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**Aron Spohr**

CTO

# Flaschenpost replaces open source search with FactFinder

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Flaschenpost SE, a leading instant delivery service for beverages and food, has achieved rapid growth since its launch in 2016. The linchpin of sales is the online store flaschenpost.de, which handles more than ten million orders per year. Until recently, an open source search was in use. But this solution was increasingly reaching its limits – not least because it was taking up too much internal developer time. After the integration of FactFinder, Flaschenpost is now using these resources for the core business again, offering buyers more relevant search results and simplifying the optimization of the specialist departments. A win-win effect that was realized in an amazingly short time.



## About Flaschenpost

More than 200,000 boxes delivered per day, over 30 warehouse locations and 20,000 employees – Flaschenpost has set itself the task of revolutionizing grocery shopping and becoming the beverage and food delivery service for the whole of Germany. The service is already available in more than 190 cities.

The Münster-based company promises to deliver every order within 120 minutes. Unlike some smaller players, Flaschenpost combines both lightning-fast delivery times and a huge selection of thousands of products in a wide range of categories. CTO Aron Spohr emphasizes, “This puts us in the golden mean, which is extremely interesting for many customers.” If required, he says, customers can do an entire week’s shopping in the store, including all variations of fresh produce. This unique offering has enabled the company to achieve enormous leaps in growth in recent years.

On the technical side, Flaschenpost’s service is based on the orchestration of efficient delivery logistics and innovative eCommerce technologies. This department is

the responsibility of Aron Spohr, who joined the company during a busy time. He says, “I joined at a very exciting time and was able to experience a huge growth spurt within the company. Dealing with the rapid growth across systems – that is, looking at where we need to stabilize technically and where we are already very good – is one of our daily tasks.” The search technology in the online store is also among the systems that are crucial to success. Just a few months ago, a solution developed in-house was replaced with technology from FactFinder – with the aim of both saving IT resources and meeting the high demands of grocery shoppers.

## Challenges: targeted product search and up-to-the-minute availability

Food shoppers usually know exactly what they want. Many have brand preferences, need to exclude incompatible foods, or pay attention to certain characteristics such as vegan, low-sugar and organic. Their expectations of the search results are correspondingly specific. Aron explains, “When I as a customer enter ‘vegan mayo,’ I

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don't want to see 48 different mayonnaises, of which the right product might show up in position 24. Rather, I want to see in the search results exactly the two vegan mayonnaises that are in the range." To meet this requirement, Flaschenpost needed a search solution that both automatically increases the relevance of the results and enables the manual exclusion of irrelevant hits.

Another challenge in the online food industry is the constantly changing stock levels: At Flaschenpost, stock is replenished several times a day – and every update of availability must be immediately reflected in the store. It would be unthinkable if this data could not be transferred into the system or if a completely new data feed had to be built. "Spot updates are enormously important for us at this point. This is the only way that search and category pages can reflect every inventory change directly in the store," says Aron.

As far as Flaschenpost's technical infrastructure is concerned, in the past the company relied exclusively on solutions developed in-house – including the search function in the store. The IT team did a very good job, so that Flaschenpost managed with its own search for a long time. What was missing, however, were, among other things, intelligent algorithms to improve the product results in a self-learning manner, and a user interface through which business users could evaluate and optimize the search hits. As the size of the store and order volume grew, more and more rethinking took place. Aron says, "Just because you can theoretically implement something doesn't mean you have to do it. We found that it made much more sense to focus on issues that were closer to the customer than to spend time building and optimizing a search technology. On top of that, the relationship between our time commitment and our quality standards no longer fit either."

