About 118 218 Le Numéro

118 218 Le Numéro is France's leading telephone directory service provider. The company is a subsidiary of New York-based kgb, the largest provider of branded directory assistance services in Europe and the largest independent provider of outsourced directory assistance services in the United States. With a keen eye on the consumer market and an acute understanding of the Internet's developing role in the directory assistance sector, 118 218 chose Exalead to power a dynamic online directory featuring simplified search, faceted results navigation, and an engaging mash-up of Web and database content. Launched in just 60 days, the site was an instant success, with traffic soaring to almost 3 million monthly visitors in the first year. **Websites: www.118218.fr, www.kgb.com**

About 118 218.....p1
118 218's Challenge p2
Selection Criteria p3
The Exalead Choice p3
Deployment p4
The Response p4
What's Next p4

At-A-Glance

118 218 Le Numéro's Needs

- Rapidly construct a large-scale, 24x7 online directory assistance portal
- Create a differentiating service to compete with incumbents
- Maximize organic traffic by achieving high visibility on top Web search engines
- Minimize costs for development and maintenance
- Support a flexible range of advertising models

Exalead Solution Benefits

- Fully operational in less than 60 days
- Fresh user experience with Web/database content mash-up, single text box search, and dynamic results clustering
- Effective new SEO tools
- High performance (40 queries per second on 40 million records); fast scaling
- Rapid ROI and low TCO (CPM < 0.03 euros)
- Agile support for new revenue models like premium ranking

exalead®

Case Study

118 218 Le Numéro

"The Web doesn't wait. We needed to develop an online service for our brand enthusiasts that was at least as good, if not better, than our competitors. With CloudView, Exalead gave us a way to achieve this, and we've been more than satisfied with the results."

Bruno Massiet du Biest
CEO, 118 218 Le Numéro

118 218 Le Numéro's Challenge

Background: A Market Opens

In 2005, the French government opened up the directory assistance market for competition. At the time, the market was valued at around 300 million euros, so independent service providers were anxious to move in and capture market share. Fifty-eight new information assistance numbers rapidly appeared (all six-digit numbers beginning with 118), and each service provider invested heavily to gain brand awareness and loyalty as quickly as possible. The winner among these early competitors was 118 218 Le Numéro, a subsidiary of kgb, the world's largest independent provider of directory assistance and enhanced information services. With a popular, quirky advertising campaign and high-quality service, dialing 118 218 for information quickly became a reflex for French consumers.

The Need to Go Online

With the growing success of free online directories and emerging Internet-to-mobile information services, 118 218 rapidly became aware of the high potential value of its brand on the Web, and of the need to leverage this medium to diversify its offerings.

Yet launching a new online service at a reasonable cost, and within a reasonable time frame, represented a formidable challenge. 118 218 would need to attract a large number of site visitors, and to build loyalty among these users by offering an experience that was, at a minimum, equal to that of 118 218's largest competitor. This competitor was an incumbent who had long operated within a quasi-monopoly environment, benefitting from a captive audience, long-established relationships with listed professionals, and a high quality database twelve years in the making.

However, given 118 218's profitability and the popularity of its brand, the company decided to forge ahead with its Internet offering in spite of these challenges. Its strategy was to capitalize on innovative technologies, such as those offered by Exalead, to effectively level the playing field.

118 218 Le Numéro therefore went in search of a true partner to accompany it in developing its online service, a partner that could furnish an agile technology that could give life to all of 118 218's ideas, backed by a team of professionals ready to share industry best practices and to bring new ideas to the table.

