

The Oracle logo is displayed in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

Case Study

The Ulta Beauty logo features the word "ULTA" in a large, bold, black font, with "BEAUTY" in a smaller, spaced-out font below it. A black swoosh underline is positioned beneath "ULTA".

The Challenge:

Delivering a Consistent and Robust Customer Experience for Both Browse and Search Navigation

ULTA Beauty, a major beauty retailer in the United States, offers over 20,000 beauty products across the categories of cosmetics, fragrance, hair care, skincare, bath and body products, and salon styling tools. The retailer has excellent positioning in organic search results; however the business team wanted to enhance the customer experience by integrating the site search engine, which was implemented on a subdomain into the main site.

The taxonomy associated with navigating across the assortment on the website needed simplification to improve the browsing experience.

Jeff Hamm, director of E-Commerce, and Michelle Pacynski, vice president of IT—Customer Facing Systems at ULTA Beauty led the initiative to replace the third-party site search platform. The objective was to find a solution

that would deliver consistent results for both search and browse navigation and to have the flexibility to easily adjust the experience without involving the IT department.

“The decision to replace the existing search was in response to a need to provide a seamless customer experience throughout the site and for this team to maintain control,” said Pacynski.

Key solution requirements included:

- Consistent navigation across search and browse
- Faceted navigation with the ability to expose sub-categories
- Robust auto-complete
- Business user control over the online shopping experience
- Related searches
- Product ranking and priority rules

The Solution:

The project was bigger than just implementing a new site search solution. Hamm and Pacynski also led the initiative to fully leverage standard ATG capabilities for presenting dynamic assets in addition to implementing Oracle Endeca (currently known as Oracle Commerce Experience Manager) as the site search solution.

One of the project goals was to leverage the expertise of internal resources and external partners to streamline the implementation and ensure best practices were followed. The Oracle Endeca professional services team from Thanx Media was selected as the partner for the pre-holiday 2013 implementation of the site search solution and for the spring 2014 implementation of Experience Manager.

“Elevating the e-commerce experience for our guests is a priority,” Hamm said. “We teamed up with Thanx Media to help us make that experience more seamless with their experience and ability to meet our time-to-market needs.”

Thanx Media specializes in assisting companies integrate robust site search solutions such as Oracle Endeca and their professional services team brings over 75 years of combined experience to every project.

Thanx Media’s Oracle Endeca professional services include:

- Requirements workshops: In-depth discussions are held with the business and technical teams designed to map out the best way to leverage Oracle Endeca within each e-commerce infrastructure.
- Project scoping: Detailed project plans are developed to guide the team through the project and stay on track.
- Architectural design: Detailed development and integration documents are created and shared to ensure optimal performance.
- Development: All hands-on development can be performed by the Thanx Media team or knowledge can be transferred through a combined effort with a business’s internal team.
- Implementation: All implementation activities, before, during and after are fully supported by the professional services team.

The navigation experience is now consistent between search and browse, product information is in sync, the ULTA Beauty team has complete control over the browse and search navigation and can implement changes internally.

The Results:

A condensed project timeframe, which began in February 2013, included a complete front-end redesign and the implementation of Oracle Endeca's site search solution

"The Thanx Media team played a key role in helping us understand and implement best practices during the project," said Pacynski. "Through our collaboration, we were able to stay on track and meet deadlines."

In order to mitigate risks associated with rolling out a new platform, ULTA Beauty ran dual sites and leveraged its content delivery network to distribute traffic between the old and new versions. Throughout the month of September, the percentage of traffic driven to the site ramped up with the upgraded ATG capabilities and the new Oracle Endeca site search solution.

The two sites ran parallel through the month of September and they fully cut over to the new site in October. After a successful fourth quarter and Holiday 2013 shopping season, ULTA Beauty proceeded with the implementation of Experience Manager to further improve the customer experience and bring more of the control into the hands of the business users.

The approach that was used to implement Oracle Endeca was also used to implement Experience Manager. The Thanx Media team was leveraged to help understand the power of the solution and to accelerate the creation and implementation of new cartridges.

"The Thanx Media team was extremely helpful in defining the purpose of the tools from both a business and technical perspective," said Hamm.

A healthy holiday shopping season as well as sales growth in the first quarter reflected an improved customer experience with the site redesign and Oracle Endeca implementation. In addition to improving the customer experience, the business team is now less reliant on IT and has the tools required to quickly and efficiently update product merchandising and navigation.



ABOUT

Thanx Media

Thanx Media is an enterprise technology company delivering enterprise-grade e-commerce software in small, medium and large. Thanx Media's professional services team has over 75 years of combined experience working with Oracle Endeca (currently known as Oracle Commerce Experience Manager) to deliver an ideal software solution that can transform site search and merchandising into a customer experience management platform. In addition to site search, Thanx Media provides omni-channel e-commerce platform, product data management, data collection solutions that enable businesses to deliver a valuable customer experience. Thanx Media is privately held. For more information, visit www.thanxmedia.com.

ABOUT

ULTA Beauty:

ULTA Beauty is the largest beauty retailer that provides one-stop shopping for prestige, mass and salon products, and salon services in the United States. ULTA Beauty provides affordable indulgence to its customers by combining unmatched product breadth, value and convenience with the distinctive environment and experience of a specialty retailer. ULTA Beauty offers a unique combination of over 20,000 prestige and mass beauty products across the categories of cosmetics, fragrance, haircare, skincare, bath and body products, and salon styling tools. ULTA Beauty also offers a full-service salon and a wide range of salon haircare products in all of its stores. As of August 2, 2014 the company operates 715 retail stores across 47 states and also distributes its products through the company's website: www.ulta.com.