



SurfStitch

SurfStitch rides a wave of success with an online solution that blows its competitors out of the water.

Business problem:

- SurfStitch's site search solution led customers down 'dead ends' and turned out too many 'no results' pages.
- The existing site search capabilities didn't support SurfStitch's vision to provide customers with a first-rate online shopping experience.

Solution:

- SLI Systems' advanced Learning Search and Site Champion solutions.

Result:

- Average time on site up 25%
- Average sales have grown by 15%
- Average page position for organic searches up 30%
- 90% reduction in 'no results' pages

Standard site search fails to make waves for SurfStitch

Despite its humble beginnings in the backyard shed of one of its founders, SurfStitch has become an online Aussie favourite, stocking over 15,000 products and over 190 brands including Billabong, Rip Curl, Volcom, Rusty, Insight, Nixon, Von Zipper, Element and Tigerlily. From surfboards, fins and tail pads to bikinis, boardshorts and handbags, SurfStitch stocks everything its customers could possibly want or need to hit the streets and beach. With so much to showcase, it's no wonder SurfStitch wanted a site to blow customers away with, but standard industry fare just didn't cut it.

"When we went live three years ago, we didn't just want to stock the strongest range of surf gear in the country – we wanted to give our customers an incredible online shopping experience. We really pride ourselves on being the best we can be, and that means having a site that's professional, well-crafted and user friendly. But the out-of-the box site search solution we started with just wasn't cutting it," explained Lex Pedersen, Managing Director.

"What we had in the beginning wasn't as functional, search-able and friendly as it could have been, despite the fact that we invested time and money engaging one of the biggest site vendors out there. It didn't ensure people found the products they were looking for and many customers were searching for items and getting 'no results' pages. It just wasn't good enough and we needed a change.

During our search for a solution we came across SLI Systems. What really struck us about the local SLI team was their focus on not just making the site better for our customers, but also making life easier for us. They were solution-focused, but also provided incredible customer service. We had been prepared for a few issues and headaches when it came to implementing new, more sophisticated site search technology but SLI Systems provided us with such a complete service that the headache just never happened. Within six weeks of our first meeting they delivered an amazing site search mock up for us to try internally, allowing us to use our own branding so we could get a real feel for how the end product would work for us. It was perfect; we didn't need to look for any other options. We knew we'd found exactly what we needed," continued Mr Pedersen.

A 90% reduction in 'no results' pages swells sales for SurfStitch

"It's only been a few months since we implemented SLI's site search solutions, and the results are amazing", says Mr Pedersen. "Basically, Learning Search and Site Champion have eliminated dead-ends for our customers. Site visitors are no longer finding themselves lost or in places they don't want to be. Results pages are comprehensive and people are giving us great feedback."

In addition to experiencing a 90% reduction on 'no results' pages, average sales are up 15% for SurfStitch and site visitors are spending 25% more time browsing. "This is especially great for us to see, as it means customers are enjoying our site much more than they were before, and we're proud of that," added Mr Pedersen. "But it's not just the customers who are getting the benefit of this though – it's changed everything for us at the merchandising end too. Just like in a store, we need to organise and re-arrange items so we can promote certain things on certain pages and in special ways. SLI's solutions allow us to respond to site activity at the drop of a hat and display the most searched products in prominent locations. And it's just so easy to manage – we never have a problem and don't need a technical person to manage search updates or use the system. It's really intuitive."

Site search that learns and champions a first-rate customer experience

Learning Search is a site search solution that 'learns' from past site search activity. It does this by tracking visitors' search behaviour, and then uses that data to deliver results that are based on popularity. With an online store like SurfStitch that sells thousands of products, this ability to return the most relevant search results is paramount. More and more people now use site search almost exclusively to find what they are looking for, and they expect to find it quickly. Learning Search delivers the results people are looking for on the first page 95% of the time. This means happy visitors, loyal customers and increased sales.

"When we started thinking about site search solutions, one thing we really wanted to make sure of was that whatever we implemented was integrated into the site and had the same look-and-feel," said Mr Pederson. "The design of our site has always been a priority for us. We have always aimed for a slick, professional presence and needed a search solution that was flexible enough to complement our high design expectations. SLI Systems has given us this, and more. What we were also really hoping for – but didn't expect to find – was a site

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search solution that didn't just provide popular and relevant results. We wanted something that would offer suggestions for products to site visitors and show pictures of relevant products, functions that would really stand out and add value to our search offering."

Small changes cause huge ripples beyond site search

SLI's integrated Learning Search and Site Champion solutions work with the language of customers, the real words customers are using to find what they're looking for – not just what you think they are looking for. And as your products change, you have the control to add or delete terms accordingly. "These solutions are incredibly flexible in the sense that they can do many things, it's not a limited service" adds Mr Pedersen. "They haven't just made it easier for our existing customers and visitors to find what they're looking for, they've also made it easier for new customers to find us online." Site Champion makes this possible by providing links that allow search engines to crawl dynamically created landing pages. Each linked page is optimised for the search term, appearing in the title, link and naturally throughout the page. Since implementing the new solutions, SurfStitch's average page position for organic searches has improved by 30%.

For SurfStitch, using customer behaviour data to optimise search terms has changed the way business is done for the better. Mr Pedersen said, "We can back up our marketing decisions with hard results in ways we couldn't before. SLI's solutions give us data that shows us whether our tactics are working, and we can act on it straight away. Every time we change the site, we review the statistics to see how it's improved or affected traffic, how people are searching, and review the results. Really, what these solutions have done for us is to make merchandising fun, easy and highly effective. SLI Systems has given us a premium site search solution that is worth every dollar and meets our own high standards. In just a few months it has turned or site search functionality around. It's been perfect for our site and our business."

SITE SEARCH THAT LEARNS • MERCHANDISING • USER-GENERATED SEO

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