

glean

Enterprise Search Buyer's Guide

How intelligent search can unlock your
company's productivity



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Executive summary

For as long as there have been large organizations, it has been difficult for employees to find the information they need. As technology took over the workplace, that problem has only gotten worse: Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) applications have proliferated across companies and teams, making it harder than ever to find information.

It's costing businesses and their employees. Doing work about work is a perpetual drag on productivity, preventing people from focusing on their core responsibilities. Moreover, employee satisfaction and productivity can suffer as workers spend hours trying to find wayward pieces of information.

Employees lose at least...

2 hours/day or **1 full day of work a week** looking for documents, information, or people they need to do their jobs.



Source: Harris Poll

This problem is far from new, which is why companies have attempted to implement enterprise-wide search platforms in the past. But these legacy

platforms have historically underperformed. They were hard to connect to data, used search technology that provided mediocre results, and required technology investments that didn't align with the modern, cloud-first approach to software that businesses need.

Modern enterprise search platforms can help bring clarity to SaaS sprawl, improve employee satisfaction, and help companies be more productive. Thanks to the latest advances in machine learning and cloud computing, it's possible to provide high-quality, personalized search results from across an entire company's software environment.

However, not all enterprise search platforms are equal. The ideal search platform integrates with all of the critical systems a company uses to share and store knowledge. It efficiently provides users with results that are relevant to them without requiring significant administration or manual intervention. Furthermore, they delight end users by offering features beyond providing a page of search results, enhancing both productivity and their overall workplace experience.

This guide will provide enterprise decisionmakers with the information they need to evaluate and acquire a search platform that will improve employee satisfaction, save time across the company, and drive financial success.



Part One

The triumph and tribulations of the modern workplace



The modern workplace has been shaped by several significant market forces that have rewritten how companies acquire and use technology. This has created novel problems for IT teams to address that enterprise search provides a uniquely powerful answer to.

How the cloud has reshaped enterprise tech

Cloud computing has completely changed how enterprises procure, deploy, and administer technology. Because the cloud now offers a functionally limitless pool of computing capacity, businesses are unshackled from physical infrastructure limitations and cumbersome perpetual licensing deals. This leads to a new model of enterprise software development and consumption, where consistent updates and a focus on customer satisfaction is the norm.

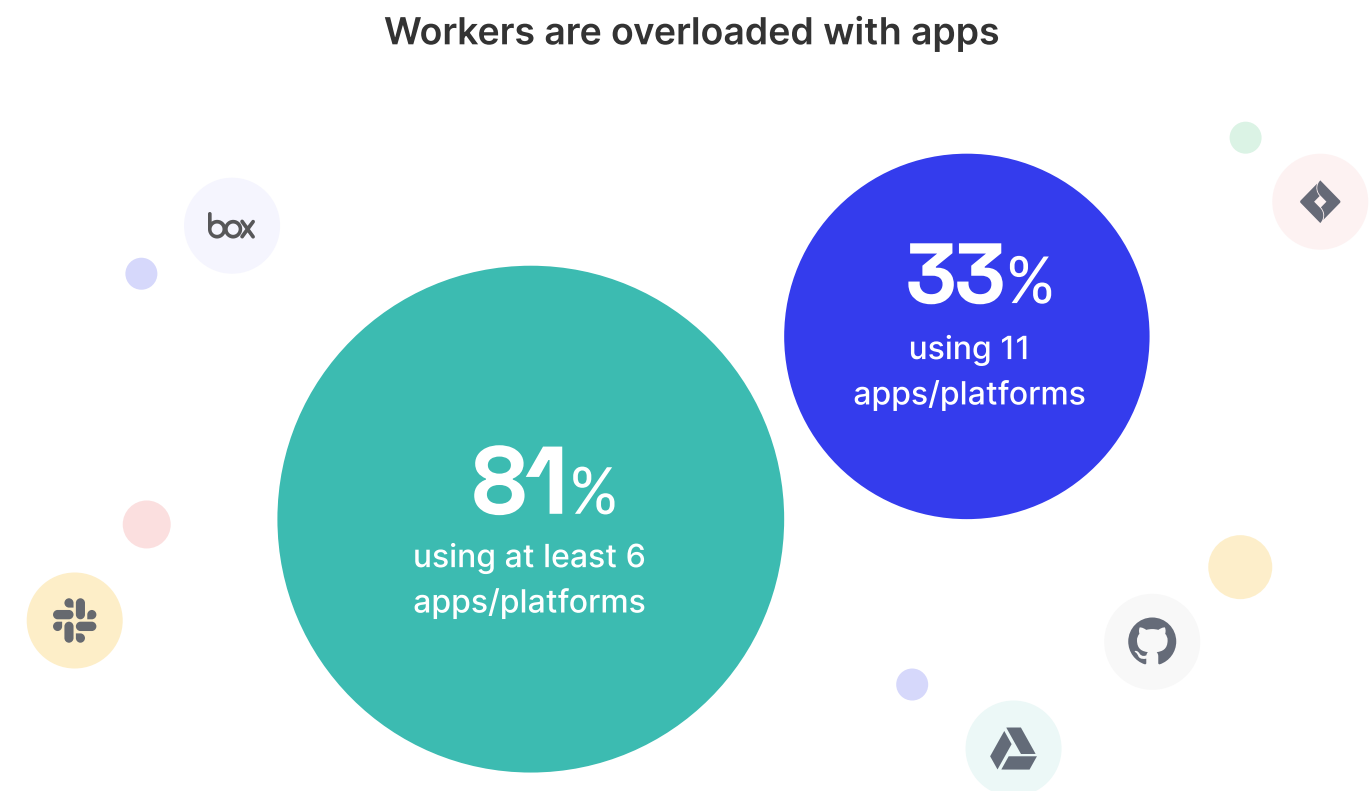
In this cloud-first world, modern IT teams can simply procure and implement new tools as business needs require. IT work has shifted away from a focus on managing physical infrastructure and towards enabling business value through the effective deployment of cloud-based solutions.

