY INFO

Industry: Nonprofit

HQ (country): USA

Number of users: 17,000+ IFT members and website visitors

Product: Coveo for Sitecore

Content sources: Sitecore WCM, 10+ External

Websites, Personify360 AMS

METRICS AT A GLANCE

900% Increase in Search Depth (Site Stickiness)

48% Increase in Time-on-Site

45% Decrease in Visitor Abandonment Rate

CUSTOMER GOAL

As an independent voice for food science, IFT both educates consumers, media, and government organizations, and provides a collaborative forum for food science professionals to gather, network and learn.

IFT's corporate website (IFT.org) serves as its primary knowledge hub and online interaction forum for members and the public. IFT is committed to actively and continuously optimizing its website, knowing that an exceptional website experience is critical to supporting the association's vision of "feeding the minds that feed the world."

IFT launched IFT.org in 2010, built atop the Sitecore Content Management System (CMS) platform. That same year, the organization also launched a private online community for its members built using Member-to-Member – a 3rd party SharePoint application – with search powered by Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 (MOSS).

This same search engine was also utilized to power the search capabilities of the corporate website, as well as several external web properties that IFT utilized (such as WordPress for its "ePerspective" blog). This meant that when visitors performed a search on IFT.org, the site would redirect them to a SharePoint search results page. Over the next three years, in order to provide its site visitors with access to the organization's growing body of research and knowledge resources, IFT custom-built several different search pages on IFT.org.

The results were not ideal, as visitors were effectively routed away from IFT.org every time they performed a search. The challenge was compounded by the fact that SharePoint was unable to search across the various resources where IFT maintained its content – including a Personify360 database and several external website properties.

In 2013, IFT made it a strategic priority to have all of its web properties and knowledge assets optimized for mobile. IFT committed to responsive design on its website, and soon discovered that its SharePoint search solution could not support responsive design. As a result, IFT began looking for a better search solution for IFT.org, and decided— in part due to SharePoint’s limitations – to also replace its SharePoint-based solution with something that would integrate with its Sitecore-based website architecture.

“It was critical for us that our search solution executes and displays results inside of our Sitecore website,” shared Marc Bernstein, VP of Information Technology at IFT. “If users are directed to an external site, they might not return to continue exploring other relevant content on IFT.org,” Bernstein explained.

OVERALL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES:







- ▶ Maximize visitor engagement with IFT research & knowledge resources
- ▶ Provide members with seamless mobile access to IFT.org resources
- ▶ Streamline management of IFT.org

“The technical knowledge of your team about the Sitecore platform is really phenomenal.”

MARC BERNSTEIN, VP, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, IFT

SOLUTION

Working with Rightpoint, a Sitecore systems integration partner IFT engaged to work on the initiative, Bernstein and his project team determined that the successful search solution needed to deliver on several key capabilities:

 <p>MOBILE Responsive, full-featured mobile capabilities for a seamless user experience across all IFT web properties and all devices.</p>	 <p>INTEGRATED Tight integration & joint administration with Sitecore’s latest web content management (WCM) platform.</p>
 <p>UNIFIED High-performance, secure connectors to index all of IFT’s information sources (Sitecore, Personify360, external websites, etc.), and the ability to correlate this diverse content to deliver unified and enriched search results.</p>	 <p>CONFIGURABLE Easily configurable search page elements & dynamic facets that enable intuitive, exploratory user engagement with IFT’s knowledge resources.</p>
 <p>ACTIONABLE Actionable usage analytics offering insights regarding how visitors find & engage content, and rapidly identifies knowledge gaps.</p>	 <p>SCALABLE Enterprise-class scalability, enabling fast search across a rapidly growing body of content.</p>

After conducting an evaluation against both Lucene and Google, IFT selected Coveo for Sitecore, because it proved the only solution to meet all of IFT's success criteria.

"We wanted an enterprise-class search solution that is tightly integrated into Sitecore and Coveo was a much better fit compared to Google," explained Bernstein. "IFT's online properties are enterprise mission-critical systems and I feel more comfortable using Coveo, a proprietary product backed by a company specializing in advanced enterprise search technology, instead of open source options such as Lucene," Bernstein added.

"We found the additional customer enablement provided by the Coveo team to be extremely helpful to our overall workflow."

MARC BERNSTEIN, VP, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, IFT

A few weeks after Coveo and Rightpoint commenced work on the implementation, Coveo for Sitecore search was successfully deployed on IFT.org. "Coveo's Professional Services team is one of the best and most effective I've ever worked with," Bernstein shared.

RESULTS

Once Coveo for Sitecore was launched, the improvements in website performance were immediately visible. Only three months into deployment, IFT experienced:

900% Search Depth (number of content pageviews following a search), indicating an increase in site stickiness

48% Increase in Time-on-Site, reflecting better visitor engagement

45% Decreased Abandonment Rate, following search, signaling improved relevance, and greater engagement

With Coveo, IFT was able to realize its vision for making IFT.org a truly search-driven website that unified and streamlined access to all of IFT's diverse knowledge resources without visitors ever leaving the IFT.org website. This included not only a unified global search page, with rich faceted navigation, but also 18 highly specialized search experiences throughout the site. For example, IFT leveraged Coveo to configure a dynamic search-driven navigation experience on its Science Reports page. Here, visitors are able to swiftly search and explore IFT research with ease.

On the site's Food Technology page, visitors are offered a specially scoped interface, which searches across the entire library of Food Technology magazine articles, and enables filtering by a variety of topics and dimensions. And because Coveo is managed directly through Sitecore's administration console, managing the site now requires significantly fewer resources. "With Coveo, configuring really user-friendly search pages that are optimized for the specific content and visitor is just really easy," commented Bernstein. "We've been able to make search a powerful way for visitors to navigate, all while reducing our administrative overheads for the site overall."

NEXT STEPS

Motivated by the substantial improvements it has seen in website performance, IFT plans to expand its use of Coveo for Sitecore. As an international organization, IFT hopes to take advantage of Coveo's multilingual search capabilities, as well as to leverage it to drive a new knowledge marketplace in the future.

"With Coveo, we have this whole new set of capabilities we did not have before. The sky's the limit," shared Bernstein.

How can Coveo help you?

Learn more about Coveo for Sitecore and try the Free Edition!

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