The Endeca Commerce Suite: Powering a Dynamic B2B Catalog

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B2B customers want to have control over their online experience and to be able to take the path through your site that makes the most sense to them, with the tools and content at hand to make the best decision for them – on that day, in that moment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Finding new ways to deliver a superior online experience keeps many B2B eCommerce professionals up at night because, more than any other variable, the customer experience has the greatest impact in converting browsers to buyers. Yet most B2B and B2C retailers still struggle to meet customer expectations for a rich user experience, which spells lost sales and diminishing customer loyalty. To succeed, retailers need to focus on delivering a dynamic B2B catalog that delivers the most relevant and targeted content to every customer, at every step of the online experience, at any moment in time. The Endeca Commerce Suite technology represents the most effective foundation for delivering a truly dynamic online catalog by delivering targeted and relevant content to the pages where customers shape their decision to buy. B2B retailers that utilize Endeca technology to shape the decision-making process increase visits, conversions, and average order values, gaining a competitive advantage over their peers.

CHALLENGE: MEETING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

eCommerce teams are faced with the difficult task of selling effectively in an environment where consumer expectations change at a lightning pace and become increasingly more sophisticated each day. Given the growing number of retail options available on the Internet, customers have little patience for retailers that cannot effectively meet their needs. Shoppers want an experience customized to their changing needs, with the right tools and content to make the *best* decision, at that specific moment in time.

HOW B2B RETAILERS INVEST

This is not news to B2B retailers. They are familiar with the benefits of investing in the online customer experience. In fact, the latest research on online shopping behavior conducted by Forrester Research shows that companies who differentiate themselves with a superior online experience have customers that are more willing to purchase, more willing to recommend their sites, and less likely to switch brands.[1]

The revenue impact is significant. Companies studied by Forrester Research experienced revenue increases between $260 and $311 million in the first year alone. In contrast, the online retailers who didn't make the customer experience a priority saw the opposite effects on their business: low sales due to session abandonment, low average order values and margins, and low rates of repeat visits and purchases. These findings are eye-opening. In fact, according to another Forrester Research report,[2] 67% of shoppers switched channels

SUPERIOR EXPERIENCE = INCREASED REVENUE

Companies who differentiate themselves with a superior online experience see 14.4% more customers willing to purchase and 15.8% less likely to switch.

FORRESTER RESEARCH
"CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE BOOSTS REVENUE", 2009

(i.e. went to a store) when they failed in their goal of researching a product online, while the remaining 33% took their business to competitors or walked away entirely. This translates into millions – potentially billions – in lost revenue.

To capitalize on the opportunity that improving the customer experience provides, B2B retailers have invested aggressively in technology and content to deliver a better online experience. As the series of Forrester Research reports entitled "The State of Online Retailing"[3] illustrate, eCommerce teams have increased their investment in several areas relating to the customer experience, including:

> **Content** Videos, reviews, articles, and in-depth product information that help customers identify the best product.

> **Web CMS and PIM** Best-in-class tools for consolidating, storing, and presenting content to customers.

> **eCommerce Platforms** The "ERP systems of eCommerce," that provide tools for merchandising and processing transactions online.

> **Recommendation Engines** Tools and services that present products and promotions based on historical customer behavior and other variables.

> **Advanced Search & Navigation** Sort and refinement capabilities that help customers find the best match for their needs quickly and easily.

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN B2B CUSTOMER NEEDS AND RETAILER INVESTMENTS

The common thread running through all these investments is the focus on accumulating and presenting the content retailers think customers want, at the moment they ask for it.

Yet despite these efforts, customers still don't feel they are getting what they want out of their online experience. Few B2B retail sites are fully successful in meeting shoppers' needs, as evidenced by the survey data below.

eCommerce Sites Still Fail to Meet Needs

Distribution of Retail Website Review Scores
Average Score 5.1
← Fail | Pass →

Source: Forrester's 170 Retail Website Reviews, versions 3-7 – Shop.org Online Merchandising Workshop, July 2008
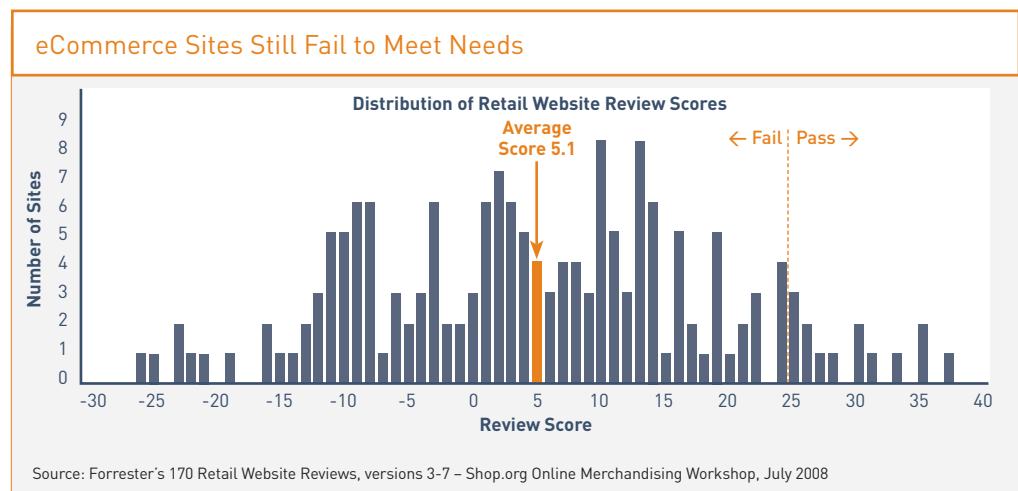
Online shoppers' discontent centers not only on the lack of rich content but also on the ability to leverage that content in their decision-making. Customer surveys on what is most important to the online shopping experience report a desire for better "decision resources" – user recommendations and reviews, user guides, videos, and articles – coupled with an easier, more relevant way to interact with those resources. Customers also want a consistent experience and the same access to content anywhere and anytime – on a Website, a mobile site, and employee interaction.