Inevitability of SaaS sprawl

SaaS sprawl results from enterprises trying to do the right thing: procure the best software that enables employees to do their best work effectively. But that means businesses are inevitably left with a tangled

mass of tools that don't connect to one another and make it harder to get work done. The sprawl is hard to manage and even harder to reason across.

While it is possible to alleviate some of these problems through good IT governance (minimizing duplicative tools, ensuring clear practices for how those tools are used, etc.), that doesn't solve the core issue of SaaS proliferation. The question in front of enterprise IT leaders is not how to eliminate SaaS sprawl entirely, but rather how to reduce its impact on employees and their productivity.



Source: OnePoll

Employees expect more of their tools

Over the past decade, cloud computing and mobile technology have effectively eliminated any barrier between personal and workplace technology. We carry our work with us in our pockets everywhere we go. That means employees have higher standards than ever before for the software that they use at work. Gone are the days when software vendors could get away with obtuse, clunky user interfaces and experiences that tethered employees to specific locations.

Instead, employees expect that the software they use at work will be comparable to what they use daily in their personal lives. These tools should help them be more effective at the office while remaining approachable and providing personalized experiences at scale. This meshes well with the rise of SaaS, since software companies must keep up with and address the needs of their customers.

Why implement enterprise search now?

Enterprise search offers a powerful way to alleviate the impact of SaaS sprawl, and is uniquely equipped to address those concerns today. Thanks to major advances in artificial intelligence, enterprise search technology is more powerful than ever. Advances in neural networks and cloud computing mean enterprises can make a consumer-grade search platform available to their employees efficiently and cost-effectively.

Furthermore, modern SaaS applications make it easy to integrate a search platform. Legacy systems required extensive integration and indexing work, and issues in compatibility and infrastructure provisioning made it harder to get set up. Modern enterprise technology environments enable straightforward integrations thanks to standard APIs and elastic cloud-based infrastructure.

From a business perspective, the need for enterprise search could not be greater. Businesses need employees who are focused on the right tasks, and who are satisfied with their work in order to execute on critical initiatives.



Part Two

Benefits of enterprise search



Enterprise search platforms provide several key benefits in this business environment. Enabling users to find content across an enterprise is not only an end in and of itself, but also drives business benefits across several axes.

Time saved

Employees spend multiple hours every day searching for information. An effective enterprise search system will reduce that time and free them up to focus on more important and impactful work.

Information accessibility enables productivity



employees in a recent OnePoll survey said being able to find information at work without asking for help would make them more productive in their role.

Time saved searching for information also has ripple effects across an entire company. When it is hard for employees to find information, they often turn to their colleagues for help. These requests for assistance not only hinder the searcher's productivity, but also their colleagues', since they have to spend time responding. In addition, employees will also duplicate the work of others if they cannot find what they are looking for, which represents both an acute productivity decrease and, and an

additional knowledge management burden. Enterprise search platforms can curtail or even prevent these problems in an organization altogether.

Increased revenue

An effective search platform helps companies increase revenue in several ways. The time savings and efficiency gains previously highlighted drive productivity, meaning that employees can spend more time focused on work that directly translates into financial results. Sales teams can work more efficiently, with access to not only common enablement material but also harder-to-find details for thorny questions from prospects. Software engineers can use search to understand the context behind decisions by looking up pull requests, tickets and design docs.

