

Mercer achieves rapid ROI with the Google Search Appliance and the GSA Livelink Connector



AT A GLANCE

What they wanted to do:

- Raise employee productivity
- Provide universal search across all company repositories

What they did:

- Implemented the Google Search Appliance to attain financially valuable productivity improvements
- Deployed the GSA Livelink Connector

What they accomplished:

- Achieved a return on investment in a short period of time
 - Boosted productivity, increased intranet usage
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MERCER



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Business

Mercer is the global leader for trusted HR consulting and related financial advice, products, and services. An advisor to nine out of ten Fortune 100 companies, Mercer is the market share leader in retirement, health & benefits and investment consulting. In their work with clients, they make a positive impact every day by enhancing the financial and retirement security, health, talent, productivity, and effectiveness of the global workforce.

Mercer has more than 19,000 employees serving clients in over 180 cities and 40 countries and territories worldwide.

Challenge

Regardless of the project, Mercer's knowledge workers need to research existing data stores, create and share new insights, and disseminate best practices. Until recently, gaining easy access to information on Mercer's intranet, Mercer Link, presented challenges. There was no comprehensive search tool spanning all of the company's information repositories, and the search tools in place offered limited functionality and performance.

Ravi Kalakota, Mercer's CTIO, explained, "The inability to get quick, relevant search results was a key drain on employee productivity. It meant that we were not effectively leveraging one of our greatest assets: our unmatched intellectual capital. Implementing search solutions across the enterprise meets a critical knowledge management need."

Mercer Link consists of over 350,000 individual web pages, over 1.5 million documents stored within an enterprise content management system, and several related applications and databases. "Our employees found the legacy search engine very challenging to use," said Kim Groemling, Mercer Link's business manager. "Because of this, most avoided searching the intranet altogether."

The firm knew it could attain financially valuable productivity improvements from implementing high-quality search that would span both the company's web pages and its document repository. The benefits would be derived from consultants spending less time unsuccessfully searching for the right information and more time toward billable tasks.

"Mercer is very client-focused," adds Groemling. "It's critical to our business to respond quickly to client needs with the best possible solutions and intellectual capital. A fast, accurate search is a must in this environment."

Based on grassroots frustration and imperatives from company leadership, Mercer defined a new enterprise search strategy led by the Enterprise Architecture team. Haroon Suleman is the lead enterprise architect working to define the enterprise search roadmap across Mercer. He also led the Google proof of concept and implementation project to deliver an improved GSA-based intranet search solution.

“Even if our 19,000 employees save just a small fraction of time searching for information, then our increase in productivity pays off the Google solution very quickly.”

Haroon Suleman
Enterprise Architect, Global IT

ABOUT THE GOOGLE SEARCH APPLIANCE

The Google Search Appliance (GSA) is an integrated hardware and software search solution that brings the ease of Google search to intranets and websites of any size. Leveraging algorithms specifically designed for enterprise content, the Google Search Appliance provides users with fast, highly relevant results. Organizations can use the Google Search Appliance to make data on servers, content management systems, databases, and business applications instantly and securely available from a single familiar search box. More than 25,000 companies worldwide use Google Enterprise search solutions.

For more information, visit
www.google.com/gsa

Solution

The firm had several criteria in mind when selecting a solution, including fast, accurate search of multiple content sources, single sign-on for users, ease of use, cost-effectiveness, security, and scalability. Three search options made the final list. Ultimately, the Google Search Appliance won out on several fronts. It met and exceeded all of the criteria such as ease of use, accuracy, and total cost of ownership (TCO). In terms of total costs, the Google Search Appliance represented a significant savings in terms of license costs, hardware and software, and maintenance costs. Further, the GSA also provided a connector for Sharepoint – the content management solution Mercer is considering – and an immediate connector to the firm’s current document management system, Livelink. “The Google Search Appliance won hands-down,” says Suleman. “The fact that the Google Search Appliance provided a bridge to Livelink, and can provide future SharePoint connectivity if needed, was a major selling point.”

During the proof of concept, staff successfully conducted stress tests to ensure that the Livelink Connector would perform well under heavy query loads. They also deliberately created scenarios to test security. All went well, and the Google Search Appliance passed muster on all of the firm’s strict criteria.

As an early adopter of the GSA Livelink Connector, Mercer relied on Google to refine the solution and validate the connector before taking it live. “We were impressed with Google’s technical acumen and responsiveness,” said Ken Buckman, Mercer Link’s IT product manager. “It was reassuring how closely Google worked with us to address any issues.”

With a solid proof of concept in place, configuring the Google Search Appliance and the Livelink Connector for production was easy. “Everything was right there, ready to turn on,” explained Buckman. “It took some time to complete the full index, but that was related to the amount of data stored in our systems.”

Results

Immediately, the Mercer IT team began receiving excellent feedback on the new search solution. “People told us they were finding things they’d never seen before,” said Groemling. “They would ask: ‘Why wasn’t this on the intranet before?’ and we would tell them, ‘It was, but you just couldn’t find it.’”

From an IT standpoint, the Google Search Appliance and Livelink Connector have been simple to maintain and have resulted in reduced costs. “We would definitely recommend the Google Search Appliance. It has given us unprecedented access to information in legacy systems and its easy maintenance is hard to surpass,” Buckman said. He notes that he and his team can easily refine the solution to meet changing business needs. For example, the Mercer team can update synonyms, key matches, and keyword searches to help ensure that teams across the company get the information they need.

With lower IT costs and higher employee productivity, Mercer is rapidly achieving a substantial return on investment. “The Google Search Appliance has been a worthwhile investment,” said Suleman. “Even if our 19,000 employees save just a small fraction of time searching for information, then our increase in productivity pays off the Google solution very quickly.”

“For Mercer, the Google Search Appliance is a key catalyst for our business success, and an important part of our overall search strategy,” said Suleman.

