AI SEARCH FOR THE ENTERPRISE

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When it comes to a more sophisticated and accurate online search Yext's AI engine has all the answers

Wouldn't it be nice if every business website we visited could answer our questions easily, directly and correctly? That's what the AI search company, Yext, is asking us to consider — and not just for websites, but for all business owned platforms, both internal and external facing. And it's a question Deepika Rayala, Yext's Chief Information Officer, can answer directly:

"It can," she says. "But you need Yext Search Platform to do it."

Today, using search on our laptops, mobile phones, and other devices is second nature to us. We often do it without even thinking about the complex process that takes place behind the scenes in order to deliver a direct answer to questions about topics ranging from the best winter shoes to Omicron variant symptoms. We're accustomed to getting our results within seconds.

"Our online day is punctuated by multiple visits to a search engine," Rayala says. "Most of the time, that will be Google."

We all know on one level that a simple Google search will do the trick. That's because, over the past few decades, the search giant has led the way on consumer search, introducing a satisfying AI-powered search experience that billions around the world have been accustomed to.

Deepika Rayala
Chief Information
Officer, Yext

"Our business strategy and growth plan stem from Yext's a bold mission to transform enterprises through AI search"

DEEPIKA RAYALA
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, YEXT

At the same time, when we search for information about a specific business on Google, we are all at the mercy of its algorithms. Those algorithms can surface ads as results — including those for competitors — as well as third-party blogs and websites boosted by SEO that may contain spam or outdated information.

For some of us, that experience might still be preferable to going to a business's official website, which is also typically powered by an outdated technology called keyword search. Keyword search typically returns a list of irrelevant hyperlinks that people have to scroll through to find an answer to their query. Rayala says. "It's an extremely frustrating experience that happens all the time, all around the world."

i'm looking for a |

So, what if we could leave keyword search in the past, take only the best parts of Google's AI-powered consumer search, and use it to transform the enterprise search experience? This is where Yext comes in.

Founded in 2006, Yext (NYSE: YEXT) is a global enterprise search company that builds AI-powered search solutions for businesses to plug into their websites, customer support sites, apps, intranet, and more. While it might not be as much of a household name as Google, it's a major fixture in the enterprise search space — one you've almost definitely used before while browsing sites.

"Our business strategy and growth plans stem from Yext's bold mission to transform every enterprise in the world through AI search," says Rayala.

DEEPIKA RAYALA

TITLE: EVP, CIO (INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS CENTRE)

LOCATION: NEW YORK

Rayala has more than 20 years of experience building IT organisations. Prior to Yext, she was Vice President of Enterprise Applications and PMO at Apttus, where she doubled the size of her team and established a best-in-class enterprise applications team. She has also led large IT transformation programs at Broadcom and Genentech, executing strategies to modernise and align the IT application landscape with the companies' business goals.

Rayala manages all aspects of IT from apps and Business Development operations to security and compliance. She also leads Yext's 'shared services centre' out of India which was opened last year.

She is responsible for leading the company's global IT organisation and driving the enterprise applications, data and analytics, infrastructure, and operations that enable Yext to deliver its platform to businesses around the world.

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FROM QUOTE TO CASH - PWC AND YEXT CREATE THE PERFECT TRANSFORMATION BLUEPRINT

PwC has been at the forefront of global business's journey into the cloud. Its recent collaboration with AI search company Yext provides a powerful case study for how to get digital transformation right.

Starting in 2020, Yext turned to PwC to help overhaul its systems, specifically its 'quote to cash' (Q2C) operation, especially as the company had made a strategic shift to a consumption-based pricing model that its existing quoting tools could not support.

'Yext needed to build a solution that was more agile, automated and catered to their various business segments to unlock operational efficiencies, would automate their process overall, especially in configuring pricing and quoting,' says Jen Yanoff, Cloud & Digital Principal at PwC US. 'They also needed to increase productivity and efficiency, because of the high volume of transactions that they have. Finally, they wanted to improve the customer experience overall.'