### **Solution: integrating Next Generation at an ambitious pace**

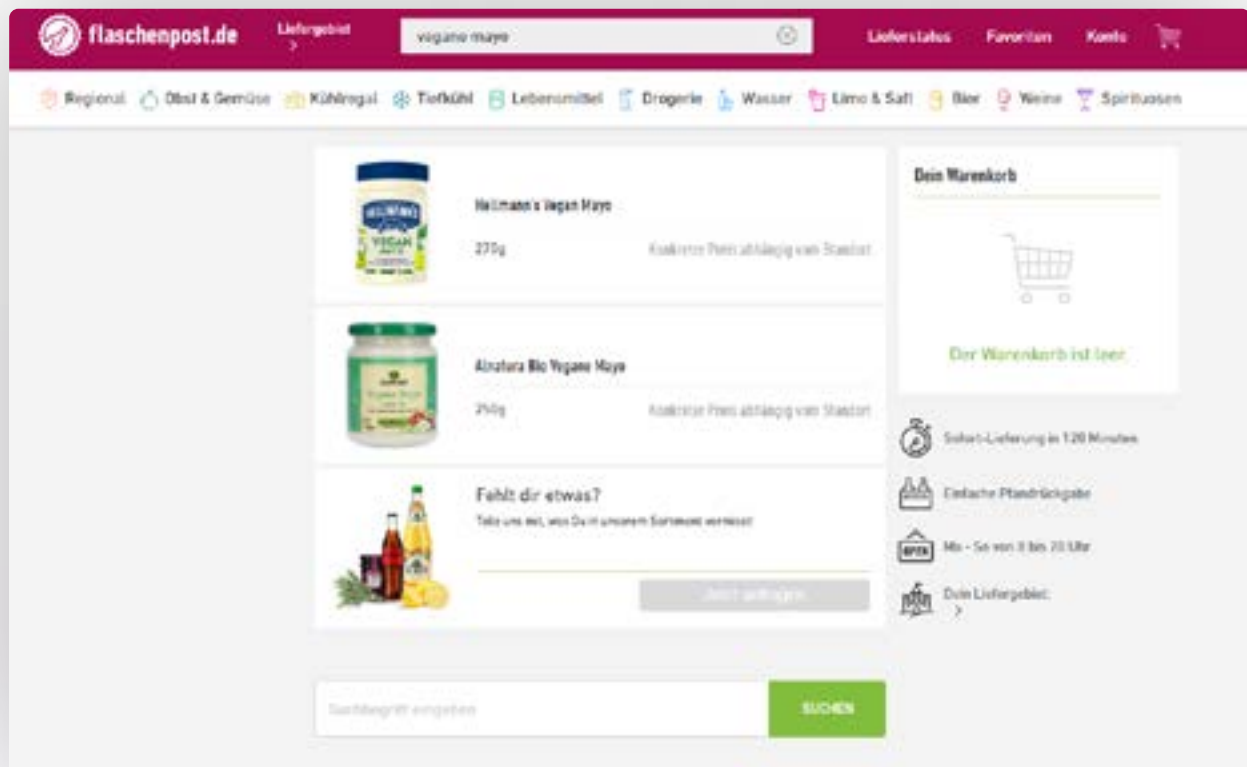
So the Flaschenpost team started looking for an alternative search solution – a selection process that didn't take long: "I've known FactFinder for quite a while, so you quickly landed on our shortlist." The combination of automation and manual control in the Next Generation version was exactly what the team had envisioned. So when Flaschenpost and FactFinder met for the kick-off meeting for the integration project, one aspect was particularly important to Aron: "We wanted to move very, very quickly." He admits that many store operators have this desire, but the Flaschenpost team was fully behind

it – both with a lot of drive and with very concrete, pragmatic ideas.

One of these ideas was to continue using the data that had been used previously to display the search results in the frontend. This involved a small JSON file that was passed to FactFinder as part of the data feed and encoded with Base64. "This was a smart move because

### **Advantages of FactFinder compared to an open source search solution**

- ✓ Reliable search algorithms that have been refined for over 20 years
- ✓ Proven increase in conversion rates through A/B tests
- ✓ Planned time and cost instead of unpredictable development costs
- ✓ Minimal IT resource commitment
- ✓ Predefined modules for Merchandising, Personalization, Recommendations, etc.
- ✓ Intuitive user interface for business users
- ✓ Personal support and consulting
- ✓ Future-proof through regular updates



*Targeted search results instead of a confusing list: With FactFinder, Flaschenpost meets the high expectations of food shoppers.*

it just worked smoothly on the FactFinder side,” Aron explains. “We were able to continue using our frontend systems without any customizations, even though the results were coming from a different search. That was one of the reasons we were so quick.” In total, only 22 days passed from the signing of the contract to the go-live of FactFinder. Aron sums up, “The project went very well to be honest, everyone pulled together. We reached our goal quickly and my technical expectations were also met.”