Many B2B merchants try to solve the problem by dictating shoppers' paths through the site via categories, thinking better category pages will get customers to their goals faster. But shoppers want to be able to find the right product in their own way because every shopper's needs are different, and every shopper requires different information to make them comfortable purchasing.

SOLUTION: CUSTOMERS DEMAND A DYNAMIC B2B CATALOG

To date, eCommerce investments have solved the problem of how to create and store great content, but not how to allow customers to interact with this content in any way they want. As a result, the true value of these investments remains untapped and left out of the online experience.

A new strategy is required to effectively incorporate this rich content into the user experience in a contextual and dynamic manner so customers begin to realize the benefit. This new approach is called a dynamic catalog.

THE DYNAMIC CATALOG: PERSONALIZED MARKETING IN THE ONLINE STORE

Marketing professionals have long acknowledged the Internet as the new staging ground for personalized marketing – where they can increase sales by presenting exactly the right products and information, in context with the right offer, at the right time and place, to the right person. In the world of eCommerce, where technology continues to redefine the realm of the possible, this type of experience is called a dynamic catalog.

A dynamic catalog is a combination of best practices that increase customer satisfaction by delivering content in a manner that compels customers to purchase. The most successful retailers today are those that combine an understanding of their customers' needs with a Website designed around the principles of a dynamic catalog. Although very few (if any) retailers have reached the panacea of an end-to-end dynamic catalog, the benefits of the approach are well documented and visible through the gains achieved by select applications using the dynamic catalog principles of search and navigation technology, recommendation engines, and campaign-driven promotions.

DEVELOPING A DYNAMIC CATALOG: WHERE TO START

If the opportunity and return are so great, why doesn't every B2B retailer already have a dynamic catalog today? It's simple. No single technology or methodology alone can present content at the speed of thought so that it is relevant to each unique customer, at every click. So where should retailers start? Where will they see the greatest immediate impact?

DYNAMIC CATALOG DEFINED

A dynamic catalog is an online store that delivers the most relevant and targeted content to each user, at each step of their online experience, at the right moment in time, in order to increase each customer's likelihood of making a purchase.

The challenge of delivering a dynamic catalog is in determining the needs of each shopper, on each visit to the site, with every changing goal – and then only presenting the most relevant information given the particularities of that time, place, and person. But how is this done, given that each shopper's needs are unique, their path and methods are unique, and that relevance is dictated by needs and goals that are only known by that customer, at that moment in time?

B2B retailers designing a dynamic catalog should first focus on sections of their Website (1) where they have received enough information about the customer to understand what is relevant, and (2) where they have the biggest opportunity to influence the customer's purchase decision.

The place to focus efforts comes into sight once you break down the customer's online experience. One way to do this is to think of a commerce site as a collection of different types of pages with which shoppers interact.

WHERE ONLINE DECISIONS ARE MADE

Customers can spend over 60% of their time within the dynamic pages of your site. Optimizing the experience within these pages is critical to increasing sales and satisfaction.

Home Page	The home page is a common starting point for a customer already familiar with a retailer. Although that potential customer has a goal in mind, the retailer knows very little about it. The greatest opportunity at this stage is delivering time-based promotions or offers based on past behavior and purchases. It is also important to prominently profile any products that the retailer is widely known for, and thus, a likely reason for the home page visit.
Dynamic Pages	Customers begin to interact with these pages from the first moment they click on a site. Whether clicking on a category, conducting a search, or refining by a product attribute, Customers are sharing some indication of their need. With every additional action, customers indicate more details of their intent for that visit. These pages are where a customer evaluates and narrows down products based on all related, available information, and where a customer's decision can still be influenced. These pages are also where a customer is most tempted to leave a site if not engaged. The retailer's opportunity here is to present the most relevant content that will guide customers quickly to the right type of product, and give them confidence they have identified the best product for their specific need.
Product Detail Pages	Once customers arrive on a product details page, they have loudly voiced their intent. Here they indicate that this product might be a likely purchase. At this stage, the opportunity is to present additional relevant content that confirms this product is the right choice, or to offer similar alternatives.
Shopping Cart	Once a customer adds a product to his or her cart, the retailer has a clear signal. This interaction is the ultimate point of relevance, as a customer has already made their decision. The retailer has the opportunity here to push the shopper into the transaction process with relevant offers that inspire action now, or to extend the shopping experience by promoting additional related items that may be appropriate.
Purchase Process	The customer's interaction here should be all about speed and ease. At this point, there is limited need for relevant content, short of prompting the customer with pre-filled personal information (address, credit card, etc.) to speed the transaction.
Static Pages	A customer who might want to know more about you or contact you will look for pages that contain relatively current content.

The interactions outlined above represent clear opportunities to increase sales and customer satisfaction by presenting different degrees of relevant, targeted content. But, it is the dynamic pages that stand out – here is where the customer is still trying to make a decision, and where the retailer has enough information to deliver content that can influence that decision. This is where customers spend the bulk of their time, and where the critical evaluation process occurs. The experience within these dynamic pages can make the difference between a sale and an abandoned session.

By delivering the most targeted and contextually relevant content to every potential customer throughout the dynamic pages retailers can make every shopper interaction a conversion opportunity. The Endeca Commerce Suite is the key to delivering a dynamic catalog within the most influential portion of your site.

ENDECA COMMERCE SUITE: POWERING A DYNAMIC CATALOG

The Endeca Commerce Suite (ECS) is a software solution that dynamically assembles and presents content targeted to the needs of each customer from the moment that customer demonstrates his or her intent in an online store. Endeca Commerce Suite allows retailers to create an online experience that shapes itself to every click the user makes. The result is a more targeted and contextually relevant experience across all channels that attracts a higher number of visitors and converts them into buyers.

