



TiVo speeds customer support, reduces call center costs, and accelerates product time-to-market with the Google Search Appliance

AT A GLANCE

What they wanted to do:

- Help engineers become more productive
- Increase customer support efficiency and accuracy
- Enable “self serve” information-gathering on their website

What they did:

- Deployed several Google Search Appliance units to make site-based content easier to find and use
- Integrated Google search on both their website and their intranet

What they accomplished:

- Reduced support call volumes and call duration by up to 10%
 - Enabled 10,000 successful website searches each day
 - Made engineering information “findable,” speeding product time-to-market
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Business Description

In 1997, TiVo created a new product and service category by developing the world’s first digital video recorder (DVR). Today, TiVo continues to revolutionize the way people watch and access home entertainment by making the TiVo DVR the focal point of the digital living room – a center for sharing television, movies, video downloads, music, and other content. Based in Alviso, California, TiVo has operations on continents and serves four million subscribers.

The Challenge

TiVo provides extensive help and support to customers – many of them trying a new technology for the first time. And, because TiVo customer support serves some four million subscribers, and countless prospective users, delivering this support is no small feat. “There are many different ways to hook up a TiVo box, depending on whether customers have cable, satellite, external storage drives, wireless adapters, or other variables,” says IT Knowledge Operations Manager Doug Meier. “Whether people are new or existing customers, they often need assistance. Our three call centers receive a large volume of inquiries.”

One key to TiVo’s success is keeping support costs low while providing exceptional customer service. On its public-facing website, potential subscribers can find information about the service and what differentiates a TiVo from other DVRs. This website provides detailed setup and upgrade instructions based on information contained within the company’s custom-developed customer support knowledge database – information that could speed customer decisions and enhance satisfaction, but only if it could be found. But the site’s open source search function was slow and returned poorly matched results.

“With the Google Search Appliance, we’re helping people accomplish their jobs more efficiently. That promotes faster time-to-market and translates to reduced support costs and a better customer experience.”

TiVo wanted to make the most of its knowledgebase to boost call center productivity and help educate existing subscribers without burdening support. They calculated that reducing labor costs in their three call centers by even a small percentage would yield significant savings. According to Front-End Web Developer Robin Down, “Our call center agents spend nearly 90% of their time looking for information.” TiVo saw the potential for effective search to make this happen, and to increase productivity in other departments. Engineers, for example, relied on the open source tool to search a variety of repositories, as well as systems containing software builds and other technical information. Unfortunately, the tool didn’t yield satisfactory results. All of this pointed to the need for improved enterprise search. “Our user experience group conducted a survey, and the top request was to improve search functionality,” says Down.

“Once we set up a Google Search Appliance, we pretty much don’t need to touch it again. It requires close to zero maintenance.”

Doug Meier

IT Knowledge Operations Manager

ABOUT THE GOOGLE SEARCH APPLIANCE

The Google Search Appliance is an integrated hardware and software search solution that extends Google’s award-winning search technology to websites of all kinds, including corporate sites and intranets. Organizations can use 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 20,000 companies worldwide use Google’s enterprise search technology.

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

The Solution

TiVo considered several requirements when selecting their search platform: a low price point, easy installation and maintenance, and the ability to customize search with internal and external data sets. The company also needed a system that would search both public HTML pages and the company’s internal knowledgebase.

“We looked at modifying our existing search,” recalls Down. “Then we saw the Google Search Appliance and its price, ease of use, and flexibility. We surveyed a cross-functional team and the consensus was not ‘What if?’ but ‘How soon?’”

The team initially deployed two GSA platforms – one for the public-facing site and one for the knowledgebase. “Within less than a month, we deployed the GSA for our public-facing site,” says Meier. “Implementing Google search for our internal CMS took just six weeks. The simplicity and speed of setting up the GSA is impressive.”

Based on its success with its first GSAs, TiVo has since deployed two more. Meier and Down were able to add new data collections and test the GSA on them to make sure everything would work before paying for another unit. As Down sees it, “Google provides an easy way to expand our search solution while minimizing costs and risks.”

The GSA is now used to search HTML pages for the external-facing site. Internally, the GSA crawls various systems across the TiVo enterprise, including the CMS, an internal employee directory, a system that monitors statistics related to the TiVo service, as well as Samba and Windows file shares.

Out of the box, the Google Search Appliance delivered relevant results with blazing speed. The team was able to customize the solution to restrict searches of sensitive engineering content and other confidential information. They also fine-tuned results for customer service agents to help them hone in on the right content faster.

“With the Google Search Appliance, set-up was easy and we were able to search many different content stores, without having to migrate information to our CMS,” explains Down. “It’s a major time savings for us.”

The Benefits

Right away, the TiVo team started receiving positive feedback. Engineers were able to find the right information faster, contributing to accelerated time to market. Customer support reps noted lower call volumes and reduced duration for each call, due to the ability to find answers to customer questions up to 10% faster. “Our internal systems became much more effective when we integrated it with the GSA technology,” Meier says, “and people visiting the public-facing TiVo site are conducting nearly 10,000 successful searches per day.”

“While everyone was happy with the new search capabilities, our customer support reps were jubilant,” says Meier. “They were amazed at the GSA’s speed and accuracy.”

Meier reports that the Google Search Appliance is also easy to maintain with limited IT resources. “Once we set up a Google Search Appliance, we pretty much don’t need to touch it again,” says Meier. “It requires close to zero maintenance.”

Since implementing the Google Search Appliance, customer service reps and engineers alike are saving substantial time, and complaints related to finding information have stopped. “Helpdesk tickets regarding our internal CMS search are now non-existent,” says Meier. “With the Google Search Appliance, we’re helping people accomplish their jobs more efficiently. That promotes faster time-to-market and translates to reduced support costs and a better overall customer experience.”

