



Industry Brief

Do It Yourself Hardware, Appliances and Tools

Customers shopping for and purchasing hardware, appliances and tools are increasingly turning to online sites. Learn which site features lead to higher profits for home and commercial improvement retailers.

More customers are turning to online sites to shop for and purchase home goods, appliances and tools. Top 500 Internet Retailers in the hardware and home improvement category saw online sales grow 32% in 2013 over 2012, according to Internet Retailer.



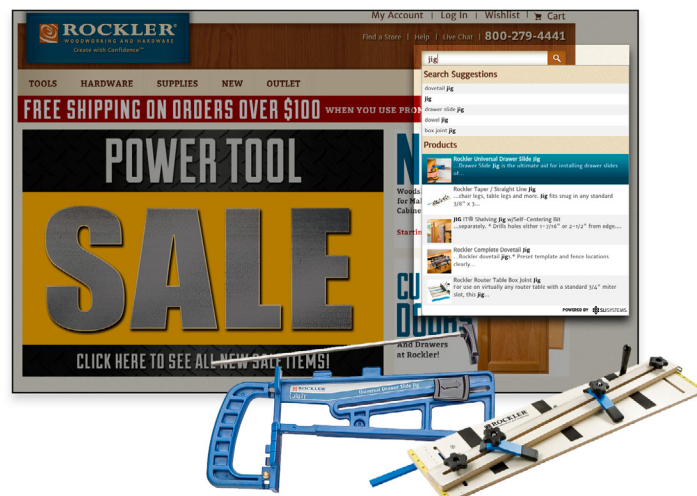
In the U.S. alone, online sales for the home improvement industry represented \$12 billion in 2013, and that number is expected to climb. According to the NRHA Retail Research Group, e-commerce sales are poised to make up 19% or \$57 billion of the overall \$300 billion home improvement industry. In Australia, the online hardware and tools industry grows at an annual rate of nearly 15%, according to IBISWorld.

Build Brand Loyalty with Learning Search™

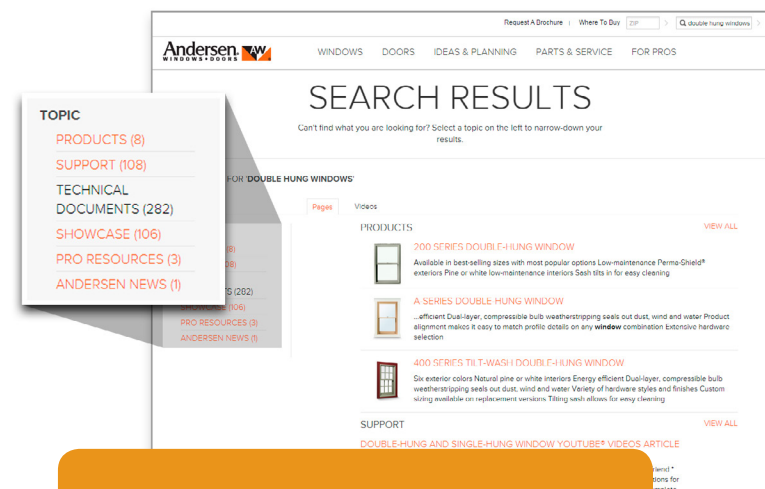
Hardware, tools, plumbing and electrical have the highest potential for e-commerce growth. While many retailers already make the most of this developing channel, online retailers encounter unique issues that can hinder the shopping experience if not properly addressed.

First, customers may have varying levels of expertise, such as do-it-yourselfers versus experienced professionals. Second, certain products – appliances versus building materials for example – are searched for in very different ways. Appliance or décor purchases may be driven by price, brand or appearance, whereas those looking for a tool or part need to match a particular specification, such as gauge, thread size or dimension.

The following site search, navigation, merchandising and SEO solutions help tackle these issues for any site selling a broad variety of goods to a wide audience.



With Rich Auto Complete™, harness insight learned from shoppers' activity to provide the most relevant results



Make all of your content available in searches, including non-product content such as educational articles or technical specs

Provide Highly Relevant Search

If shoppers can't find what they want in the first page of results, they are likely to believe you don't carry the item and abandon your site. Show customers the most relevant items first and you'll increase the likelihood that they'll make a purchase. Search features like SLI Rich Auto Complete™ speed shoppers' paths to the right products by automatically presenting relevant products, images and other information as soon as visitors start typing letters into the search box.

Search by Various Measurement Units

Are your products specified by measurement in fractions or decimals? Site visitors don't always search for products using the same unit names or symbols. Whether they search "8.5 x 12.375" or "8 1/2 x 12 3/8," your site search should accommodate searches with standard or metric units so customers are always presented with the right products.

Index Educational Information & Specs

Whether you target B2B or B2C customers, education is an important factor in your e-commerce site. New homeowners may want basic information on how to make repairs, while contractors or architects may need technical specifications. Keep all of your documents, online articles, video tutorials, reviews and other non-product content easily searchable, so customers always find what they need.