The collaboration ultimately resulted in key innovations across three areas: productivity gains (reducing processing time by 50%), workflow improvement efficiencies, and support for the new pricing model.

According to Yext's CIO Deepika Rayala, working with PwC has helped to improve the efficiency of Yext's business, saving many hours that sales staff would have otherwise spent producing detailed quotes to customers and providing contract support.

Samrat Sharma, US & Global Marketing Transformation Leader at PwC US, says that with such projects, there always should be an element of pragmatism and focusing on what really matters, from experience to outcomes.

At the same time, it's important to leverage technology and data in order to be able to really focus, amplify, and simplify the company's ability to deliver, tackling that with empathy and trust.

'We need to be clear that we need to build infrastructure in a sustainable way with a clear intent to help drive the customer experience, drive growth, and drive profitability,' he says.

Learn more

YEXT

"We often say, if you've ever searched for information about a company online, chances are you've interacted with Yext". Yext currently works with more than 2,500 businesses and organizations around the world to transform their digital experiences with AI search."

AI is the key word here, since it's the foundation of Yext's search platform — and what differentiates it from typical keyword search experiences. It starts with Yext's knowledge graph technology, which can consolidate a business' facts from different sources into a brain-like database that can be mined.

"Every company knows its own data the best, and they should be the source of truth for that data," Rayala says. "By storing and structuring their data in a company-specific knowledge graph, they can power a Google-like search experience that is powered by their own knowledge graph."
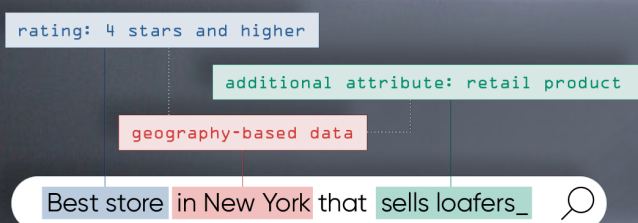
Once an Answers search bar is implemented on a website, AI also comes into play with the ever-evolving machine learning models and algorithms that continue to learn from the queries on your site. By understanding even the most complex natural language queries, the platform can deliver a direct answer. Sometimes, this answer can be accompanied by images, videos, or even action buttons like "get directions."

While the backend technology is impressive, Yext is most excited about the variety of ways that their platform can be used. AI search has broad applicability, so we're setting our sights not just on horizontals like marketing, customer support, developers, and workplace but are also focused on verticals like financial services, healthcare, retail, the public sector, and more.

"One of the cornerstones of Yext's success is strong partnerships"

DEEPIKA RAYALA
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, YEXT

rating: 4 stars and higher

additional attribute: retail product

geography-based data

Best store in New York that sells loafers_

2006
Year Founded

AI/SEARCH ENGINE
Industry

2000
Number of Employees

$354.7mn
Revenue

Indeed, Yext recently expanded its AI solutions to new areas, enabling businesses to implement modern search experiences in key area such as customer support sites and support agent dashboards. These solutions are also optimized for their specific industry. For healthcare organizations during the pandemic, for example, Yext's Find-a-Doc solution proved extremely helpful.

" One such example is our 'Find-a-Doc' AI search solution for healthcare organizations that is designed to improve the pre-appointment patient experience by enabling patients to identify the right provider quickly and easily on a healthcare organisation's website," says Rayala. When a patient searches for a specific doctor speciality, location or other criteria, Find-a-Doc will rely on advanced NLP to actually understand the patient's query and return the doctors that match their criteria — complete with headshots, contact information, and helpful prompts like 'make an appointment' and 'get directions.'"

According to Rayala, Yext — as a global company — is committed to constantly expanding the number of languages its search platform caters for. Currently, its site search product exists in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Japanese.

It's easy to see how Yext's solutions can offer a seamless, digital experience for end users. But for businesses, Rayala explains, there are even more benefits to reap: increased conversions, reduced support costs, expanded insights, greater productivity, and more.

