



The Quick Guide to Better Site Search

Start
improving
your site
search today



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To accelerate your e-commerce, start with site search

Turn Your Browsers into Buyers

As online and mobile retail sales continue to grow, retailers are focused on creating an e-commerce experience that meets new shopper needs and encourages more sales. U.S. analyst firm Forrester Research estimates e-commerce sales currently account for 10% of total retail sales and expects that number will continue to climb.

- Offering an advanced site search and navigation – one that returns the products visitors are most likely to want – can be the difference between engaged customers who buy or dissatisfied customers who bounce.

Additionally, as shoppers engage with Pinterest, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social networks, retailers are investing more in marketing strategies that create content on these sites. In order to bring the social conversation into a site, retailers need to include this content in site search results.

Win On-the-go Shoppers

Mobile commerce, driven by widespread tablet adoption, contributes to more sales with every passing year. Most retailers understand that site search designed for a mobile device is now crucial to delivering a great user experience.

How vital is site search to a site's success? Since the early days of e-commerce, site search has been the preferred method of finding products or information for many visitors. In recent years site search has become more sophisticated as user expectations have evolved.

- Site owners have seen that visitors who use the search box convert at a much higher rate and spend more per visit than those who don't.

Today, robust site search is not only a necessary element of a site but also one that retailers should feature prominently. It's worth the care and effort it takes to make site search as user-friendly as possible. When done well, site search will help improve your site's user experience, engage visitors and convert browsers to shoppers.

Consider this research showing why it is extremely important for retailers to quickly provide visitors with the products they are looking for:

8seconds

is the average time visitors spend before deciding whether or not to remain on a site

- MarketingSherpa

43%

of visitors immediately go to the search box

- MarketingSherpa

50%

of users prefer to use a site's internal search engine, as opposed to simply navigating the site

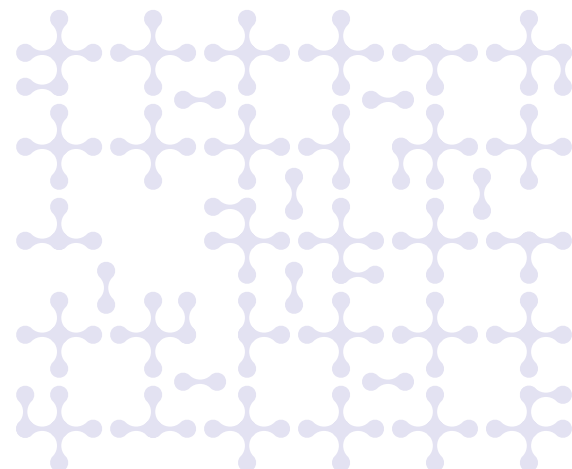
- E-Commerce Times

The Secret to Better SEO

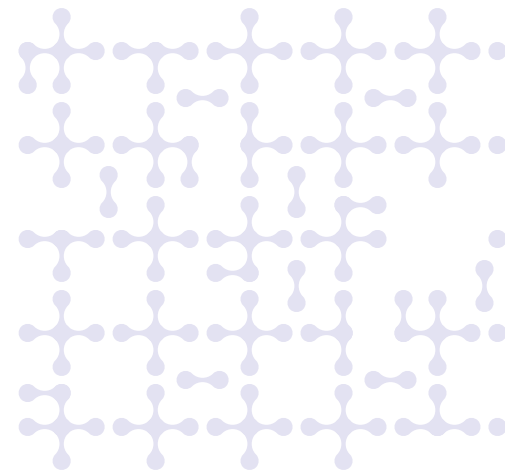
An effective site search solution can also be a gold mine of information. It can provide useful data about the terms people enter in your search box and which search terms are successful. This information can be used to improve the overall user experience, as well as other areas of your marketing – including merchandising, paid search and SEO.

 This e-book contains 11 site search tips to help you provide your site visitors with a satisfying search experience that leads to improved conversions.