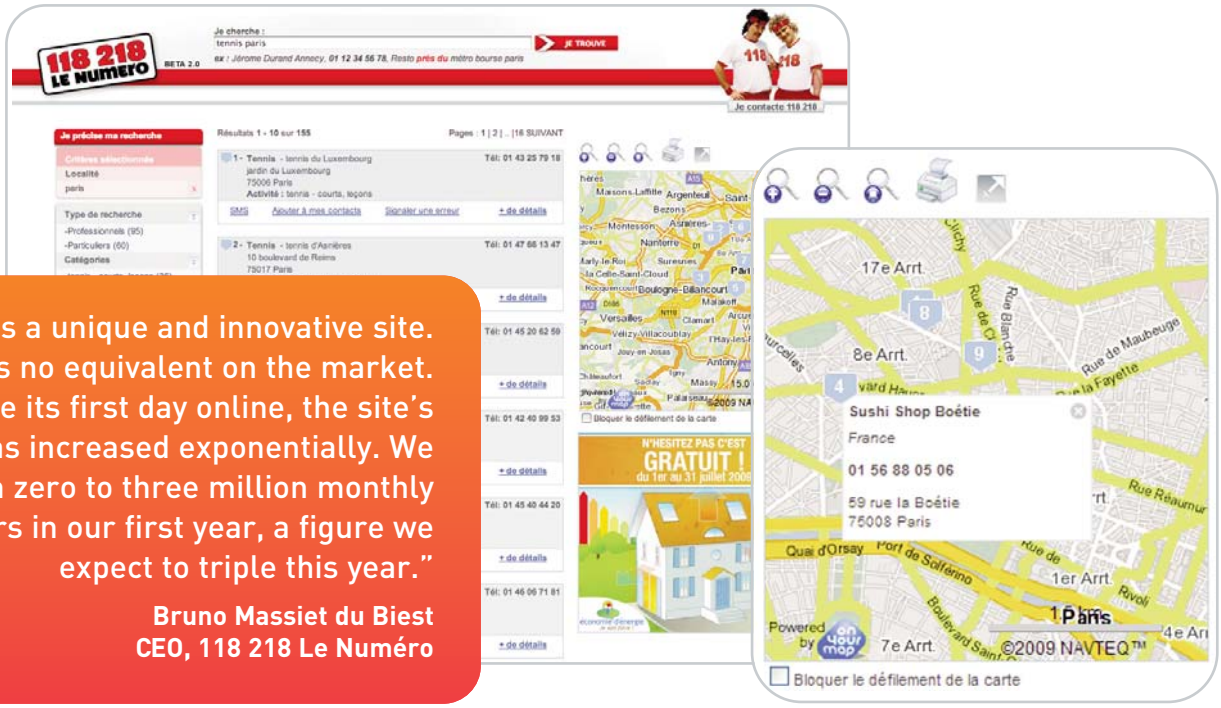
"Deploying an online directory is highly complex and usually requires 12 to 24 months. Exalead allowed us to launch our site in 2 months while bringing unmatched differentiating innovation."

Bruno Massiet du Biest

exalead®

Case Study

118 218 Le Numéro



"118218.fr is a unique and innovative site. There is no equivalent on the market. Since its first day online, the site's audience has increased exponentially. We went from zero to three million monthly visitors in our first year, a figure we expect to triple this year."

Bruno Massiet du Biest
CEO, 118 218 Le Numéro

Selection Criteria

118 218 Le Numéro needed a solution that could be quickly deployed at a reasonable cost, and that provided the optimal balance between innovation, functionality, and ROI. Selection criteria included:

Usability
- Automatic spellchecking, spelling correction, and phonetic matching (without a dictionary)
- A single text box for launching queries
- Proximity search (for finding businesses near a specific location)
- Assisted navigation for results
- Compatibility with a mapping service
- Enrichment of database information with content from the Web

Performance
- Efficient indexation of, and query processing for, a database of more than 40 million businesses
- Capacity to process more than 40 queries per second (QPS)
- Efficient engineering and a distributed architecture to minimize resource requirements and control TCO
- Ability to process data updates without impacting performance

Agility
- Rapid to deploy (under 60 days)
- Easy development of new paid inclusion revenue models
- Support for the creation of innovative new SEO tools
- Support for the development of new services (for example, information requests/delivery by SMS)
- Advanced mash-up technologies to automatically extract and integrate database and Web content

The Exalead Choice

After narrowing the field to two competitors, Exalead and Fast Search & Transfer, 118 218 Le Numéro chose Exalead CloudView™, the only solution that met all of 118 218's requirements. In fact, some of the criteria in the final call for offers were actually inspired by the specific capabilities of the CloudView engine. 118 218 CEO Bruno Massiet du Biest was confident from the outset that his company had made the right choice: "From the beginning, the power of Exalead CloudView™ has served as the catalyst for our new service, enabling us to realize our ideas in record time. It provides a powerful and flexible Web crawler, next generation HTML extractors, rich configuration tools, an open development environment, real-time indexing, and more."

