inbenta

3 Steps to Improving Search Results on Your Website

Introduction

If we look back at history, the way we look for information and products changed forever with the advent of the Internet.

Sure, there had been major disruptions in the area before, but none of them were so radical, life-changing and had so many consequences that had an impact on the economy, social relationships etc.

However, consumer expectations have risen significantly since then. It is not uncommon for businesses to find themselves struggling with their website experience, with complaints that look like:

"Our search engine returns irrelevant results."

"We receive a ton of traffic, but it doesn't convert."

"It takes on average 3 search attempts for our customers to click on a search result."

Over the last few years, things have started to change, again. The democratization of **Artificial Intelligence** and the advancements on the field are offering thousands of opportunities for improvement in **the way we search for and find products and services**.

In this ebook, we'll cover:

✓ How this can impact our digital and product experiences as consumers.

✓ How business owners can take advantage of new search technologies to tailor experiences.

✓ The steps of implementing a search engine to help you build long-lasting relationships with potential and existing customers.

10 common issues companies face with their **website search**

There are a few issues that tend to arise when implementing a search engine on a website. However, instead of just naming them, we'll go over these issues one by one with a singular approach.

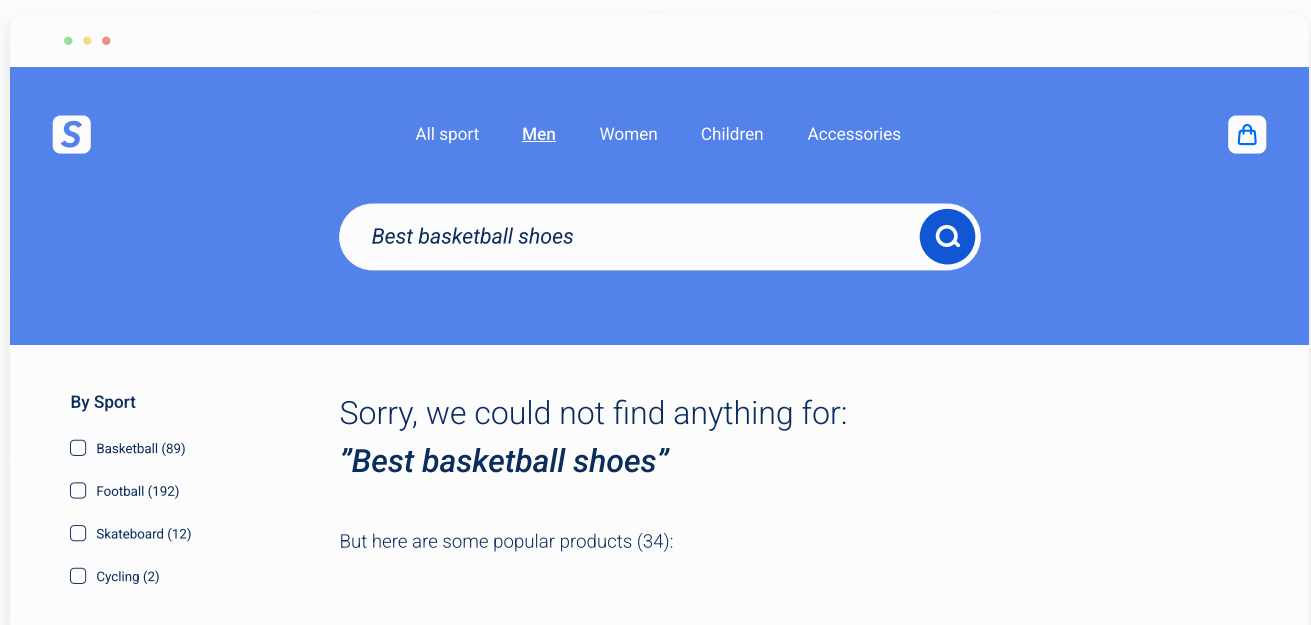**We will challenge your current search experience with 10 questions.**
You'll probably need to analyze several metrics to answer these, but it'll be worth it.

If you are unable to answer the questions because your search tool gives you no access to the necessary KPIs, then you probably need to find a new search provider that offers "out-of-the-box" analytics and clearly shows you the metrics that are relevant for your business.

01.

How many search queries end with and without results?

This is simple. From all the search queries visitors submit, how many of them lead to a *"no result"* page? If the percentage is high, then you have an indicator that something is wrong about either your search tool, or the contents you offer.