Keep in mind that these tips are applicable to a variety of sites, and what determines “the best user experience” for your site visitors will depend on your site, the types of products you sell and your customer profiles and preferences. We recommend that you consider your customers before implementing any of these changes.



Improve your site search with these 11 tips



1. Make Your Search Box Always Visible

People who search on a site convert at a higher rate than people who don't search, so it's worth your while to figure out how you can encourage more people to search. One way of doing this is to ensure your search box is always visible to your visitors. Making it float, where it always appears at the top of the page as visitors scroll down, can be helpful if you allow users to see 100 or more items per page or if you enable infinite scroll on your search results page. Make sure to keep the floating bar small so it is not intrusive. SLI customers that have tested this have seen some dramatic improvements in revenue per visitor by adding the floating search box.

2. Observe User Activity to Improve Relevance

Use data from your visitors' activity to improve the relevance of search results. By examining search data, you can learn that visitors who enter a given search term are likely to click on specific products. A good site search solution can rank these products at the top of search results, making the results more relevant and therefore making it easier for all visitors to find the results they seek.

3. Exercise Control over the Results that Matter to Your Business

Manually control the results when you want different items at the top than what is returned by your search engine. For instance, you can merchandise results by placing sale or promotional items at the top of search results. A robust search solution should allow you to reorder search results as needed to promote products.

4. Jump Directly to a Results Page When You Know the Answer

Use redirects when you want to take visitors to a particular page on your site, rather than showing search results for a query or class of queries. For example, if there is only one result, it may make sense to take the visitor directly there, rather than showing them the search results page. Another example is when visitors type in specific product or SKU numbers – in this case it is common to take them directly to the product page.

You may also want to set up rules for specific words. For example, when visitors search for "returns," take them straight to the page that describes your returns policy. Using redirects in this way means visitors can view one less page than they would otherwise need to, which typically leads to an overall improvement in the usability of your site.

The Importance of Relevancy

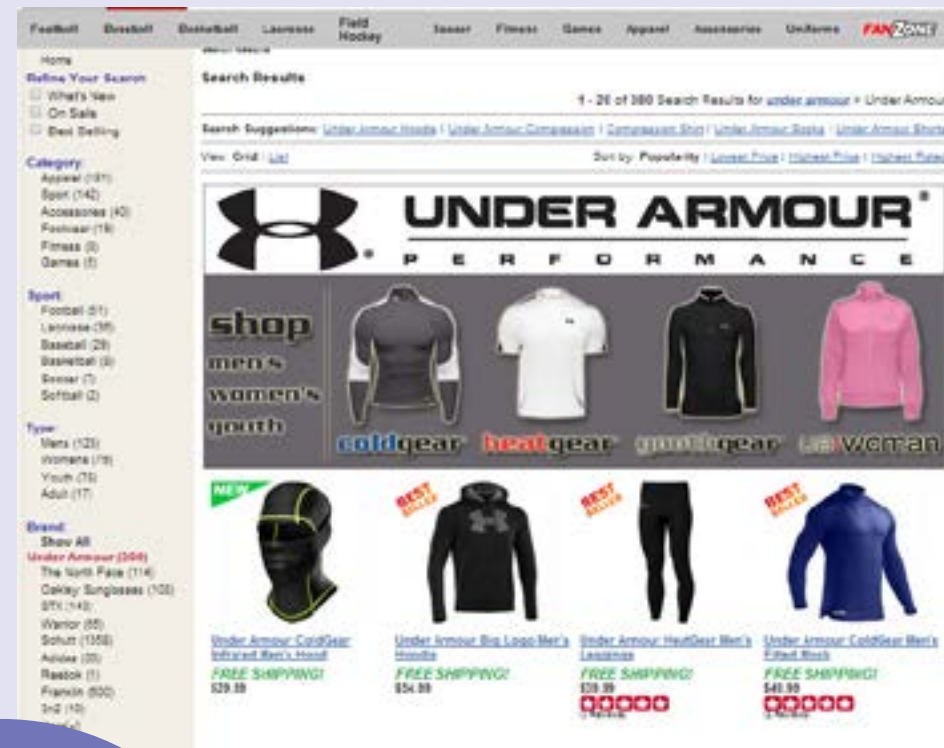
Of all aspects of site search, relevance is most critical. Relevant results contain what the searcher is looking for. If you can ensure relevance, your visitors won't need to sort, filter, paginate or perform a related query.

