

## The Wasserstrom Company offers customers faster, tailored search with Google Search Appliance



### At a Glance

#### What they wanted to do

- Deliver search results faster
- Search within customer catalogues, instead of entire product database
- Reduce the need for IT support
- Implement consistent search for both business customers and consumers

#### What they did

- Chose Google Search Appliance (GSA) with the Searchandiser, a third party tool, for merchandising

#### What they accomplished

- Reduced search delivery time by 50% for business customers – and by 75% for consumers
- Created catalogue-only searching to speed up response times
- Adding catalogue-specific synonyms and product content to improve search experience for B2B customers
- E-commerce team is promoting products within search and tuning search results, without IT intervention

### Business

The Wasserstrom Company, based in Columbus, Ohio, is a restaurant supplier and distributor of food service supplies and equipment to businesses and consumers. Wasserstrom opened as a family-run business in 1902, and today sells millions of products every year from top manufacturers.

### Challenge

Business customers that shop for restaurant and food service supplies at Wasserstrom.com want to find the items they need and check out quickly, which means the search needs to be fast and accurate. “Our business-to-business customers aren’t browsers,” explains Dale Edman, The Wasserstrom Company’s vice president of e-commerce and online marketing. “They don’t use website navigation – they are 100% about search. They know what they need.”

Business-to-business customers make up about 95% of Wasserstrom’s revenue, while the rest are individual shoppers. While consumers are more likely to browse the site and check out product options, they still need to sort and compare prices, sizes, and brands. However, the company’s search solution from IBM was not serving either audience very well, Edman says.

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*—Dale Edman, vice president of e-commerce and online marketing, The Wasserstrom Company*

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“Our search system delivered results too slowly – taking as long as eight to 10 seconds,” Edman says. “We couldn’t easily fine-tune results to push certain products to the top of the list, or add synonyms and facets, without the help of our IT team. That slowed down our ability to make search better.”

The lagging speed of search results also affected business customers who viewed customized catalogues of Wasserstrom products, based on their product and pricing requirements. “We have about 350 catalogues tailored to specific customers, and those catalogues might contain a few hundred products each,” explains Edman. “But when a B2B customer started a search, our system looked for matches in our entire database of 100,000 products, then matched those products to the customer’s own catalogue. It was a two-step process that delayed results.”

### Solution

Wasserstrom first decided to upgrade search for the consumer side of the company. “We chose Google Search. From our perspective, Google owns the search space, so it made sense to go with the people who know search best,”

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## About Google Search Appliance

With the Google Search Appliance (GSA), the search experience shared by millions of people across the globe can be harnessed by your individual company with specific enterprise enhancements that make searching easier, intuitive, and customizable. Ready to index most enterprise content right “out of the box,” the GSA turns your company’s intranet or website search engine into a system that is as relevant and reliable as Google’s – with the same ease of use.

For more information visit:  
[www.google.com/enterprise/search](http://www.google.com/enterprise/search)

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Edman says. The improvement was immediate – search response time dropped from as long as 10 seconds to 0.3 seconds. “We were also able to tune the system on our own, or change the order of facets and add synonyms,” Edman says. “We didn’t need to pull in IT or outside consultants.”

With consumer search made faster and more user-friendly, Edman and his colleagues turned their attention to search geared to business customers. “Having split platforms for search wasn’t very efficient,” he says. “We were doubling our administrative tasks and time – plus, we wanted to bring the good results we’d seen on the consumer side to our business customers.”

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To bring the same fast search and better tuning to the B2B part of the company, Edman and his colleagues decided to extend their use of Google’s search solution, the GSA. “I reached out to colleagues at other companies who understood some of the unique challenges of B2B search,” Edman says, and Google was usually at the top of their lists. “Google told us they could solve our issues,” he says. “Their team is very focused on commerce search.”

Edman saw the chance to make Wasserstrom’s B2B search markedly better. The GSA solution for Wasserstrom includes the Searchandiser, a third party merchandising tool developed by GroupBy, a premier Google partner. This tool, along with the GSA helps e-commerce businesses control how products are displayed in search results.

### Benefits

Relying on the GSA has brought faster and more relevant searching to Wasserstrom’s business customers, and more customization options to the company’s e-commerce team. Search results, previously delivered in as long as 10 seconds, now take only 0.3 seconds to arrive. When business customers launch searches within their catalogues, the GSA searches only the products within the specific catalogue. “Removing that extra step – that is, the need to search our entire product catalogue – has been a major factor in delivering search results faster,” Edman says.

In the near future, Edman plans to use the GSA to personalize each business customer’s catalogue – for example, by adding synonyms, landing pages, and descriptive content about products, based on items within the catalogue. “We can make all of these changes ourselves, and we don’t need to call on our IT people for help,” Edman says. “We’re giving back time to IT so they can work on other projects.”

The GSA is making a big impact on how Wasserstrom builds a better search experience and promotes products, without demanding costly IT intervention and time investments. “Google takes away the headaches and expenses of gaining control of search,” Edman says. “When we make search faster, and when we tell a better story about our products in search results, we make our customers happier.”