Samsung, for example, turned to Yext to transform its help centre. First, Yext helped them build a robust knowledge graph that consolidated all their help articles, FAQs, YouTube videos, and more, then implemented an AI search experience on the site.

"Now, when a customer asks Samsung a complex question, the Yext algorithms powering the search experience understand the question and provide a direct answer," says Rayala. "They surface dynamic content like photos, help articles, and calls-to-action — not a list of blue hyperlinks."

Ultimately, within eleven weeks of launching with Yext, Samsung experienced significant growth in every major customer satisfaction metric, increasing its Net Promoter Score (NPS) by 45%, Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) by 33%, number of resolved issues by 15%, and number of completed surveys by 8x. Tapping into Yext's performance analytics, Samsung was also able to boost click-through rates (CTR) by 40%. All told, Samsung increased customer engagement with its help site by 19%, streamlining the path to resolution and delighting customers along the way.

While it may seem like building this kind of search experience — knowledge graph and associated integrations — would take months, Rayala provides a real-life example of how quickly customers can be ready to go with Yext Answers.

"We have the technology, integrations, algorithms, and expertise necessary to deliver a world-class search experience out of the box. We're able to get businesses up and running with AI search relatively quickly so they can start enjoying its perks."

Another example she offers is Yext's work in the public sector during the early phases of the pandemic.

"Within the span of 60 days, when the world was scrambling for information, we were able to build custom information hubs to help the World Health Organization (WHO), the US State Department, and the states of New Jersey and Alabama deliver accurate, up-to-date information about COVID-19," she says.

"Many businesses in every industry continue to use an outdated technology called keyword search"

DEEPIKA RAYALA
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, YEXT
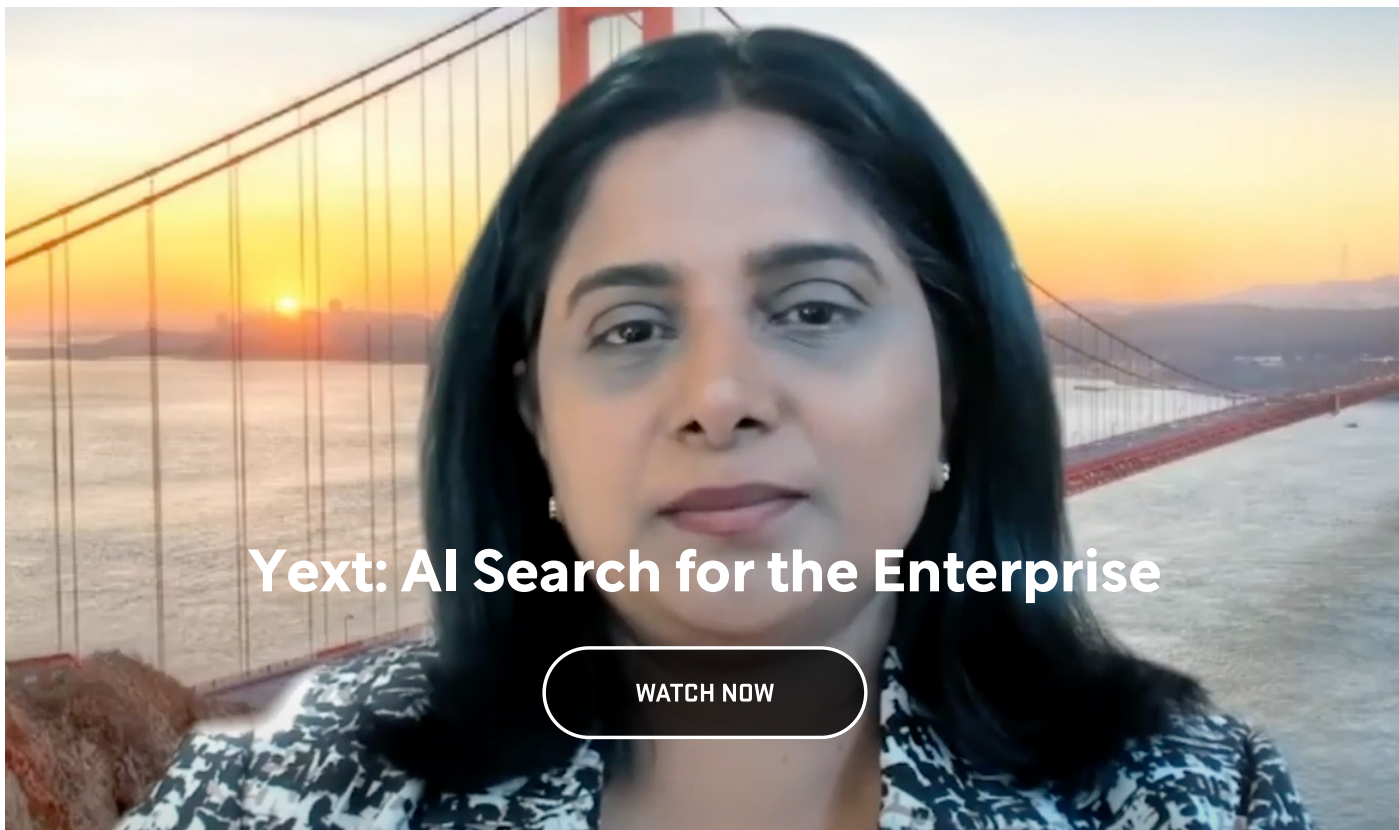
Yext: AI Search for the Enterprise