The business value delivered by the Endeca Commerce Suite is enabled by innovative technology which provides the desired customer experience while giving business users full control to manage the experience. Based on the Endeca Information Access Platform (IAP), the Endeca Commerce Suite is powered by MDEX Engine™ technology at the core of the IAP. The MDEX Engine allows real-time, rapid interactions with your site data and content – even as it changes – by creating a nearly infinite faceted space that contains billions of possible combinations of products and product attributes. The Merchandising Workbench application, featuring Page Builder, gives business users control over how content is presented, allowing retailers to shape dynamic pages and deliver the most effective customer experience to continually increase sales and conversions.

When the power of the MDEX Engine is harnessed by business users through Merchandising Workbench with Page Builder, the result is an experience that delivers the most relevant content to each customer at every step through the online catalog. The Endeca Commerce Suite delivers this highly relevant experience more effectively than any other eCommerce technology.

Endeca Commerce Suite: Powering a Dynamic Catalog

The advantage of an Endeca-driven catalog over sites assembled from traditional search, Web CMS, and eCommerce platform tools can be seen in five key capabilities:

1. Allows any customer to take any path most relevant to them by creating a dynamic and contextual user experience that allows the user to select what is most appropriate for them in that moment.

2. Integrates all your content and data in to the user experience by leveraging all existing investments in technology, data, and content and allowing each user to make the best purchase decision.

3. Influences customers during the decision process to advance business goals by giving business users the tools to influence shopper goals.

4. Tracks and optimizes every shopper's interaction to continually enhance the customer experience by creating and optimizing targeted dynamic pages.

5. Increases natural traffic profile and make a great first impression by greeting shoppers with dynamic and targeted pages which harness medium- and longtail content.

These five capabilities are what make Endeca uniquely designed to deliver a dynamic catalog for B2B online businesses.

1. ALLOW ANY CUSTOMER TO TAKE ANY PATH MOST RELEVANT TO THEM

Virtual Sales Associate

Shoppers want to simultaneously be in control of their online experience while never losing the context of what they are looking for with each click, sort, or refinement. So meeting the shopper's expectations from the first click is crucial. Engage with click number one – or risk losing the shopper.

Shoppers all think of their problem differently, and shouldn't be constrained to a path you think they should take through your online catalog by limiting them to a static category taxonomy. There are just too many possibilities of what each shopper might deem important at any moment in time. Imagine what it would be like to walk into a physical store and have the sales associate keep telling you about anything and everything except for what you came in for on that day.

Start thinking of your site as a virtual sales associate who helps each individual with their unique questions and goals on each visit to your site. A good sales associate knows that additional information is only valuable to shoppers if it helps them understand their choices and can see how it affects the decisions they want to make on that day. A sales associate helps shoppers discover the best product for them by revealing relationships between products and preferences, ensuring what is displayed is always in the context of the shoppers' interests.

Introduce shoppers to this virtual sales associate from the moment they first enter your site. With their first click, shoppers will start telling him or her what their intent is in that moment, on that day. Your first challenge is to create a home page that is a shared entry point for every conceivable visitor, yet immediately steers whoever has arrived, for whatever reason, swiftly to the specific goal only known to them. This means you have to create different ways that users can enter into the data and content on your site, so that you can pull every shopper into the path that is most relevant.

Advanced Search Takes Out the Guesswork

In the example on the next page, Newark.com's home page makes the search experience immediately relevant for any user from their first interaction. Newark.com takes the guesswork out of a product search with data-driven spell correction and innovative search type ahead, helping users enhance the relevance of the results. For Newark.com, Endeca's core search capabilities are more than just a search box. They are not a "one size fits all" search appliance or a "single point of access" search layer that misses higher-value opportunities to help an engineer find just the right part.

A WARM WELCOME FOR EVERY CUSTOMER

Your first challenge is to create a home page that is a shared entry point for every conceivable visitor, yet immediately steers whoever has arrived, for whatever reason, swiftly to the specific goal only known to them.

Just like a good sales associate, Endeca technology listens to the customer's question and presents the different options available to narrow their search to the right product. All of this takes place at the "speed of thought" which turns the Website into a real-time conversation with a sales associate.

Helping Customers Find Relevant Paths From the First Click

Advanced Search Capabilities are More Than Just a Search Box for Newark.com
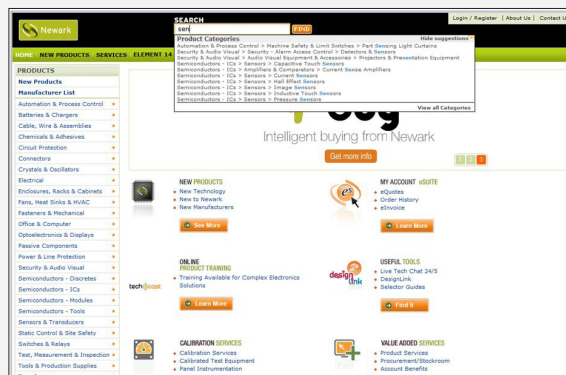
- **Type-ahead search** saves customers a step by revealing the most likely next steps on a search for "semiconductors". Based on popular searches, matching categories, or other criteria, a customer can be more quickly directed into the most relevant content based on their key strokes.

- **Data-driven spell correction** immediately redirects a sticky-fingered typist to a category page for "semiconductors" rather than punishing them for the slight misspelling, "seniconductors".

- **More relevance strategies** like out-of-the box relevance modules that business users can use to tune results based on their content to ensure that search queries are answered most effectively.

