



Reimagining the Search Experience

Executive Summary

Search is foundational to a wide variety of experiences. The ability to instantly find relevant information and gain insights in large amounts of data from a variety of sources is key to organizational productivity. The data that organizations accumulate contain key insights that make employees more productive and effective. A holistic search approach is the key that unlocks insight from data.

The reasons we search remain constant: we are looking for insight, information, people, and answers. Today, what we search for has grown to include a rapidly increasing amount of structured and unstructured data from a multitude of internal and external sources including databases, websites, communities, applications, and file shares.

Google has taught us how useful and powerful search can be and has also set high expectations for simplicity and ease of use, which is why the phrase “Google it” is now a part of our everyday language.

Each day knowledge workers around the world waste an enormous amount of time searching for information across corporate intranets and other enterprise infrastructure looking for information needed to perform their jobs productively. The same workers who can pull out a smartphone and immediately locate a nearby restaurant, or compare hotel prices around the globe, find that this type of internet search simply is not available on their corporate intranet or within the business systems they use, nor does it allow them to include external sources in their search results. Instead, they are required to go to multiple separate locations to search and then consolidate the results.

Various analysts and consultants have put price tags on the lost productivity of inadequate search:

- McKinsey estimates the average employee loses about 1.8 hours a day—nearly 20% of the workweek—searching and gathering information.
- IDC places the figure at 2.5 hours a day—nearly 30% of their work week—searching for data that should be at their fingertips.

You can run your own multipliers for number of employees and hourly costs, but the losses from inefficient searching is staggering – and a hidden pain point.

If we think about employees as customers and apply the same ideas and techniques used for customer engagement to employees, then we can have a meaningful and positive impact on them. Engaged employees:

- Are passionate about their jobs.
- Are committed to the organization.
- Put discretionary effort into what they do every day.

Effective search can act as a facilitator so that “you only look one place” (YOLOP) to find the information you need to do your job. YOLOP can address many of the productivity issues employees are facing. It makes search significantly easier and faster.

This paper discusses a few topics that BA Insight technology makes possible.

Work Hubs

Team members in a sales organization will use vertical applications such as Salesforce to manage and access information about customers, companies, and people. They will also often use a document management system which contains other content that is required for them to do their jobs and collaborate with others such as SharePoint Online and Teams, and they may use Outlook for email.

So, in this example, their daily lives require them to go to four or more places, perform four different searches, in four different search locations, all with their own features and capabilities, to help them find needed information.

Deploying a search solution to act as a work hub to help employees find the information needed to do their jobs faster and better is critical to a productive and engaged organization. Historically, we think about this work hub as a centralized place to go. It is kind of a destination, and in the past, most often their destinations have consisted of an enterprise search solution built on SharePoint on-premises, or in the last few years, SharePoint Online. But why continue doing it that way? Why not make enterprise search a work hub that is located directly within each application? Why not give them the ability to access information from all resources, internal and external, from the enterprise systems where they work? Why wouldn't we want to have the "most used" business systems provide the "user improved" search results from the applications they are in while also providing access to other information that resides in other places?

BA Insight customers are modernizing the search experience by bringing:

1. Natural language query/search to each application.
2. Search as you type, recent searches, and recommendations based on previous searches.
3. Search analytics so we know what users searched for and what the results were. Information that can help administrators improve results.
4. Autoclassification to tag information independent of where it resides, making it findable.
5. Ability to preview documents, and with a single search, find the document(s) and the pages within the document(s) that contain what users are looking for, independent of where they and the information reside.

We hear from customers that their Salesforce users complain about the Salesforce search experience. The same goes for Teams users, Outlook users, and ServiceNow users. How long do you think it will be before investments will be made to improve the search experience within all of these applications so that they will more closely resemble internet search?

Let us reimagine search and make it available in as many places as we can, searching as many locations as we can. After all, we are well into the 21st century and should move on from the centralized ideas about enterprise search and start thinking about work hubs everywhere.

The Power of AI-Assisted Enterprise Search

AI is everywhere. In fact, it is the new hotspot for venture capitalists. At BA Insight, we have and are making continued investments in applying AI to internal search problems- whether it is helping to bring things like natural language query to Salesforce and SharePoint or using it to extract insights from documents stored in business systems. So, instead of investing in developing AI technologies, we take advantage of billions of dollars invested by behemoths like Microsoft and Amazon, or the innovation provided by open-source community, by integrating with them and applying AI to search.

Below are some examples of how we apply the AI integrations:

- **Natural Language**

For years, the Web has been proving out the ability to effectively search using natural language and asking questions instead of keyword search. Now you can provide the same capability to employees. In fact, through our Work Hub strategy, we can bring Natural Language search to many systems including Salesforce, SharePoint Online, ServiceNow, Microsoft Dynamics, Microsoft Word, and even intranet platforms like Akumina and LiveTiles. It provides one web-like interface that speaks your language and is available in many places. The beauty of the approach is that the system is trainable and can be taught your organization's language, responding accurately.

- **Natural Language Processing**

Natural Language processing is excellent in helping categorize information automatically, suggesting meta tags for documents, and inferring relationships.

- **Image and Video Identification**

Ability to find the video that has the information you need, get you to the place in the video, or find the document because the image in the document is the answer to your question.

- **Making Things Relevant Through Recommendations and Suggestions**

On the web, when you start typing, it starts acting. Rather than waiting for the user to express an intent, it proactively predicts intent. A user receives recommendations based on a variety of data that has been captured. Analytics/Machine Learning-based recommendations and suggestions are a welcomed capability for internal search implementations.

Actionable Search

Enterprise Search has come a long way, but it needs to become actionable.

With the help of many visionary organizations, we have spent years and invested millions of dollars in R&D to make enterprise search much more like web search. We now have over 90 connectors, make search available anywhere, anytime, on any device; and we have tools that improve relevancy and personalization to help users quickly find the information they need. Customers refer to our search solutions as “Google-Like”.

However, once users find the information, they still have to go to the source system to make even the simplest changes. This could be something like uploading a file to a document management system, changing the attributes of a file, submitting a request for time off, changing the status of a support case, and many other actions. This is not the case with web-based search. Consider this scenario:

You decide you want to buy a new television, so you start doing some research on the web. You could do this from any device – phone, tablet, or computer. Using Google, you type in the keyword “tv” and receive results from many sources. This includes Amazon, Sony, LG, Samsung, Vizio, Best Buy, and more. The results on the first page show the most relevant and accurate results. When clicking on one of the relevant links, you then go to a site with more details, where you can refine your criteria. You could refine by price, brand, size, reviews, etc.

This process helps you quickly find the information you are seeking, after which you will be able to immediately “purchase” it. The action of purchasing it is an extension of the search experience as opposed to a separate action by itself.

We advocate that enterprise search needs follow the lead of web search and extend search to become actionable by taking advantage of hyperautomation platforms that make that possible.

About BA Insight

BA Insight provides connector-based, actionable search solutions that solve internal enterprise search challenges by deploying powerful, web-like search within your existing infrastructure, maximizing the value of intranet and digital transformation projects. By bringing the internet to the enterprise, we provide the ability to instantly find personalized, relevant information and gain insights from the vast amount of data that resides across a variety of content sources, a key to improving organizational productivity and morale. Our software connects millions of knowledge seekers to critical information worldwide in a variety of industries at customers such as Amgen, Baker McKenzie, Bombardier, Chevron, Equinor, Gilead, Hatch, JM Smucker, Merck, Nvidia, Oglethorpe Deakins, ResMed, and Rio Tinto.