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"We have the technology, integrations, algorithms, and expertise necessary to deliver a world-class search experience"

DEEPIKA RAYALA
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, YEXT

It's clear how proud Yext is of its customers and the incredible success it has facilitated for them. In order to realize that success, Yext had to enable more efficient business operations – and so, under Rayala's IT leadership, the company implemented a comprehensive IT transformation program that required working with multiple IT partners.

Take Yext's relationship with professional services network and accounting firm PwC, for example, which Rayala says strengthened when Yext needed to implement updated product and pricing strategy to support an ever-increasing volume of transactions.

"PwC helped us with complex challenges by integrating technology, business, and employee experience," Rayala explains. "They brought strong technology expertise and the ability to affect global transformation at scale, ultimately helping us drive meaningful changes to our processes and ways of working."

In terms of meeting the challenges of managing a rapidly growing SaaS environment, Yext turned to the software-as-a-service (SaaS) management platform, Zylo.

"Implementing Zylo has also enabled us to have a more streamlined and decentralised management where certain SaaS apps can

be procured and managed by the lines of business," she says. "However, all apps are still managed under the purview of the overall governance process when it comes to contract renewals, compliance, spend and usage tracking. This allows for quicker time to market and efficiency."

Yext is also working closely with San Francisco-based workflow management company, Pipefy. "By using a tool such as Pipefy, we've been able to automate complex workflows in one unified platform with an easy-to-use interface," says Rayala.

Alongside her duties as CIO, Rayala serves as the executive sponsor of Yext's Employee Resource Group (ERG), Embrace, which supports employees of colour and contributes to the broader inclusive culture behind Yext's products — one that Rayala says she is very proud of.

As an executive sponsor, Rayala advises a core team of employees on events and activities and joins safe-space meetings to understand how employees are doing on the ground, especially when external events impact them.

Rayala says, "Leaders should step outside of their daily work and dedicate time to learn

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rating: 4 stars and higher

additional attribute: retail product

geography-based data

Best store in New York that sells loafers_

> "(Yext helps) businesses deliver truly exceptional search experiences to their end customers, partners, and employees"

DEEPIKA RAYALA
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, YEXT

from, work with, and support employees, especially in endeavours such as running ERGs. These forums help employees feel more connected and go a long way in building company culture."

