



Leading home furnishings retailer increases e-commerce revenue using SLI Systems' Learning Search and Site Champion

Site Champion:

Increased Carolina Rustica's site traffic by 25-30%.

The Results:

25-30% increase in revenue.



A Growing Inventory Calls For An Improved Site Search

In business since 1996, Carolina Rustica specializes in hand-crafted iron and wood furniture and lighting, including iron beds, bakers racks, bar stools, and dining tables. With an average 20% revenue increase each year, rapid growth had brought new challenges: They were adding approximately 100 new products each week to their online store, and this ever-growing inventory necessitated more powerful e-commerce site search functionality.

Carolina Rustica had tried a number of e-commerce platforms, but every one lacked a robust search function. Site visitors had to use exact search terms to find items, and the search didn't accommodate misspellings. Plus, those systems reduced site performance and clogged up server memory.

Most critically, the poor search performance – and the accompanying poor results – was driving away frustrated prospective customers. When shoppers can't find the desired item, they'll try another destination. And that's not an easy proposition to swallow, especially when you're competing with major furniture and lighting companies like Lamps Plus and Bellacor. Carolina Rustica needed every possible advantage to build and retain a loyal customer base.

Recognizing that poor site search performance was stifling revenues and impeding growth, Carolina Rustica turned to SLI Systems.

“Choosing SLI Systems was one of the most positive business decisions we made.”

Richard Sexton, President





A More Intuitive System

When company President Richard Sexton began looking for the right site search vendor, he found that several vendors offered good solutions. However, SLI Systems' Learning Search had more comprehensive tools, in addition to being fully managed and more cost-effective. He also liked how the Site Champion offering provides unique features for search engine optimization (SEO). "SLI's system felt more intuitive," says Sexton. "It ties in to search engine rankings, as well as its own search terms."

Sexton appreciates how Learning Search continually learns from user searches, delivering more refined results over time. This "self-service" aspect allows Carolina Rustica's staff to devote their time to other revenue-generating functions, such as online marketing. In fact, marketing becomes easier. That's because Learning Search records all search history, so the staff know which search terms and products are most popular, reducing guesswork and allowing for more targeted online promotions.

Once shoppers arrive on the site (www.carolinarustica.com), they don't need to know exactly what they're seeking. Learning Search cross-references the database by popularity. So if a visitor searches for "ceiling fan," Learning Search will show the two most popular fans by two different vendors, along with the rest of the fans in its inventory, in order from the most to least popular. Combine this with SLI's intuitive search technology, and people are more likely to make a purchase – and to become returning customers.

A 25% Increase In Conversions And Revenue

Before implementing SLI's Learning Search and Site Champion, Carolina Rustica offered approximately 5,000-6,000 SKUs. Now, because SLI makes it easy to add new products, they can offer 15,000 SKUs from 70 manufacturers (account for multiple options from the manufacturers and you get 10 million SKUs).

But what about tracking sales? On the web, conversion is a critical measurement of success. By implementing Learning Search, along with improving the site's navigation and creating more specific landing pages, conversion for 2006 increased by 25%.

Furthermore, Site Champion, which automatically improves search engine rankings of product listings, has increased Carolina Rustica's site traffic by 25-30%. Site Champion search results also integrate into Google Adwords campaigns, making it easy to provide search-specific landing pages. The results: 0.5% increase in conversion for a 25-30% increase in revenue.

A Key Factor In 45% Company Growth

Revenue for 2006 was \$3.7 million, up from \$2.5 million in 2005. Online sales now account for 80-90% of the company's total revenue. And while SLI Systems is not solely responsible for the increase, they have been a major driving force. No wonder why Sexton says, "Choosing SLI Systems was one of the most positive business decisions we made in 2006!"

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