Guided Navigation Shows the Most Relevant Next Step

Once a customer makes his or her first choice from the search box and lands on a search results page, more Endeca tools appear to help them make the next best decision on the journey through your store. Result sets are summarized based on meta-data surrounding the content, giving shoppers guidance on how to refine and explore further. These summaries are often called Guided Navigation® (or faceted search) and can be presented as maps, charts, graphs, tag clouds, concept clusters, or a simple list of dimensions for refinement. Just like a good sales associate, Endeca technology listens to the customer's question and presents the different options available to narrow their search to the right product. These options are created automatically at the time of the click, to ensure they are always relevant to the customer's search.

In the example on the next page, CDW.com displays how Guided Navigation helps customers find exactly what they are looking for. Here the customer really begins to interact with the site in a manner that mimics the back and forth dialog one would have with a store associate.

The features of CDW's dynamic pages – enabled by Guided Navigation, breadcrumbs, and search results – help shoppers discover new information that leads them to refine their results or make a follow-on query. The results summaries themselves can form the basis of further exploration. All of this takes place at the "speed of thought" which turns the Website into a real-time conversation with a sales associate – one smart enough to reply with only the most relevant answers to the customer's question.

Helping Customers Find the Next Best Step for Them
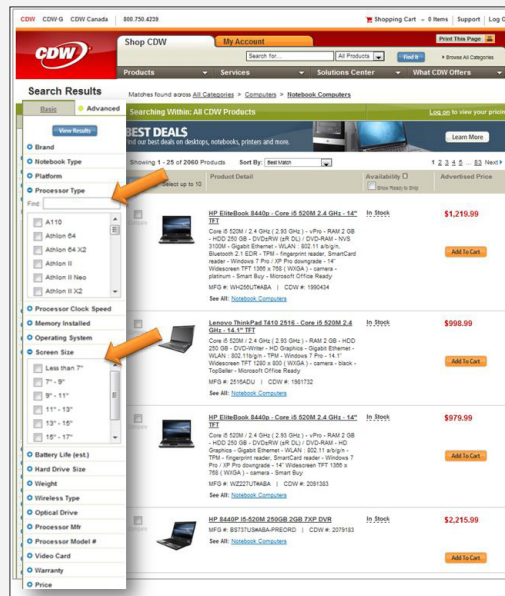
Guide Navigation Helps CDW Customers Refine Their Results

- **Search Results** A display of the products that match their criteria, sorted according to relevance, margin, popularity, or other criteria.

- **Only the Available Options** This is the beginning of the dialog, when the site reveals the options available to the customer. "Based on your search, we have many different options to choose from. Which one is most important to you?" Because the Guided Navigation summaries are assembled at the time of the search and based on the data returned, only valid options are presented with no dead ends.

- **Narrow to the Right Fit** The Guided Navigation options presented summarize the shared attributes so customers can narrow selections based on the features important to them. This means going beyond simple filters like category, price, or brand to include color, inventory status, size, fit, use, etc.

- **Breadcrumbs** By tracking the filters applied and displaying them as breadcrumbs, customers that have followed an unsuccessful path can retrace their steps and de-select options that are less important rather than starting over.

Category Navigation Puts Customers on the Right Path Faster

In addition to search results pages, Endeca can also start a dialog through category and subcategory pages from your site's top-level navigation. Even if shoppers choose to start with a category rather than the search box, they can have a similar experience that gets them faster to the right product.

Fastenal uses category and subcategory pages off of its home page to make sure that its dialog with shoppers is a blend of hand-picked featured results, dynamic results, and related results that are driven by the shoppers' navigation state.

The value of Endeca as top-level navigation is giving customers the ability to divert from fixed product taxonomy into attributes or related content such as video or reviews. Whatever first choice a shopper takes, Endeca makes it as relevant as possible, and provides the tools to go even deeper into increasingly relevant content. This is in line with the principles of a dynamic catalog, and highlights how search should not be viewed as a one-off, query-response phenomenon. Rather, it should be seen as a doorway for customers to conduct a contextual dialog with the richness your catalog and merchandising have to offer.

Category Navigation – Another Point of Entry for More Effective Customer Dialog
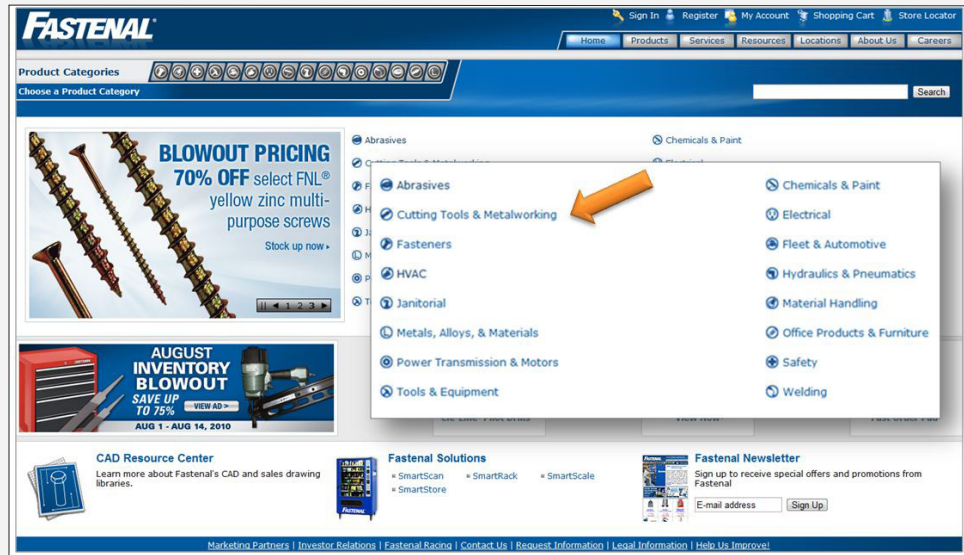
Fastenal's category pages are dynamically generated, so customers have access to a similarly effective navigation experience no matter which route they take.