S	All sport	**Men**	Women	Children	Accessories	

Best basketball shoes	🔍

By Sport

☐ Basketball (89)

☐ Football (192)

☐ Skateboard (12)

☐ Cycling (2)

Sorry, we could not find anything for:
"Best basketball shoes"

But here are some popular products (34):

02.

How many search queries end with a click?

This will show you how relevant the results are. If the percentage of clicks is high, this means that the relevancy of the results is good enough. However, if most of the search queries your visitors type result with no clicks, then you might need to reconsider the results themselves.

03.

What's my site's exit rate on the search results page?

It is closely related to the previous question, but also on how well you manage the irrelevant or *"no results"* page. If the results don't meet the customers' expectations and there is no other way for them to easily keep navigating your site, they'll leave.

04.

How much time do visitors spend on my search results page?

That's a good one.

Too much time on your search results might indicate they are somewhat relevant or on a similar topic, but still not precise enough, so they feel compelled to click on them.

Too little time on the search results can indicate one of two things:
✓ If the search ends with a click, then your search results are **"on point"**!
✗ If the search ends without a click, then this means users were sure that what they were looking for was simply not there.

05.

How good are my conversion rates
and how high is the average order value?

Any website where economical transactions take place needs to look at their conversion rates. It doesn't really matter whether you sell products or services. The conversion rate is a good indicator of whether the visitors find what they're looking for. The average order value in eCommerce is also a great way to understand how well your experience is designed.

06.

Is the content on my site good enough?

This is particularly important when we are talking about customer support or help sites. If there are many searches that lead to 'no results' or if people are not clicking on the results they are shown, this might mean you need to improve your existing content so that their search answers customer requests.

Your search tool needs to provide you with dashboards to analyze the search queries, so you can identify trends and recurring queries.

In eCommerce, this can also give you a hint on new products to incorporate into your catalog!

07.

How's my search experience designed?

Is your search bar attractive enough? Where is it located? Does it provide suggestions or recommendations? Is it tailoring your visitors search depending on their previous behavior on your site?

Your search bar needs to be visible enough and easy to find, and the experience must also be easy to navigate. Almost **40% of visitors** will leave your site if they find it unattractive.

08.

What happens with your zero results page?

Having an answer or a result to everything is virtually impossible. Yet, we know that visitors, when faced with a 'no results' page, tend to leave the site.

Thus, it is critical that your zero results page is well-thought, engaging and gives alternatives to enable the customer to keep browsing your site.

09.

Does the site offer good navigation?

We know people using search bars have a higher purchase intent than those who simply browse. However, good website navigation is still key. Make sure to offer filters, guide visitors through different sections of the site and overall simplify their experience.

10.

How does your search handle different phrases, spelling errors and more?

Many search engines cannot handle misspelled words. Let's say you moved and want to change your address in your bank account. One of the most commonly misspelled words is "address". You go to your banks help center and type:

> *How to change my* ***adress**** 🔍

Many search tools won't be able to understand or process this query.

The same happens when users do not express their request using the words you expected them to. For instance, what about saying:

> *I recently* ***moved*** *and want to change my* ***details*** 🔍

Sure, the word *"details"* is not exactly a synonym from *"address"*, but it is quite close, and you probably want to show the same results.

The question remains... Is your search engine using semantic search or keyword-based search?

Bonus question:
What kind of search provider am I using?

So it all comes back to this.
Which provider have you chosen and are they really giving you all the tools you need to make your site search a success.

What is semantic search and how does it help

Beyond the keyword

One might think that basic user queries can typically be handled by keyword-based search with quite a good success rate.
Let's take, for instance, the following search query:

> blue jeans

Of course, the search engine will pull any product containing the word *"jeans"* and the color *"blue"* in their title or description.

However, keyword-based search doesn't distinguish between synonyms. This means that the users query will not return a product with a title *"navy jeans"*, the same way it would not return a product named *"blue denim trousers"*.

But a semantic search engine **WOULD**.

Semantic search is an approach to search, which aims at understanding the real meaning and intent of a search query as opposed to only looking for exact matches of the word the user has typed in the search bar.

Whilst most search engines, even keyword-based ones, are already able to understand *"jaens"* as *"jeans"*, they won't be able to extract the real meaning and also return *"denim trousers"* in the results.

Another very important element to semantic search is **context**. It happens that sometimes, the same word form can be used with different meanings. Your search engine needs to be able to **disambiguate** (or discern) between the two meanings of a word included in a specific query.