5. Create Landing Pages Related to Specific Keywords

For some popular search terms, you may want to redirect users to a specific site search page tailored to that search keyword. For example, you may already have landing pages dedicated to particular brands. When visitors search for specific brands, you can send them to the related brand page instead of a generic search results page.

This example shows a landing page for the Under Armour brand. We recommend examining your site search reports to identify the most popular searches. Then consider whether you can provide a better experience by having dedicated landing pages for some searches.

Redirect to Dedicated Search Page Example

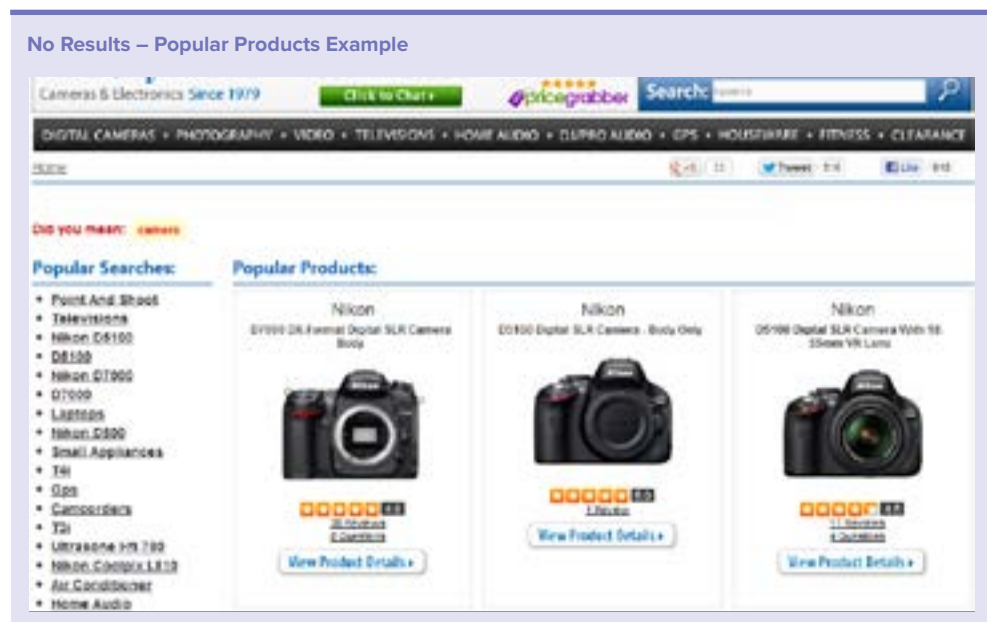


Find out how
better search
relevancy improved
Sports Authority's
clickthrough rate
sli-systems.com/sports

6. Don't Let “No Results” Pages End the Journey

No results pages can often cause users to abandon your site. Here are some ways to keep them engaged.

- For multi-word queries, show results for some of the words in the phrase if there are no results for all the words entered. Clearly show a message like, “There were no results that contained all your words, but here are results that contain some of your words.”
- Have a list of popular queries on the site. There is a chance that one of these may be what the searcher is looking for. The nice thing about popular search queries is that they are in the language of your visitors and are likely to resonate with a visitor who is getting no results.
- If there are no results on the “no results” page, be sure to have text explaining that no results were found and suggest entering another query. Also, consider showing popular products. One of these might be what your customer is looking for. You should make it clear that these aren't the results for the query or it could be confusing.