2. INTEGRATE ALL YOUR CONTENT AND DATA INTO THE USER EXPERIENCE

Thinking Beyond Search and Navigation

Retailers need to integrate data and content dynamically into the site experience, and move past the realm of thinking of search and navigation as just leveraging product data from your eCommerce platform. Why? Because in the world of online retailing, the content that customers value has evolved rapidly in the past few years. Though important, online content is no longer just about product catalog data such as features, pricing, and special offers. Compared to even a year ago, consumers now demand much richer types of interactive and social content – user reviews, articles, buying guides, and video content. Shoppers want all of this at their fingertips to determine that they've found the best product.[5] The question now becomes how to get the most out of all of these sources of content and provides shoppers with the experience they demand by fully integrating the content into the user experience.

The Endeca Commerce Suite can ingest the structured data around your products – such as price, features, and colors – as well as the related unstructured content – such as product reviews, articles, videos,[6] or anything else not neatly stored in columns and tables. This means you can pull in data from PIM databases, Web CMS, eCommerce platforms, review engines, web analytics engines, and any other systems containing information that help customers make a purchase decision.

CUSTOMERS PAY MORE FOR SOCIAL CONTENT

U.S. online retailers that offered product reviews and recommendations saw 21% higher total sales, 21% improved conversion rates, and 15% more purchases of bigger ticket items.

**INTERNET RETAILER,
"EMERGING TECHNOLOGY" SURVEY**
CONDUCTED BY VOVICI CORPORATION

Customers respond positively when review and sales data is integrated into the overall user experience, such as when their search results are sorted by user-defined ratings. Using content in these ways increases transparency into your product line and customers have better visibility into the trade-offs they can make.

Showcasing Articles, Product Guides, Video, Reviews

What does this mean for customers? In the example below, Future Electronics brings this concept to life by integrating rich content and product information into the user experience. The site uses diverse types of content to expose shoppers to better-suited products and enables them to get a greater understanding of the trade-offs between Future Electronics' products, driving shoppers to higher price points, with the likelihood that they will shop at the site again.

Assemble Diverse Content With Every Click

Endeca integrates key decision resources into the experience.

Future Electronics integrates articles, help documenta-tion, and user-review content as filters that help customers make the best decision and feel comfortable purchasing.

Customers can conduct a search for "lighting," read an information kit or product datasheet about what to look for in lighting, narrow it down to the right price range and product specifications, and then sort by the most popular or highest rated among those remaining options. As a result, the customer not only identifies a set of products that seem to fit his or her needs, but has also acquired enough information to feel confident in one choice as the best option, making it more likely that they will purchase.

Customers respond positively when review and sales data is integrated into the overall user experience, such as when their search results are sorted by user-defined ratings. Customers also like when they can filter by top seller or top rated, or ideally, when they can narrow results down to the top-selling, top-rated products by people like them, utilizing customer profile data. Using content in these ways increases transparency into your product line and shoppers have better visibility into the trade-offs they can make.

Because of the ability to ingest these different sources and formats of data and content, identify shared attributes, and unite the content for presentation to customers within the context of their actions, the Endeca eCommerce Suite consistently helps customers make a decision to purchase, which increases sales. In contrast, Web CMS, eCommerce Platforms, PIM, and traditional search technologies all struggle to tie together data from various sources and present it in context for the billions of different ways in which a visitor may want to view the content. When they try, the custom development required greatly increases the complexity and cost of the application, while speed, performance, and the ability to support business requests for UX changes degrades. That's not the foundation for a dynamic catalog.

Social Content Drives Confidence and Engagement
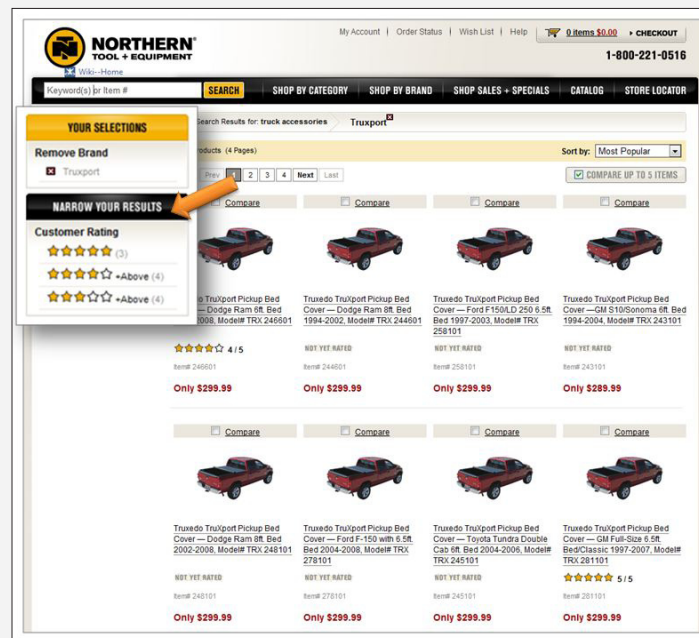
Northerntool.com incorporates user-defined ratings into its Website as a navigation option. They also let users browse reviews and navigate reviews simultaneously with products – another creative way to promote products through customer input.

Northerntool.com also provides innovative ways of illustrating this principle. They not only empower shoppers by driving engagement with diverse types of content, but they also elevate the impact of data assets and customer community in their merchandising strategy.