In addition, search platforms make it easier for new employees to get up to speed and feel confident in their roles. Rather than having to muddle through a tangled mess of systems to find information, employees have one source that provides everything they need. A recent [OnePoll survey](#) found that it takes the average American worker **a year and seven months to feel like they are thriving in a new job**. Enterprise search platforms can decrease that lead time and get people up to speed.

Employee satisfaction

In a recent Harris Poll, **44 percent of working Americans said that finding information at work was more painful than going to the dentist.**

Workers crave easier access to information



44%

Finding information at work is more painful than going to the dentist.



48%

Would give up their morning coffee to instantly find or access the documents/information they need anytime at work

Source: Harris Poll

Looking up data is a drag on its own, and some employees can end up serving as impromptu librarians to help colleagues across functions find the files and information that they are looking for. That work is frequently uncredited and distracting, frustrating everyone involved. Enterprise search platforms make it easy for people to self-serve answers to their questions, so they don't have to rely on colleagues or spend time searching.

Cost reduction

Finally, increased employee effectiveness can lead to cost savings for enterprises. Enabling employees to self-serve their knowledge needs means that salaries go towards employees' core work responsibilities, rather than distractions.

Especially as organizations slow down hiring or lay off portions of their workforce, it is critical to ensure that organizational knowledge can be disseminated as quickly and effectively as possible. Enterprise search is a powerful tool to ensure everyone remains on the same page, even as the landscape of institutional knowledge within a company shifts.



Part Three

Qualities of a market-leading enterprise search platform



Not all enterprise search platforms are created equal. As IT teams evaluate vendors for consideration, it is critical for them to take these factors into account and seek market-leading solutions for their problems.

Factors to consider in an enterprise search platform

- ✓ Data indexing
- ✓ Semantic search
- ✓ Personalization
- ✓ Connector library
- ✓ Security and permissions
- ✓ Ease of setup
- ✓ End user experience

Data indexing

When considering a search platform, one of the first things to contemplate is how it stores and retrieves data to provide results. The ideal approach is for the platform to crawl and index a company's data across its source systems. Google and other consumer search engines use this approach for several reasons, most notably the benefits it provides to response time. Indexing-based search platforms can deliver results quickly.

Some platforms instead rely on federated search. This approach relays a user's query to the search APIs available from the source systems that they are authorized to search. While the federated approach reduces or eliminates the need for a search index, it sacrifices responsiveness. Because every query must be run through multiple search APIs, each with its limitation, results can be slow to load, or load in stages as responses roll in from varying source applications. This approach is not ideal because employees are used to consumer-grade search platforms that can provide results quickly because of their indexing approach.

While you can look for solutions that utilize multiple modalities, others can augment and translate non-text modalities to the text domain in a manner that's as cost-efficient, effective, and relevant in terms of retrieval of various modalities (image, video, audio, etc.) from text domains. Solutions with rich crawling of metadata, linking, etc., are able to attach text to those non-text items intelligently and satisfy user intents that involve non-text items.

Not all indexing-based platforms are created equal: enterprises should look for search solutions that keep indexes of company data updated on a frequent basis. If the index is updated less than once an hour, users risk missing important search results with the latest content available to them.

Key questions:

- Does the platform index documents or rely on federated search?
- How frequently is the index updated?

Semantic search

The best modern search platforms use artificial intelligence to provide the most relevant results to users with an approach known as semantic search. This approach analyzes the relationships between words in a query to understand the context and meaning of a user's input, rather than simply matching keywords. This is especially useful for queries that use colloquial or ambiguous language, like, "what is our parental leave policy?" In addition, semantic search algorithms can adapt to organizations' unique language, understanding not only a generic relationship between words, but also how that fits into a company's unique context.

Key questions:

- Does the search platform use semantic search techniques?
- How do search algorithms adapt their understanding based on the organization's unique language?

Semantic search

A search bar with the text "file expenses". Below it, a user profile for "Christine N" is shown with the text "answered · 2w ago". The main result is a link titled "How to submit an expense report" with a subtext: "To submit any company expenses (meals, learning & development, company events, company travel, etc), please submit your receipts on Gusto. Make sure to input the correct category." Below this is another link titled "Travel and expense policy" with a subtext: "Gusto is used for filing expenses..."

Keyword search

A search bar with the text "file expenses". Below it, three search results are listed, each with a blue menu icon and a title: "Travel and expense policy", "Corporate travel policy V1", and "Expense process".