- If there are common queries with no results, consider showing a keyword-specific banner for these queries. For example, if someone searches for a product that you don't stock, but you do have an alternative, your banner could say: “We don't have this product. Here are some alternatives.”
- Have a spell checker to suggest the correct spelling and show it as a link. Alternatively, the spell checker could automatically take visitors to the search results page for the term with the correct spelling, telling them that it has done so.

- If you have a call center, it is a good idea to include your phone number. Also provide a link to your Live Chat service if you have it. While we don't recommend interrupting your users' online experience, offering a way to contact your customer service team can help them find what they need.

No Results – Phone Number Example



7. Learn from Searches with No Results

Sometimes the language customers use does not match your product descriptions. Slang, international differences and using brands as product names (e.g. Kleenex instead of tissue) can cause no results to be returned for a query. Identifying these terms and creating synonyms can help take users to the products they are looking for. If customers frequently search for items or brands that you do not carry, you might consider how to improve and expand your product offerings.

8. Exercise Caution when Using Global Factors

Global factors that can affect an entire group of products (e.g. margin, price or best sellers) should be used with caution to influence result rankings. Retailers sometimes use global factors to promote certain products or highlight a sale. However, by using global factors you're impacting the relevance of the search results, which might make it harder for visitors to find the exact products they seek.

Learn how better
site search helped
Boden boost its
average revenue
per visit by 215%
sli-systems.com/fashion

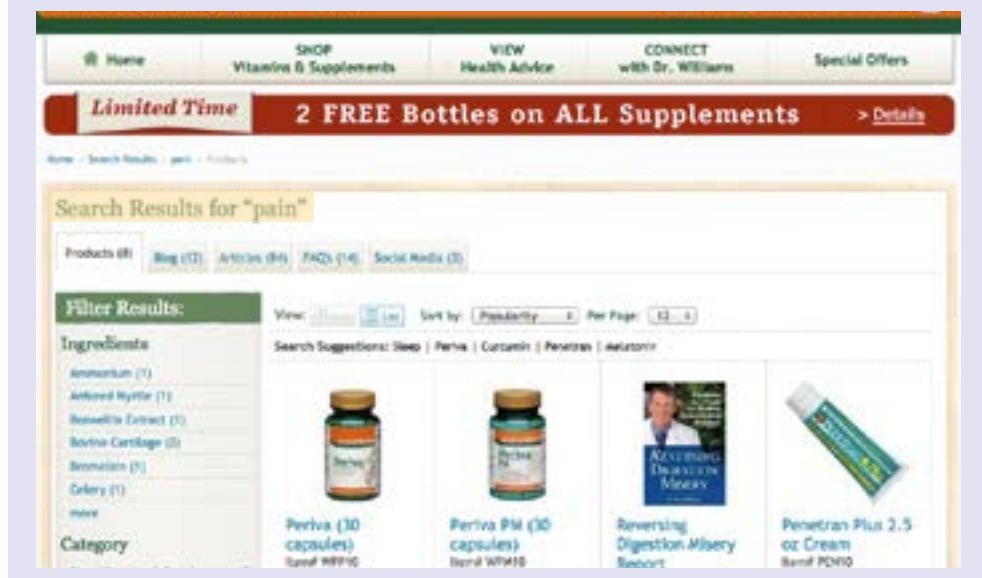
Learn how e.l.f.
brings its rich
content into search

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9. Make All Content Easily Accessible

There are a number of ways you can present the various types of content you offer, such as adding tabs to search results or showing different types of content on different parts of the screen. Whichever display option you choose, make sure the most important content, such as products for sale, is the default content displayed and highlighted in the search results.