Target Your Customers by Location

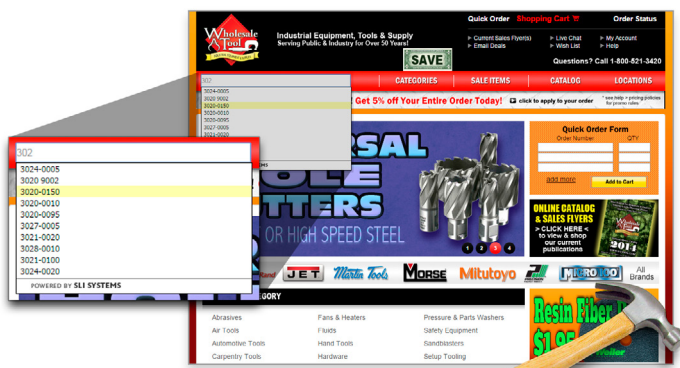
Your customers' needs and your ability to deliver might be different based on geography. Make sure your site search can integrate geolocation services to allow deeper segmentation of products by location. This allows you greater control over regional variations in price, function or other attributes. Additionally, you can point them to the closest store.

Improve Your SEO

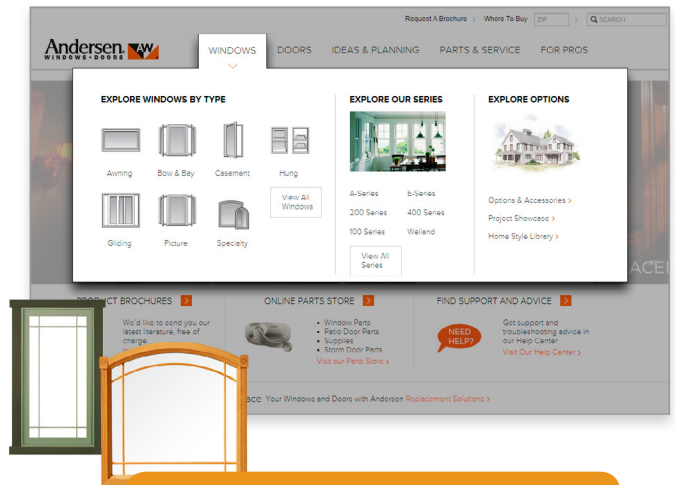
Make sure customers find your site when surfing the web, without over-spending on advertising. For example, SLI Site Champion™ creates custom landing pages that are indexed and ranked by Internet search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo!, increasing page ranks and enhancing your current SEO efforts so more of your products are found.

Match Full or Partial SKUs or Part Numbers

Many tools and building materials are referenced by a SKU instead of a product name. Additionally, customers visiting your site may only have a manufacturer's part number as a reference for what they need. Make sure your search can match full or partial SKUs, making it easy for customers or customer service teams to find a product quickly.



Autofill applicable matching SKU numbers as they are entered



Use images in navigation to help reduce shopper confusion and provide a visually appealing display

Streamline the Purchase Process

Customers who use search generally know what they want and may be more motivated to make a purchase. Quickly guide them to the shopping cart by putting an “Add to Basket” button directly on search results pages, which helps move them closer to a sale.

Improve Your Navigation

Some products are more easily identified by image. An interesting way to showcase your product categories is to add imagery in your navigation bar. Spice up your pages by using images that help shoppers visually navigate to what they are searching for.

Adapt Your Merchandising

Do you want to highlight sales, brand name products and other special deals? The SLI Merchandising and Reporting Console makes it easy to plan, execute, tune and measure a variety of e-commerce campaigns. Rules-based merchandising controls allow you to promote, cross-sell and highlight specific brands or products. Detailed reports and analytics offer insight into shopper activity, trending keyword searches and other data to help monitor success.

Narrow Results to the Very Best Products

Searching a broad term like “refrigerator” will usually return too many results for customers to make a thoughtful decision. Help them narrow their selection to a manageable set by adding refinements such as brand, price, shipping options or ratings and reviews. You can also use icons, such as brand logos or governmental qualifications, like Energy Star rating, to visually display attributes or brand.

The image shows a screenshot of the US Appliance website's search results for refrigerators. A large, detailed refinement sidebar is overlaid on the left side of the page. The sidebar is titled "Refine Your Selection" and includes sections for Category, Finish/Color, Brand, Price Range, and Review. The Category section shows "Refrigerators (132)" with sub-options like "French Door (92)", "Side by Side (27)", "Freezers (6)", "Top Mount (6)", and "Built In (1)". The Brand section lists various brands like Samsung (53), LG (39), General Electric (38), KitchenAid (34), Whirlpool (32), Maytag (27), Frigidaire (18), Electrolux (9), AGA (7), and Liebherr (6). The Price Range section shows options from \$1000-\$2000 (45) to \$4000-\$5000 (2). The Review section shows star ratings and the number of reviews for each product. The main content area displays a grid of refrigerator products with their names, prices, and "HUGE PRICE CUT" labels. A callout box at the bottom of the sidebar says: "Offer refinement options so shoppers can quickly narrow down a large selection to a manageable set of choices".

Help Professionals and Do-It-Yourselfers Find What They Need

There are many ways to ensure your home improvement site stands out from the rest. Whether your customers are seasoned professionals or hobbyists, the e-commerce solutions mentioned above will provide them with a positive shopping experience. Contact SLI Systems to learn more about learning-based search, navigation, recommendations, merchandising, mobile and SEO solutions that contribute to the success of top home improvement sites around the world.

About SLI Systems

SLI Systems enables the world's leading e-commerce retailers to increase sales by connecting shoppers with the products they are most likely to buy. With proven search technology that learns from the activity of real site visitors, SLI delivers SaaS-based site search, navigation, merchandising, mobile, recommendations and SEO solutions that arm retailers with the tools they need for rapid growth.

To learn more visit sli-systems.com, sli-systems.com.au or sli-systems.co.uk.