Understanding every search query with long-tail NLP technology

NLP or Natural Language Processing is the technology that helps computer programs understand human language as it is spoken and written.

It is used in **search engines, chatbots** and other pieces of software processing large amounts of natural language data.
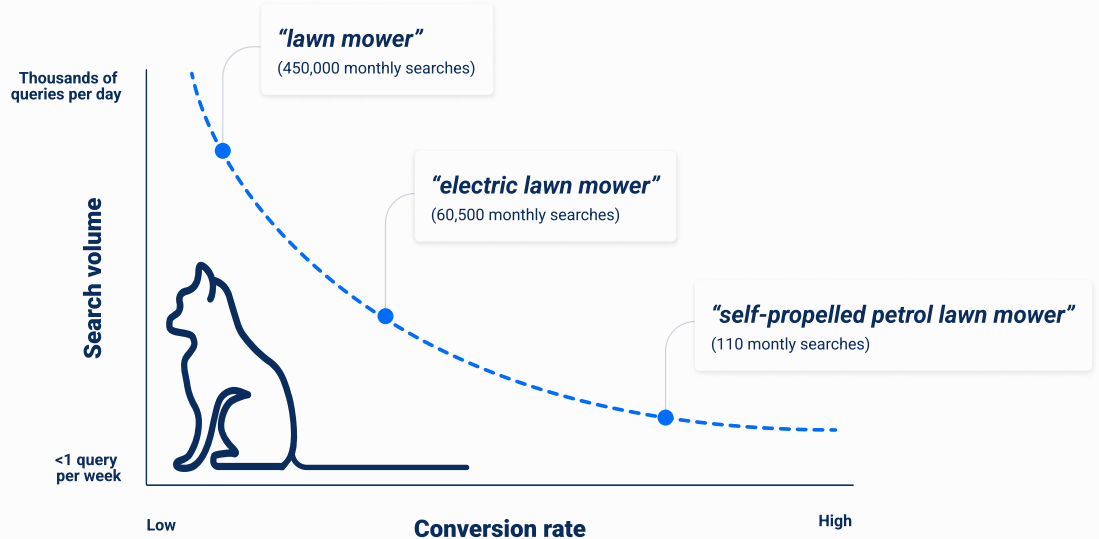
But what is long-tail NLP?

If you are somewhat familiar with SEO, you'll know that long-tail keywords are those search queries that are more than three words long. They tend to be much more specific and have a much higher **intent**.

What does intent mean? Well, it means people using them are closer to purchasing a product or a service.

Long-tail keywords have a lower search volume when compared to more generic keywords.

Let's look at the graph below with Google searches for the following keywords:

"lawn mower"
(450,000 monthly searches)

"electric lawn mower"
(60,500 monthly searches)

"self-propelled petrol lawn mower"
(110 montly searches)

Thousands of queries per day

Search volume

<1 query per week

Low

Conversion rate

High

There are lots of users looking for the term *"lawn mower"*. However, very few of them look for the term *"self-propelled petrol lawn mower"*.

We should never underestimate the importance of these keywords though. Why? Well, if we take all of the keywords being searched online, **most of them (80%) are long-tail.**

The same thing happens with website search.

Many users will type long queries. Every single one of them will rarely be repeated, but if your search engine manages to understand them and return relevant results, chances are users will end up converting, as their purchase intent is much higher.

Long-tail NLP is the technology machines use to understand human natural expressions that are long or more complex, as the one we saw above (*"self-propelled petrol lawn mower"*), regardless of the words used.

If users searched for *"self-driving petrol lawn mower"* or *"autonomous petrol lawn mower"* or even *"self-driving gasoline lawn mower"*, they would get exactly the same results.

80% **of the search terms have over 4 words**

3 steps to implementing intelligent search

Now that we've seen the importance of a good, high-performing search engine, it's time to see how to launch and implement a smart search engine.

To do so, we need to follow a series of steps to ensure success. Let's start with the first one.

01. Defining your search needs

Before you launch or start any project, you need to define your search needs. Search can be implemented in different applications, environments, etc., and also for different purposes.

What's your goal?

Are you looking to help customers find products on your eCommerce site? Or do you want to help customers needing support to find answers on their own? Then your search bar will have two different types of audience.

✓ **An eCommerce search bar** will need to be placed in a very visible area, i.e. at the top of the page, in all category and general pages.

✓ **A search bar for a help center** will be placed probably in a similar area, but only in the help center pages.