Easily Accessible Content Example



Showcase Your Expert Knowledge

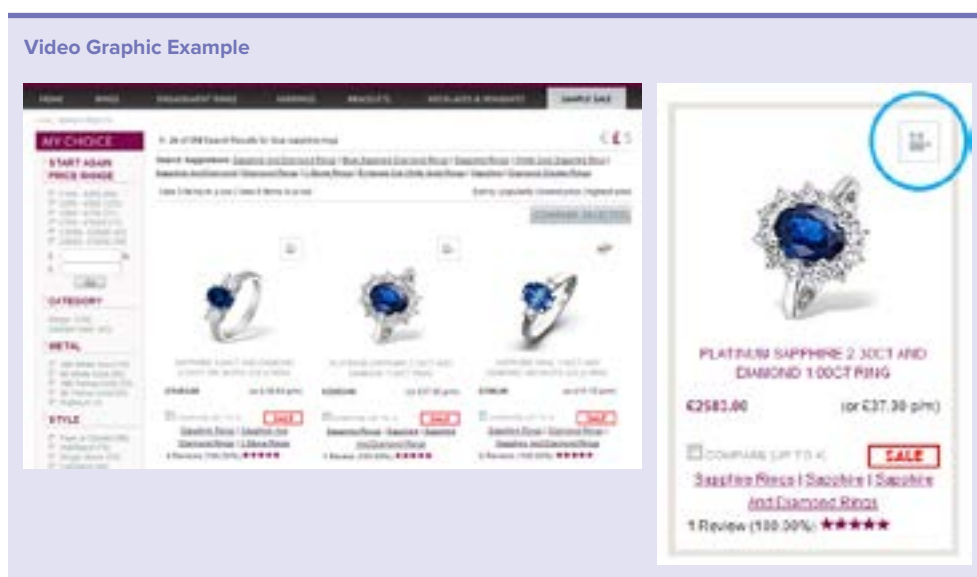
Many sites will only search their core content, such as articles on a news site or products on an e-commerce site. However, additional types of content such as blogs, videos and installation guides can provide valuable insight into your products and further influence a visitor's purchasing decision. For the best user experience, make this content accessible through search.

10. Show Videos in Search Results

Recent studies show that how-to videos or product-highlighting videos can increase conversion rates and make customers more confident in their online purchase decisions. More retailers now make videos a key component to their merchandising strategy. Videos should be easy to find and play directly from search results.

One client reported that people who watched on-site videos were twice as likely to purchase. When videos could be viewed directly from search results, it increased the number of views by 80%.

To indicate that a video is available, consider adding a video graphic as a ribbon overlay to the product image. You can also include a video thumbnail graphic with a play button below the product image. In the example below, you can see a video badge on the right corner of the product image.