3. INFLUENCE CUSTOMERS DURING THE DECISION PROCESS TO ADVANCE BUSINESS GOALS

Making Every Interaction a Conversion Opportunity

Equally important to creating a site that sells more effectively is enabling your business users to influence customers along their path to finding a product. This is where business goals meet shopper goals, so that as the shopper takes a journey through your site, you can make every interaction a conversion opportunity through targeted promotions and merchandise placements. Endeca's dynamic merchandising capabilities are unique because they allow you to present the most relevant offers based on the customer's explicit intent as indicated by his or her actions (such as search, category selection, and navigation refinements). The merchandising team sets up rules that are global, but always keep the merchandising offer in the context of the customer's path.

Among the many types of merchandising strategies you have to choose from, dynamic merchandising is particularly critical. Consider the usual triggers for merchandising promotions and zones on typical eCommerce sites. They can be time-based (as in a quarter-end sale in September), campaign-based (such as "serve this promotion to all cookied users that abandoned their shopping cart in the last session"), or behavioral algorithm-based ("based on this user's past transactions and trends identified from similar users, present him or her with a specific offer"). While each of these methods has its merits, the problem is that they are again relying on a merchandiser's prediction of the visitor's response. Inevitably, there will be many customers presented with products that are completely irrelevant based on what they need right now, because the promotion was based on past purchasing behavior or a specific campaign.

The Endeca Commerce Suite allows merchandisers to influence customers by creating business rules that automatically present the most relevant promotion based on the products a customer is viewing in that moment. Whether it's a promotion for products that are top sellers, top rated, top-cross sells, or clearance items, it will only show those that fit the criteria of a shopper's Google search, on-site search, or navigation state.

Dynamic Merchandising in the Shopper's Context

Newark.com controls product placement with dynamic results base on a customer's demonstrated intent. In the example below, Newark.com knows that a potential customer is looking for a new digital camera battery, so they showcase new and most popular or cross-sell complementary accessories to increase average order value. They can also highlight top selling items or top rated products to make customers feel safer choosing products vetted by the wisdom of the crowds – and spotlight buyer guides and articles from experts to give them the tools to fully evaluate the products.

Dynamic Merchandising – In Context of the Shopper's Path
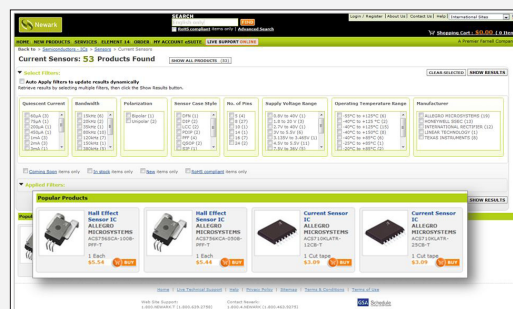
Endeca's dynamic merchandising is different – presenting merchandise always in the context of the shopper's path.

Newark.com has the ability to control product placement in combination with dynamic results based on the shopper's navigation state.

- **Up-sell** the newest product lines in context

- **Cross-sell** by showcasing related merchandise

- **Top-rated / Top-sellers** increase confidence and conversion

- **Relevant documentation** in the context of the shopper's journey help enhance the view

Endeca's unique dynamic merchandising capabilities let you tap into the breadth of all your available data and promote products based on margin, inventory data, and/or sales data, in addition to showcasing relevant documentation, buying guides, or reviews. All such opportunities enhance the relevance of your merchandising by tying them not only to each shopper's individual shopping interests and queries, but also to his or her customer profile or purchase history.

4. TRACK AND OPTIMIZE EVERY SHOPPER'S INTERACTION

Continuously Tune the User Experience

Once you introduce the previous three capabilities, merchandisers and other business users still need to tune and improve the customer experience to take advantage of additional gains in conversion and sales. Near the end of the quarter, perhaps you want to create rich topic pages around popular themes that automatically change as related data and content is added. Alternatively, you know the top searched items on your site cluster around specific brands or product lines, so you want to optimize the experience for customers when they land on that content.

The Endeca Commerce Suite allows business users to continuously change and improve the customer experience by creating targeted dynamic pages in the most strategic spots. Merchandisers start by identifying those pages where conversions are low, where bounce rates are high, or where a better experience would simply help the business. These could be pages created in response to specific search terms, categories, or intersection of product attributes.

Targeted Dynamic Pages Optimize High-Value Interactions
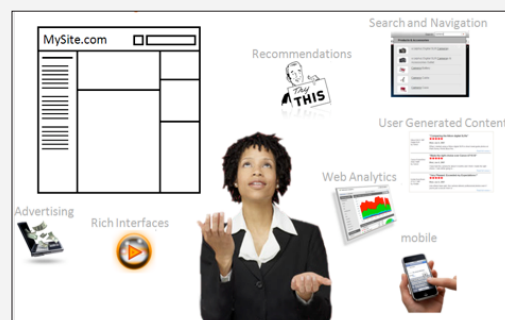
Page Builder helps merchandisers tune the experience

Create dynamic topic pages that integrate product information, user reviews, video, and merchandising zones to provide customers with content necessary to make an informed purchase. The ability to rapidly produce more effective landing pages without IT assistance allows business users to improve site effectiveness and launch new campaigns at a faster pace and lower cost.

Using Page Builder, part of the Merchandising Workbench, you can select a unique layout for any page, utilizing the breadth of your content, whether product information, recommendations, reviews, or video. Merchandisers can control exactly how and where this content is displayed by building the pages in a modular fashion, where each section of the page can feature different content driven by different rules. They can do this all without requiring hands-on support from IT, reducing the time to make site changes from weeks to minutes.

Optimized and Targeted Dynamic Pages

Endeca B2B customers use Page Builder to create dynamic topic pages that integrate product information, user reviews, video, and merchandising zones to provide customers with content necessary to make an informed purchase. The ability to rapidly produce more effective landing pages without IT assistance allows business users to improve site effectiveness and launch new campaigns at a faster pace and lower cost.