What's the scope?

Are you planning to integrate your search solution on a website or an app? This is important as your search solution needs to be able to adapt to restrictions in terms of screens (you need a responsive search solution!).

Also, are you planning on using a search bar or a different channel for users to perform their search?

A new approach that is also quite successful is integrating search within a chatbot. This means the chatbot will use your sources to find answers to customers requests, all within the chat box.

What are your result sources?

Where do you want your results to come from? Do you have only one source or are there many? If that's the case, you might want to look into a search solution that provides what we call **federated search**.

Federated search looks in different sources of information to return the most relevant answer. Your sources can be databases, product listings, website pages and more.

What industry are you in?

Many search engines can handle generic vocabulary. But what happens when you have a specific **industry or company-specific terminology** your search engine needs to understand?

Make sure your solution is adaptable and flexible and can understand your own designations of products and concepts and accommodate new terms that you need the engine to understand.

02. Choosing the right technology

This step is key. The right technology can make or break your sites search experience.

Query understanding

We've already seen how traditional keyword-based search is unable to truly understand a query.
We've also discovered NLP technology and how it is able to understand real meaning, but how do we achieve that?

At Inbenta, we use semantic analysis and **our unique Lexicon**, a humongous repository of concepts and semantic relationships between them, **available in 35+ languages**. This is how we make our search engine and chatbots smart enough to understand queries regardless of the specific keyword.

However, we also understand the benefit of statistics. Our **Neuro-symbolic AI** merges the semantic approach with machine learning technology to help our solutions learn and improve over time.

Detailed search dashboards

This is an essential piece of your search puzzle. You need to be able to understand how users behave and interact with your search bar. Choose a software that can identify search trends, give you information on query volume, create query clusters and queries with no results.

A look and feel adapted to your brand

Your search experience needs to convey the same image your brand does.

Make sure you go for a solution that is able to easily adapt to your color guidelines, fonts and character. A search that resembles you.

Search suggestions

Do you want search suggestions to be based on the users profile or the most popular results? Statistical approaches have been used for the past few years with somewhat good results, but they lack relevancy. You can be showing result suggestions to customers, having nothing to do with the real customer intent, just because it has been searched many times before.

Testing tools

Before you launch a search engine on your website, you might want to test it and make sure everything goes well. Also, every time you include any new source for results, you might want to see how it turns out before your customers can access it.

Many search engines don't allow the user implementing it the opportunity to experience using it. Make sure your software of choice is able to do that.

But what if the search engine gives an unexpected result?

You will then probably appreciate a search software that can show you how the engine got to those results and even fine-tune them, if needed.

03. Appointing a team to monitor and optimize your project

One of the biggest issues companies face when launching a tech project is thinking about it as a "one-time" thing. Creating a great search experience requires effort and you need to be able to appoint someone in charge to oversee the project. Make sure you cover:

The content

If you are in eCommerce, you probably have specialists working on writing copy for the product listings. However, if your search project is focused on a help center/support, then you might want to have a team of one or more people working on developing content for your support site. This will increase self-service and reduce incoming support contacts, which will help you save money and time.

The data

You need to appoint someone to oversee the KPIs and identify any issues with your search experience on a global scale. Make sure you issue regular performance reports and that you don't miss out on any trends.

Conclusion

Many companies put huge efforts on improving Google rankings but often forget to take care of their own website search.

Yet, search experience on a site can set a "before and after" in terms of customer satisfaction and future loyalty towards a brand.

Implementing a smart search solution that can truly understand your customers needs and answer with the right piece of information or return the correct product, is key to winning the heart of new and existing customers.

If you wish to start improving results on your site and take advantage of this huge conversion lever, here are a few additional interesting pieces of content:

✓ To test it and see how it works - **Inbenta's Free Trial**.

✓ To dig deeper into the subject and discuss it with an expert - **Inbenta's Demo Request**.

✓ To get a feel of the features of a good semantic search engine - **Inbenta's Search Datasheet**.

> *Or you can always take a look at our **blog**.*

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Inbenta is a global leader in a new class of enterprise AI and semantic search technology for e-commerce and customer support.

Powered by natural language processing, Inbenta's products are used by over 250 companies to drastically boost self-service, enhance customer experience, increase conversions, and cut down on support costs by helping customers find exactly what they need.

Inbenta specializes in conversational chatbots, virtual assistants, e-commerce search, support ticketing, hybrid chat, and knowledge management.

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