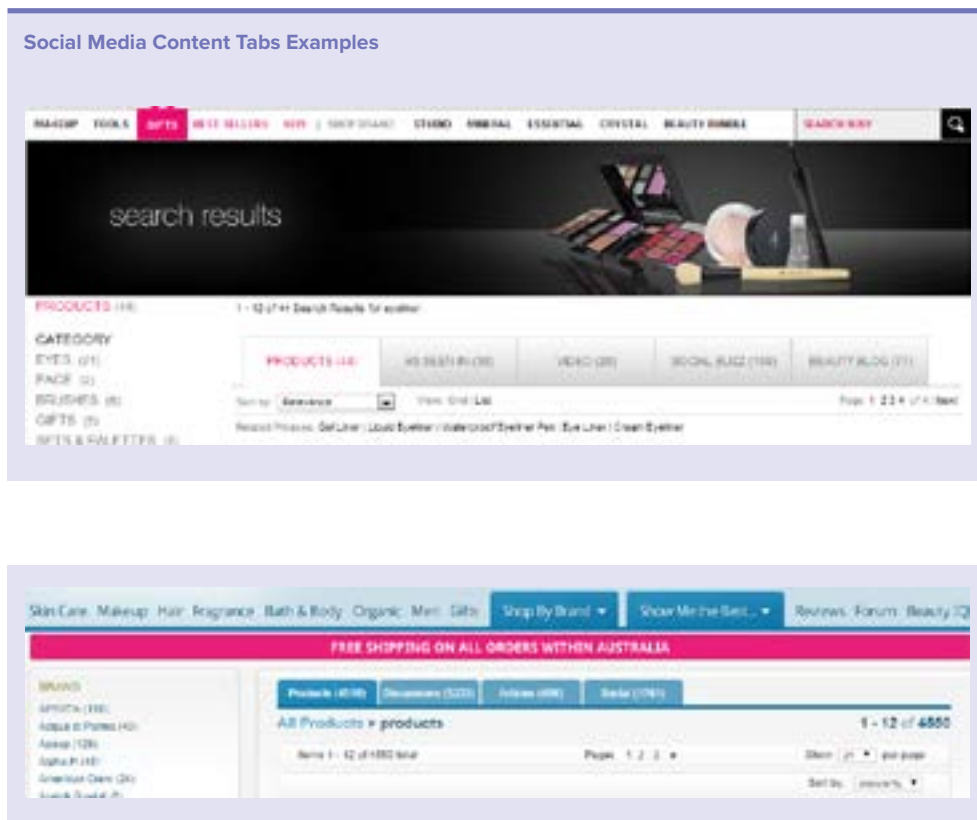


Read our e-book: Use
Creative Content to
Convince Shoppers to Buy
sli-systems.com/creativecontent

11. Include Content from Your Social Media Sites

Some of your best content may now be hosted on social media sites like Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. You are also likely to find some of your best user-generated content and customer advocacy for your products on such sites, including users who Pin items they like or who create and post shopping haul videos, where they un-package and review the products they purchased. Consider having your site search engine catalog this content to include in search results. This makes the content on these networks searchable and also highlights that you are active on those social networks. It may also encourage visitors to engage with you on these networks.

In the examples below, shoppers can easily find content in separate tabs for video, blog posts, media mentions and social networks.



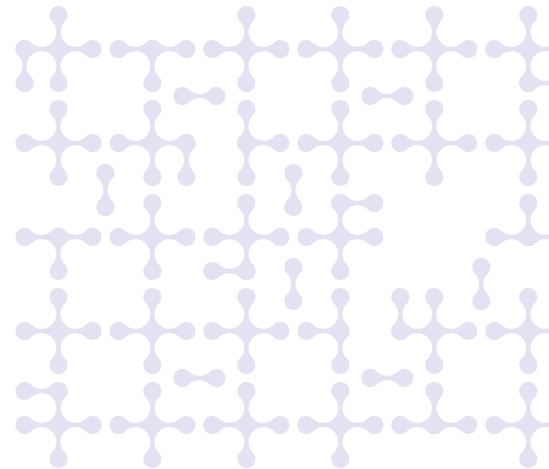
While some sites group non-product content under a single tab, it works especially well to use separate tabs for different search result types – product results, videos, social media, etc. In the example above, visitors are shown matching product results as well as results from social media, discussions and articles.

Consider SLI Systems

Customer expectations are evolving at a rapid rate, so adapting to these ever-changing requirements is critical for success in an extremely competitive e-commerce environment.

These 11 tips will help you improve your site search starting today, but this is only the beginning. There are many more ways SLI Systems can improve your site with e-commerce acceleration solutions that help you turn browsers into buyers. Backed by its team of experts, SLI is ready to arm your site with the technology needed to improve your site search, navigation, merchandising, mobile, recommendations and SEO.