### **Results: fewer resources tied up, more satisfied customers, more transparent optimization.**

Since implementing Next Generation, the development team can now focus on other tasks aside from search.

As a result, Flaschenpost has more resources again to further optimize its core systems for eCommerce and logistics. “That was very important to me,” says Aron. But the actual added value of FactFinder is also clearly noticeable – both for online shoppers and for employees in the various departments such as category management and marketing. “Our customers like to use the search regularly, often even several times per session. For us, this is a clear sign that the solution is working well and is being accepted. Since we got off to a super-fast start, we are currently still in an intensive testing phase and are trying out a lot. In any case, the basic trend is very positive.”

Aron also mentions a change that cannot be measured in hard figures, but which nevertheless says a lot – the feedback from online shoppers, colleagues and acquaintances. Feedback such as “I didn’t even know you

had that, I didn't find that at all" has almost completely disappeared, he says. "The results are just more relevant," Aron said. For example, he said, there were quite a few word combinations that didn't return anything with the old search that now produce matching results with FactFinder. "It's a noticeable difference," he points out. "You find the products you need at the top of the results." When asked what impresses him most about FactFinder, he says, "I'm always impressed by how quickly the FactFinder API delivers product results. It only takes a few milliseconds, and that's exactly how you want it."

Aron goes on to say that, in addition to the customer journey, FactFinder also simplifies the daily work of the departments. "Colleagues now have a nice UI in which they can set everything and, above all, also track it. Especially the latter is a very important point." In the backend, search results can be easily reproduced – so unlike the solution previously used, FactFinder's AI-based search is not a black box for the user. It is transparent at all times why a product is in a certain position in the results. If necessary, eCommerce employees can then fine-tune the results with just a few clicks, using campaigns, thesaurus entries or ranking rules, among other things. "It's really very simple," says Aron.

## Next steps: even more customer focus using AI

In terms of the results achieved, Flaschenpost is more than satisfied with the implementation of the new search. However, the team would like to build on these initial successes as quickly as possible. Currently, the integration of further FactFinder modules such as Navigation and Merchandising is in full swing. In addition, Aron has very specific ideas on how to make shopping even easier, faster and more intuitive: "In online grocery, it is increasingly also a matter of offering those products that a customer would like to buy, even though he didn't know that beforehand. But when he is reminded of this, he says 'yes, of course I want that'. That's the direction it needs to go in." The Flaschenpost team wants to rely more on artificial intelligence, "To understand online shoppers, you can't get around artificial intelligence." Thanks to FactFinder's self-learning search and other AI modules such as Predictive Basket, Flaschenpost is well-prepared for the future in this respect.

### Project results:

- ✓ Go-Live within 3 weeks
- ✓ Saving in IT and developer resources
- ✓ More relevant search results in the store
- ✓ Positive user feedback, higher customer satisfaction
- ✓ More efficiency and transparency in store optimization

## About FactFinder

FactFinder is the European leader in eCommerce product discovery and search. We help over 2,000 online shops worldwide like MyTheresa, Intersport, OBI, Stihl and Elkjøp Nordic increase revenue by 20-33% with outstanding shopping experiences.

By combining human and artificial intelligence, we understand every shopper's intent from the first click. We call that authentic intelligence. Smarter algorithms and human expertise create a union that will always give a competitive edge.

Every day millions of B2C and B2B shoppers find what they are looking for with FactFinder – fast, personalized and with joy.



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