exalead®

Case Study

118 218 Le Numéro

Deployment

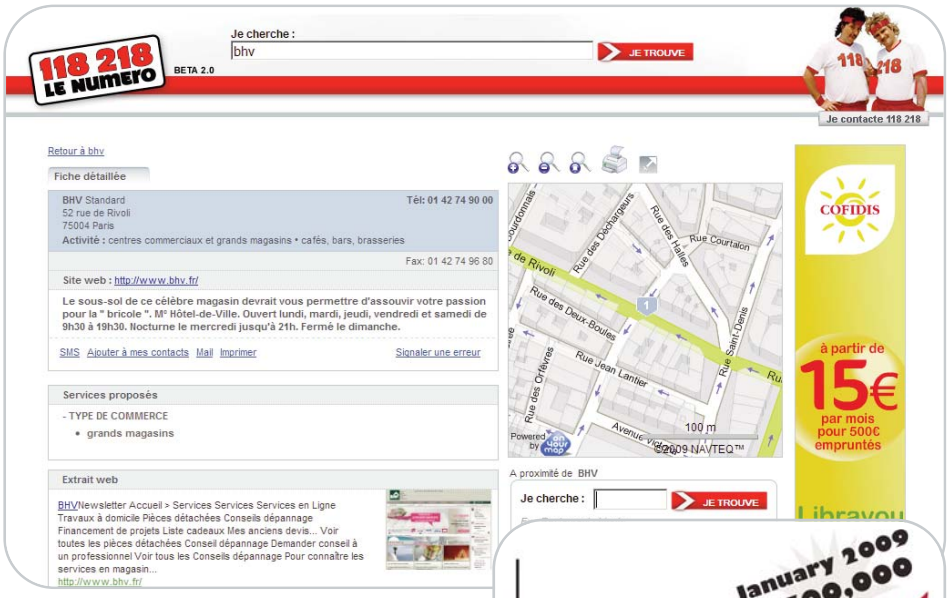
118218.fr launched in less than two months, a tribute to the know-how and responsiveness of the Exalead/118 218 team as well as to the agility of the CloudView platform.

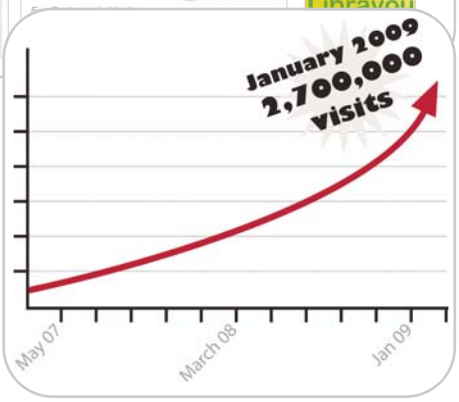
What's more, 118218.fr offered an innovative, differentiating experience right out of the gate. The site was unique among its competitors, offering simplified single-field search, faceted results navigation for fast search refinement, and organic listings constructed from a unique Web/Database content mash-up.

- **Simplified, Single-Field Search**
  Using CloudView for primary database access allows 118218.fr users to enter their queries using a single, Web-style text box. CloudView's natural language processors and advanced document model eliminate the need for complex search forms. Users can simply pose their queries as questions, or type in a phone number for a fast reverse-directory lookup.

  Users can also search by proximity, locating businesses in a certain area or close to a certain address. For example, after finding the theater he or she was looking for, a user can then find a nearby restaurant for dinner after the show.

- **Guided Results Navigation**
  For each result set, 118218.fr displays a refinement menu with relevant, clickable selection criteria (for example, type of food and price ranges for restaurant listings). The number of results matching each criteria are displayed, helping users hone in quickly on the listing sought.





- **Hybrid Web/Database Content**
  118218.fr produces more than simple directory results. It also extracts information from pertinent websites, and seamlessly merges this unstructured Web data with structured content from the 118 218 database. The user can also browse classified ads on a map, and get directions to businesses, thanks to the integration of the Exalead results with the OnYourMap service.

Additional features include no-cost forwarding of results by SMS or email, and a one-click tool for adding listings to Outlook or Lotus Notes contacts.

The Response

Users responded swiftly and very favorably to the fresh 118218.fr search experience. Site traffic quadrupled the first year, hitting 3 million monthly visitors by January 2009, a response that greatly pleased the 118 218 CEO: "The Exalead solution exceeded our expectations. We were able to launch an innovative, 24/7 service in less than 60 days, and we met our cost objectives, with a CPM (cost per 1000 impressions) of less than 0.03 euros."

What's Next?

CloudView will soon be deployed to kgb online directories in other countries, like the UK's 118.com, and 118 218 Le Numéro has already used CloudView to develop an internal application that lets operators quickly find the answers to information requests coming in via SMS. Want to know more? Dial 118 218 the next time you're in France!