Increase Traffic and Conversions With Rich Content and Layout
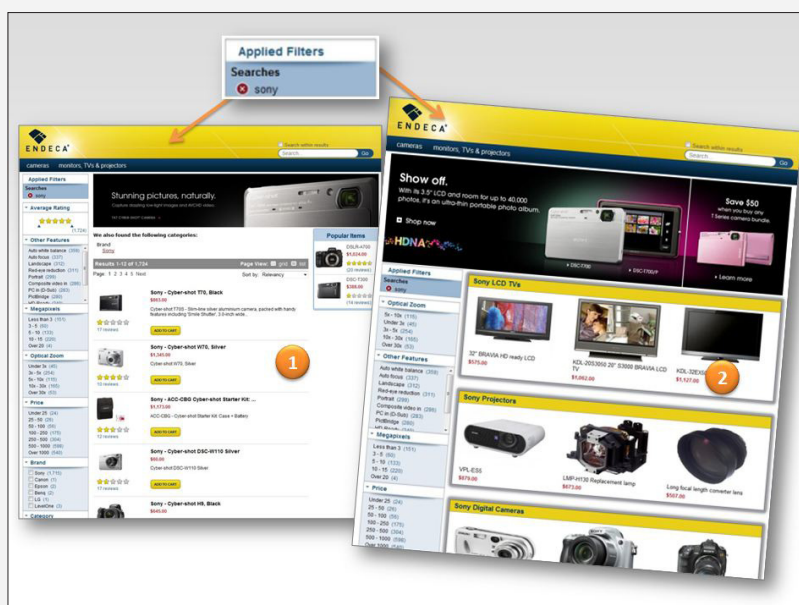
Using Page Builder, customers can identify search results pages that need improvement – either because they are the highest trafficked pages, or contain valuable merchandise but have low conversion. Using Page Builder, business users then automate the creation of templated pages of rich content that engage visitors with the right content, promotions, and layout. In the example above, you see a search results page for "Sony" transformed into a new, more engaging page triggered by specific action – such as search, refinement combination, sub-category, or a Google search.

All dynamic pages are not created equal. The ability to optimize certain pages based on search terms, navigation refinements, or the combination, and have granular control over the user experience on these pages to best meet the customer's needs, can provide significant uplift in conversions and bottom-line revenue.

5. INCREASE NATURAL TRAFFIC TO YOUR SITE

Trusted, Effective, Low-cost Source of Traffic

With more than 100 billion Web searches each month,[7] people have come to rely on web search engines as trusted sources of finding reliable information about products and services. What this means for you is that a significant percentage of your shoppers don't enter your store through your direct URL. Searches from Google, Yahoo!, or Microsoft's Bing help them skip the small talk and get right to the point in the dialogue that matters most to them. Therefore, first impressions count not only on your home page, but also from Web search.

Millions of Keyword Rich Pages

The challenge is that many traditional B2B Websites are built on a taxonomy that publishes category, sub-category pages, and product detail pages to the search engines, but nothing more. On these sites, few pages are built from the intersection of the actual product attributes that people are searching for on the Web, limiting the entry points on a site for visitors.

For example, a site might have a page that displays products at the intersection of "brand" and "category" but not necessarily for the complete criteria of a visitor's search. Sites built on eCommerce and Web CMS platforms miss the opportunity to leverage the potential of dynamic content and data, leaving millions of highly relevant intersections of information unknown to Web search engines – and shoppers.

Long-tail queries, usually about two to four words long, are particularly high value because they contain more information about exactly what the visitor is looking for.[8] Think of the dynamic, targeted pages you could be creating for these queries as "side doors" that bring customers immediately into the heart of a dynamic catalog – pages within the site that search engines (as well as other links such as blog entries and Twitter posts) would find, bypassing the home page, heading directly to more relevant content. The faster these side doors make visitors feel like they are at the right place for their information needs, the more likely it would be that the visitors convert. Not only do these keywords contain more specific information about the intent of the searcher, but they are also not as heavily contested by pay-per-click efforts, so you have a better chance of grabbing a top ranking.

The Endeca Commerce Suite makes it possible to create these side doors into more targeted and relevant pages by creating dynamic pages at the intersection of product attributes.[9] Endeca is able to take metadata about product attributes and automatically link products and content that share those attributes. It then creates unique pages at all the most relevant intersections of these attributes, with each page highlighting a very targeted group of products, reviews, or content. As a final step, the technology publishes sitemaps containing these dynamic pages – often thousands or millions of pages – to Google, Microsoft's Bing, and Yahoo!, with canonicalized URLs that are optimized to be more relevant and keyword rich.

SEARCHERS ARE IMPATIENT

"Roughly 50% of people who click to your page leave in 8 seconds" – so make sure your site not only draws users in from Google, Microsoft's Bing, and Yahoo!, but engages visitors immediately once they arrive .

MARKETING SHERPA
EYETRACKING LANDING PAGE STUDY
RESULTS, FEBRUARY 2005

As a result, your pages will tend to rank more highly for the very specific, long-tail searches that include these attributes – and shoppers landing on these pages will have a more relevant, targeted experience. Which means more visitors coming to your site and landing on more relevant content, increasing the likelihood of them making a purchase.

Targeted Pages Give Shoppers a Warm Welcome

Now that you have the major search engines pulling visitors through new side doors into your site, targeted dynamic pages built with Page Builder are the critical second step to ensuring you are putting your best foot forward once they arrive. Shoppers will make up their mind about the relevancy of your site to their needs within seconds, so you want to make sure you give a warm, personal welcome that is customized to each of them. A targeted, relevant greeting will go miles to improving shopper engagement and conversion.

Armstrong does a great job of welcoming customers who are looking for very specific types of products and help, from a contractor looking for the new light commercial flooring to a home owner researching the best in bio-based tile for their upcoming renovation. The point is, they can't possibly predict all the possible seasons, brands, and levels of experience of the visitors are coming to the site. They use Endeca's Page Builder to take some of the guess work out of the process.