Rayala believes that the most important leadership quality is being genuine. "When you're leading a team, it is critical for people to trust you enough to come along with you on the journey — and authenticity is the key to building that trust. ●
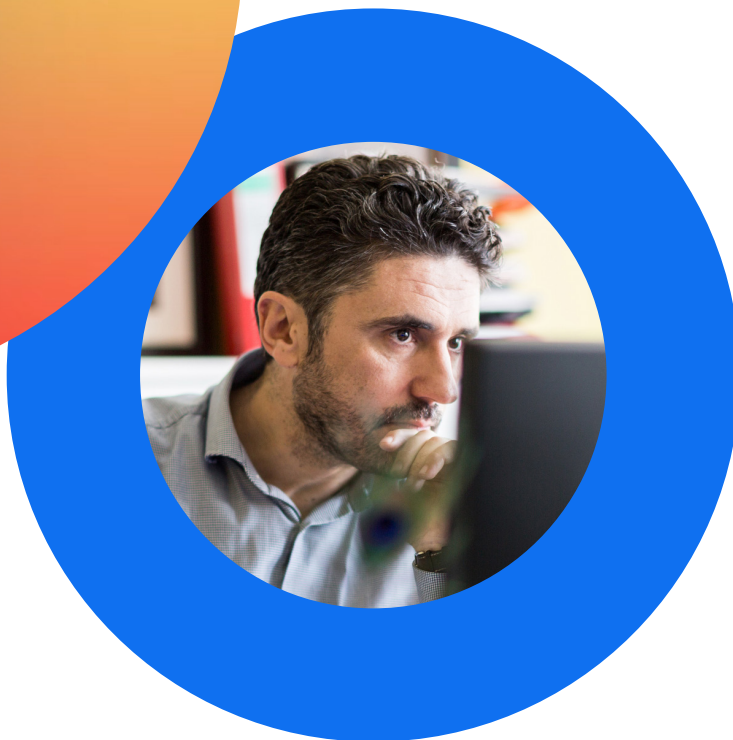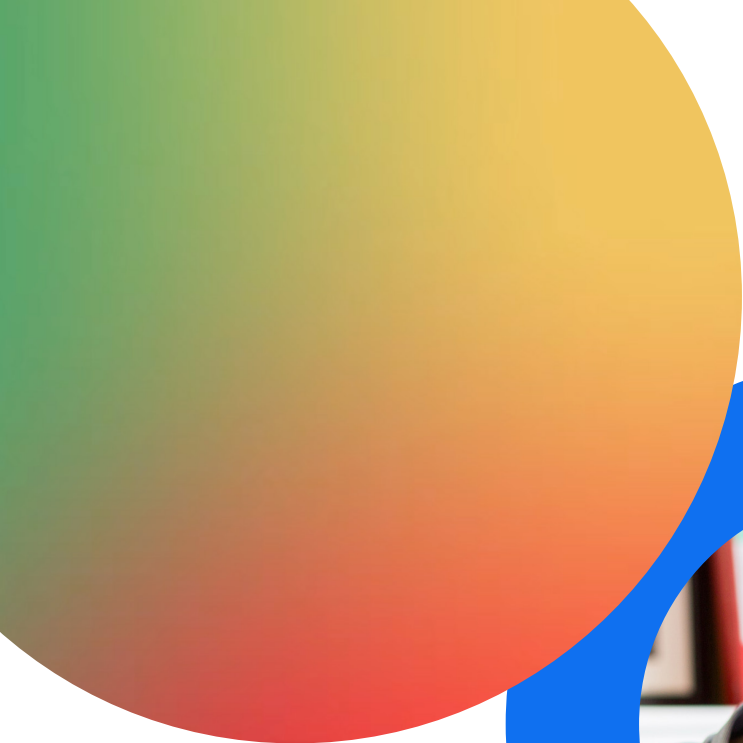
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