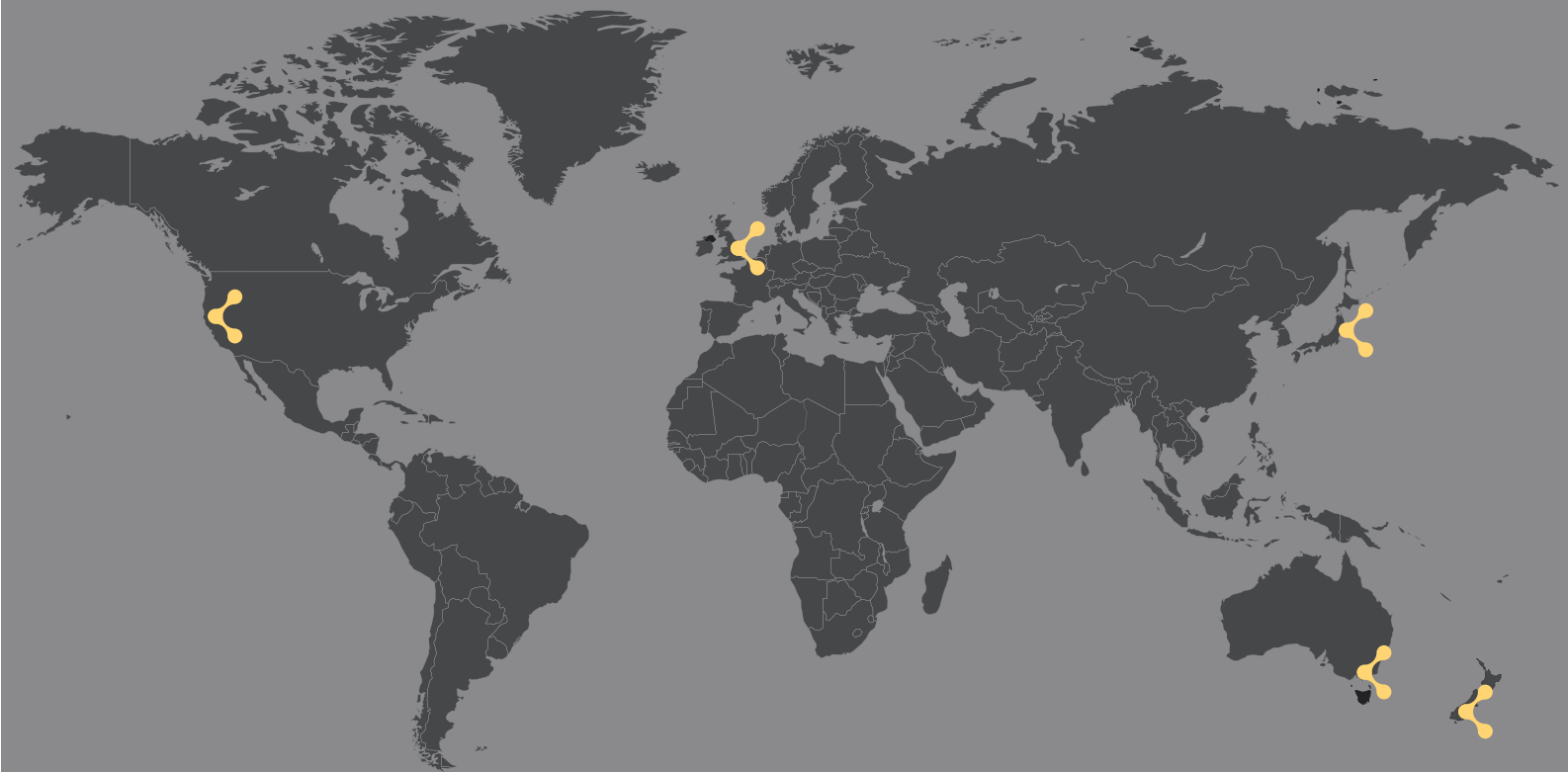
Contact us today at sli-systems.com, sli-systems.co.uk or sli-systems.com.au for a demo.



About SLI Systems

SLI Systems enables the world's leading e-commerce retailers to increase sales by connecting shoppers with the products they're 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,
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