



Cambridge-based Endeca has pioneered a search solution that even Google is lauding. Guided Navigation will play an increasingly large role in the future of search, and Endeca is holding the key.

—"Beyond Googling," William Quist, AlwaysOn, April 20, 2005

Making Searches Work at Work

By [Michael Totty](#)

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Business these days is supposed to thrive on information. So why is information still so difficult to find when it's buried inside a company?

After all, Google can scour billions of pages on the World Wide Web, and deliver pages that pretty closely match most queries. But try looking on the company intranet for something as simple as the deadline for enrolling in next year's health plan. You might find links to documents describing the 2002 plan, or -- depending on how you phrased the search -- nothing at all.

The reason, search experts say, is that rummaging around inside a company's repository of electronic documents is a lot tougher than hunting for something on the Internet. Luckily, enterprise search, as it's known, is getting better -- in part because savvy Web surfers are demanding that their search results at work should be at least as good as what they can get online.

"Google has set the bar," says Whit Andrews, a research vice president at Gartner Inc. Companies want to know, he says, "how do I make my intranet work like Google does?"

The Problem at Work

Why is looking for something inside the company so hard? For one thing, corporate information can be locked in a variety of formats -- from emails to text files to structured database files. In addition, searchers' goals at work are different: They're either looking for a single piece of information that they know exists, like a contact's phone number, or collecting a comprehensive view of a particular topic -- say, everything on various departments' efforts to comply with Sarbanes-Oxley requirements. In

contrast, while some Web searches might be for a specific document or title, in most cases, people are searching for things like "restaurants in New York City" or "chocolate cake recipe," where they can expect to find multiple sources of information.

Also, inside a company, it isn't easy for software to automatically decide which documents are most relevant to a particular search. Google and other Web search engines determine relevance by analyzing the complex structure of links to other Web pages, but those links are rare in the corporate-information world.

Then there's the question of security. On the Web, everything is, in theory, available for anyone to see. Inside a company, it might be desirable for the entire sales staff to find contacts for prospective customers, but not to see the unreleased quarterly sales results for the entire company.

Successful search engines "are the ones that can address the types of complexity within the enterprise," says Hadley Reynolds, vice president and director of research for Boston-based Delphi Group, a consulting and research company.

In some cases the solution is simple: Get Google. Since 2002, Mountain View, Calif.-based Google Inc. has sold an enterprise-search appliance, a low-cost network computer loaded with a special version of its popular Web-search engine. The device uses a variant of the company's PageRank algorithm to deliver relevant search results. But in addition to links to other Web pages, it looks at the users' search patterns: how often a particular document is selected, how long it is viewed, and how quickly the user switches to another file (suggesting that the first choice wasn't useful).

BEA Systems Inc., based in San Jose, Calif., wanted a search tool that would work with both its public Web site and its employee intranet, and it chose Google when it needed to meet a sudden deadline for upgrading its Web site. Deployment was quick: Yogish Pai, BEA's chief technology officer of information technology, says he decided to go with Google at 10 one morning, and the appliance was plugged in and running by that same night.

Someone searching for "vacation days" can select from a group of tabs -- for the Web, human resources, sales and marketing and other departments. The user can then refine the search further from a pull-down menu.

Getting More Complex

But for more complex search problems, companies are looking for something other than Google.

National Instruments Corp., an Austin, Texas, seller of computer hardware and software, wanted to replace its four different tools for both internal and external search. So late last year, it selected Fast Search & Transfer, based in Oslo, Norway, for its internal search.

In testing the Fast search tool, John Graff, National Instruments' vice president of marketing, discovered why enterprise search can pose security problems. He directed the engine toward one of the company's internal servers "to see what would show up," he says. What showed up, among other things, were drafts of employee performance reviews and other sensitive documents. As a result, he's limiting the use of the software to servers containing publicly available information.

For many large companies, no single tool can satisfy all their needs. At Dutch bank ABN Amro Holding NV, the London-based group that supplies legal support to its investment-banking arm uses a search tool from Autonomy Inc. for its research activities. The tool pulls information from a variety of internal and external sources -- including Web news feeds and government sites -- to deliver a comprehensive set of documents on a given topic.

While Autonomy has proved useful for conducting legal research, when ABN Amro in Amsterdam went looking for a search platform for the bank's 400 corporate intranets, it selected Endeca Technologies Inc., Cambridge, Mass. Endeca pioneered the use of "guided navigation" in enterprise search; in addition to the usual list of search results, it organizes results into categories that can help narrow the hunt. Searching for information about corporate-gifts policies in ABN Amro's online policy instruction manual -- made up of more than 600 volumes -- might deliver hundreds of results. Guided navigation lets the user narrow the search -- by the year the document was published, the country of origin or the relevant business unit -- making the results more manageable.

"We regard our information as very valuable," says Alex van Os de Man, an ABN Amro information-management project leader. "But it depreciates if we cannot find it or if you have to do a lot of site hopping to find it."

-By [Michael Totty](#), Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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