

Friendster

Friendster's Challenge

A few clicks around Friendster's website at www.friendster.com reveal the company's operations are anything but usual. Of course, you don't become the top social networking site in Asia and one of the largest in the world by being a follower.

Friendster has been innovating since it rolled out its site in 2003 with a clear

vision—to help people meet new friends and reconnect with old ones. Today, Friendster contains an enormous volume of information—100 million user profiles from all parts of the world and growing—and the innovation continues.

The company is focusing on search technology enhancements that will make it even easier for members to

locate their friends or acquaintances on the Friendster network.

"Search is a key growth driver for our company," says Friendster Director of Engineering Prakash Dodeja. "More connections and higher network activity drives growth on Friendster. That's why search is very important to us. It's absolutely critical."

"The response times on search have definitely improved with Exalead. It's important our members get near real-time access to the valuable information in our user profiles. We are pleased to say that Exalead's enhancements have helped us achieve this goal."

Prakash Dodeja,
Friendster Director of Engineering

Selection Criteria

In 2008, with a user base that was expanding by 100,000 profiles a day, Friendster's leadership team realized it had outgrown its search technology, an open source solution that offered only basic text search.

To build on its momentum in the social networking space, Friendster sought to improve its ability to distribute and aggregate the valuable profile information generated by millions of members worldwide. This is essential to retaining and attracting members on the Friendster network, and making www.friendster.com an even more popular online destination. As a result, Friendster sought search

technology that delivered:

- Access to rich and voluminous content
- Simple and innovative interfaces, with intuitive navigation
- Discovery and distribution tools that are the main drivers for user satisfaction today

With Friendster's previous search solution, there were concerns about the lack of advanced functionality and a need to handle the ever increasing traffic on Friendster.com.

Zero Tolerance for Zero Results

"The feedback we received from the usability tests we conducted was that

many times a user entered a search query and received zero results," says Dodeja. "We needed to change this."

Friendster management targeted other functional improvements as well. The company wanted to improve the query per second response time so members could locate their friends even faster. Friendster also wanted to optimize indexing so users would no longer need to wait for regularly scheduled spidering processes to access profile information. These enhancements would all be part of making life easier for the millions who visit Friendster.com every day.

