

Nashville Upgrades Their Citizen Experience with Improved Site Search



About

As one of America's fastest growing cities, the Nashville area is home to more than 1.9 million people and 40,000 businesses. When citizens are looking for information and updates about the services they need, questions they have about government actions, issues that need attention and events they want to attend, they turn to the Nashville.gov website. Nashville.gov receives more than 30 million pageviews each year which makes the city's website a critical resource to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of their citizens, provide superior support and improve transparency.

Need

Nashville launched a website redesign project to make it easier for citizens to find the information and services they need. One of the key takeaways that emerged from the redesign project was the need to improve site search. This led the team to seek a site search solution to complement their new service-centric Drupal website.

Why SearchStax?

Nashville was already a SearchStax customer and has been using SearchStax Managed Solr with their website since 2018 when they migrated search from Google Search Appliance to Solr.

When Nashville was looking for a site search solution to go along with the website redesign project, Net Tango recommended using the recently released SearchStudio solution. After receiving a product demo, the Nashville team realized that SearchStudio would more than meet their needs, and it came with the ideal combination of features, affordability and track record.

Situation

The City of Nashville's previous Nashville.gov website was outdated and was not meeting the needs of an increasingly digital population. In addition, the technologies supporting the website were out-of-date and no longer supported.

In 2018, the City embarked on a multi-year website redesign project. They started with a user engagement project to gather feedback and identify the key needs for the future website using a public survey and focus groups with various stakeholders.

The results of the survey identified that users were extremely unhappy with the current site search experience. In fact, some citizens would conduct a Google search to find what they were seeking instead of using the search on the Nashville.gov website. Plus, the Nashville team had limited insights into what visitors were searching for or what content was most valuable to them.

Solution

While the website implementation on Drupal began in 2019, the SearchStudio component was not started until near the end of the project in May 2021.

During implementation, the Nashville team was able to take advantage of the SearchStax Drupal Module which accelerated the integration of search with Drupal. The implementation team was going to design their own search page, but discovered that they could save weeks of development time by using the SearchStax UX Accelerator to quickly deliver a search page that leverages the out-of-the-box features of SearchStudio.

The implemented search solution is complex because it searches and crawls five different websites in addition to the Drupal website including, the legislation portal and archive, property assessment records, the city's COVID information website and the customer service portal. The SearchStax team designed a comprehensive solution to crawl and bring all of the disparate data into site search.

Results

The new website launched in August 2021 and features fast and flexible site search incorporating results from Nashville.gov, hubNashville, the COVID information website, the new Legislation Portal, the existing legislation archive and the Property Assessor's website.

The search results can be filtered by content type, organization and website, and can be sorted by date or relevance. In order to improve the value of search results, Nashville has already implemented over 100 Promotions or keyword matches to improve the search results for top searches without having to involve IT. The Promotions allow the Nashville team to push the most popular content to the top of the search results which improves the search experience for citizens.

The team now has access to analytics that they didn't have before including insights to the top searches, searches with no results and the most clicked content. The search analytics dashboard also provides graphs with the average click position, click-through rates and searches with clicks. With over 3,000 searches conducted and over 1,000 content items viewed each day, the team is compiling a rich trove of data from which they will derive insights to identify gaps in content and further optimize the search experience.

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I can't say enough how amazed I am that the SearchStax team pulled off the implementation and made site search work the way we want it to work

Randall Williams
Manager of Web Based Services

