Business challenge

GFC wanted to make it easier for its customers to find and make use of their corporate data. Too often, workers were forced to search through multiple systems to locate the correct information.

Transformation

Using IBM® Watson® technology, GFC created the AskGordy app to allow workers to search for relevant data by asking natural language questions. Users can even provide direct verbal feedback about the quality of the answers, which the system can then use to improve future searches.

**Mike Adams
Development Manager
GFConsulting Group,
The Gordon Flesch Co.**

Results

Improves user satisfaction
with more accurate search results

Increases visibility
into company data spanning multiple content systems

Drives business growth
with a new, marketable search app

The Gordon Flesch Co.

Delivers greater insight into business data with a convenient mobile app

Based in Madison, Wisconsin, GFC is one of the largest independent providers of office technology solutions in the US. Family-owned since 1956, GFC employs more than 600 people in 26 offices throughout the Midwest. The organization delivers unique business process expertise to solve challenging problems and achieve organizational goals. This includes integrating industry-leading software and hardware to build custom solutions that are supported by technical expertise, customer service and flexible, in-house financial services.

"The user almost had to know what they were looking for before they could find it."

—Mike Adams, Development Manager, GFConsulting Group, The Gordon Flesch Co.

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Hiding data in the open

Over the years, IBM Business Partner GFC's enterprise content management (ECM) products and services had garnered a large customer base. And while these customers were routinely pleased with the capabilities of the platform, they sometimes struggled to gather information from across various record sources.

In particular, GFC supported one large public agency with dozens of content repositories that included diverse record types, ranging from research data to technical reports to departmental memoranda and emails. To locate important information, agency staff had to search through systems individually and collate records manually.

"The user almost had to know what they were looking for before they could find it," explains Mike Adams, Development Manager at GFConsulting Group, a division of GFC. "Simple search, when applied to a large range of documents from various sources, was not providing adequate results to users."

There's an app for that

While exploring potential solutions that would offer its customers greater visibility into their data, GFC, participating in the 2017 Watson Build competition, developed the new AskGordy search app based on IBM Watson technology. Recognizing the viability and maturity of the new app, IBM provided the business with technical and marketing assistance to bring AskGordy to market as quickly as possible.

The new app, available via the web or on a mobile device, allows users to make queries via a chatbot-like interface, powered by the IBM Watson Assistant platform. If the nature of the question or answer is too complex for the chatbot, the system automatically conducts a more detailed search across all available content repositories, capitalizing on models built and supported by IBM Watson Knowledge Studio and IBM Watson Discovery technology.

"You can ask a simple natural language question of the Watson engine either verbally or by typing," adds Adams. "And the application dissects that query and returns the documents that are most closely aligned with the intent of the question rather than simply matching the terms." If the results are not what the user expected, he or she can deliver direct, verbal feedback, which the system incorporates into the model to better refine future searches.

The Explorys data revealed encouraging results for SmartAnalyst's customer. The company was able to see how often its drug was used and at what phase of the treatment. Further, among the different therapeutic agents examined in the study, the customer's therapy showed better time-to-event outcomes than the other drugs. This may indicate that SmartAnalyst's customer's treatment is more tolerable at longer exposure than other agents in the study. The next step, says Papademetriou, is to determine whether these results lead to other favorable clinical outcomes.

Everything you need to know

With the new AskGordy app in place, the difference is clear. "We've seen some user satisfaction levels go from around 0 percent to almost 100 percent," raves Adams. "We can accept input from about 25 different content management systems, like Laserfiche, and we can handle all of that diversity of the source material and maintain the fidelity and security of the information."

Now, users can find what they are looking for, quickly and easily. And with the available mobile support, they can even access this information outside of the office.

The new app, backed by IBM technology and support, also helps attract new business, as Adams explains: "Using IBM removes any concern that the customer may have about whether its secure, stable, or will be there in the long run."

Take the next step

To learn more about the IBM solutions featured in this story, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner.

To learn more about its office management solutions, the AskGordy app and what GFC can do for you, please visit: GFC

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