Every Page is Your Homepage

Armstrong.com is able to rank #1 on a Google search for many high value phrases.

For example, a search on Google for "blue biobased tile" displays a link to Armstrong.com as the first result.

And, when you click through, the page content doesn't disappoint. Armstrong.com takes you directly to a targeted dynamic page that contains content targeted to a shopper's needs.

These examples represent the new SEO opportunity unique to the Endeca Commerce Suite. The ability to automatically create millions of new pages that are highly targeted and relevant will change how most customers enter your store. The result will be a site that attracts more visitors that ultimately turn into customers.

CONCLUSION

The most effective B2B retailers will be those that can deliver the most targeted and relevant experience to their customers at every step, based on their needs at that moment – a dynamic catalog. The Endeca Commerce Suite is the foundation for delivering a dynamic B2B catalog by focusing first on the dynamic pages where a customer is shaping a decision to buy. Because of the unique way Endeca technology automatically presents content based on the customer's actions, Endeca can help B2B retailers increase traffic and conversion rates far beyond what is possible with any combination of alternate technologies. Start taking advantage of your rich content and the expertise of your merchandisers today, and give your customers the type of experience they demand. In the process, you will create a site that attracts a higher number of visitors, and converts a higher number into customers that purchase more products, more frequently.

If you would like to learn how Endeca can help you create a dynamic B2B catalog on your site, contact us today at 617.674.6300.

You can also check out customer success stories and more best practices online at Endeca.com.

FOOTNOTES AND RECOMMENDED READING

[1] "Customer Experience Boosts Revenue," Bruce Temkin, Forrester Research, June 2009.

See also, "Best Practices In User Experience (UX) Design," Mike Gualtieri, Forrester Research, September 2009.

[2] "Website That Don't Support User Goals Waste Millions," Forrester Research, February 2010. See also, "Web leads stores as primary way online consumers research products," Internet Retailer, March 2010.

[3] (1) "State of Retailing Online 2009: Marketing", Forrester Research, June 2009. (2) "State of Retailing Online 2009: Merchandising and Web Optimization", Forrester Research, August 2009. (3) "State of Retailing Online 2009: Profitability, Economy, and Multichannel", Forrester Research, October 2009.

See also: "2010 US Online Retail Technology Investment Outlook", Forrester Research, January 2010.

[4] "State of Online Retailing," Shop.org Online Merchandising Workshop, July 2008 (conducted by Forrester Research).

[5] "Myths and Truths about Online Customer Reviews," Forrester Research, December 2008.

See also: Usefulness of content discovery tools, Jupiter Research richrelevance / Bazaarvoice Consumer Survey, November 2008: 77% of consumers found rating and reviews of products useful for researching and completing purchases.

Additionally, a recent study of online purchasing behavior showed that 51% of consumers (between the ages of 14-75) purchased a product based on an online recommendation. Data is from the December 2009 Deloitte report titled "State of the Media Democracy Fourth Edition: Select U.S. Highlights." 2,046 consumers ages 14-75 were surveyed online during September 11 - October 13, 2009.

Another study showed that of online resources that US Online Shoppers consider useful for researching or purchasing products, user ratings and reviews 73% and search engines ranked 86%. Data is from the February 2009 richrelevance and Bazaarvoice report titled "Online Retail: Driving Relevant Experiences" for which JupiterResearch surveyed over 800 US consumers in November and December 2008.

[6] Consumers are increasingly turning to online video as a reliable source of information gathering, with more than 146 million U.S. internet users (or 77% of the total U.S. Audience) viewing 12.7 videos in one month. eMarketer, "Online Video Growth Continues," January 2009.

[7] comScore, "Global Search Market Draws More than 100 Billion Searches Per Month," Worldwide Search Market Overview, July 2009. "The total worldwide search market boasted more than 131 billion searches conducted by people age 15 or older from home and work locations in December 2009, representing a 46-percent increase in the past year. This number represents more than 4 billion searches per day, 175 million per hour, and 2.9 million per minute. The U.S. represented the largest individual search market in the world with 22.7 billion searches, or approximately 17 percent of searches conducted globally. China ranked second with 13.3 billion searches, followed by Japan with 9.2 billion and the U.K. with 6.2 billion. Among the top ten global search markets, Russia posted the highest gains in 2009, growing 92 percent to 3.3 billion, followed by France (up 61 percent to 5.4 billion) and Brazil (up 53 percent to 3.8 billion)." Here's the link to that data: http://comscore.com/index.php//Press_Events/Press_Releases/2010/1/Global_Search_Market_Grows_46_Percent_in_2009

[8] The Longtail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More, Chris Anderson, New York: Hyperion, 2006.

Although the Long Tail theory has come under fire in the past few years, when it comes to web search queries the theory holds strong. Below are a few sources pointing to statistics that long tail traffic regularly produces over half of search traffic to large sites: Wired Blog Network, "Google's Long Tail", Feb 12, 2005, Read Write Web, "Google's Udi Manber", June 21, 2007, Hitwise Intelligence, "Sizing Up the Long Tail of Search", Nov 2008.

Making balanced recommendations on how to invest in the long tail, Anita Elberse in her article entitled "Should You Invest in the Long Tail" (Harvard Business Review, July-August 2008, page 98) advises online retailers to not put all their eggs in the "long tail" basket, and to still acquire and manage customer by using their most popular products. However, "if the goal is to cater to your heavy customers, broaden your assortment with more niche products. [Her] research shows that even when online assortments of [products] are enormous, and thus even the most frequent customers could easily satisfy their appetites with products in the top decile, those customer are disproportionately active in the tail. They want a wide assortment, so offering one helps attract and retain them."

[9] For more information about Endeca's SEO capabilities, visit Endeca.com/SEO