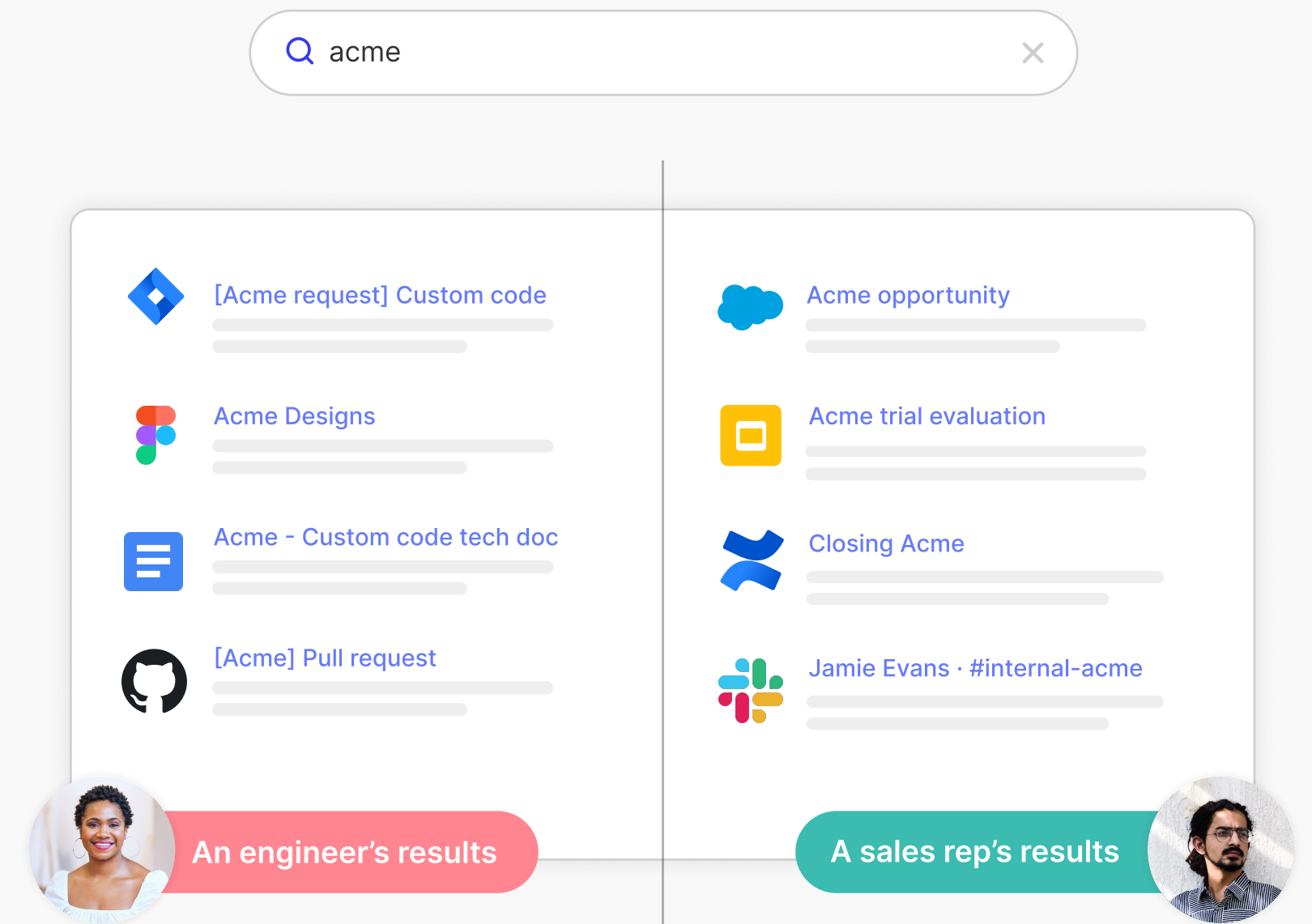
Personalization

Search quality does not exist in a vacuum. If a software engineer searches for “employee onboarding,” they will want to know about how to set up a development environment and get access to the relevant code repositories. But the same query from a sales representative needs to return results about accessing a company’s Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and enablement materials to get the salesperson ready to pitch. Returning sales-oriented results to the engineer is a bad experience and vice versa.

By taking into account company structure, and activity signals from the source systems that feed into search, the best search platforms are able to provide a high degree of personalization without requiring manual tuning or adjustment on a per-department or even per-user basis. Although manual tuning has its strengths, it may not provide better results than a well-configured automated tuning approach. It could actually end up harming users in the long run, since it's harder for humans to keep track of and reconfigure search ranking as content changes. Enterprises should be looking for platforms that provide the most personalization with the least manual effort, since that will enable IT teams to remain focused on higher-value tasks.

Key questions:

- What signals does a platform use to personalize search results?
- Is personalization automatic, or does it require user input?
- How will the system adapt over time as a company changes?



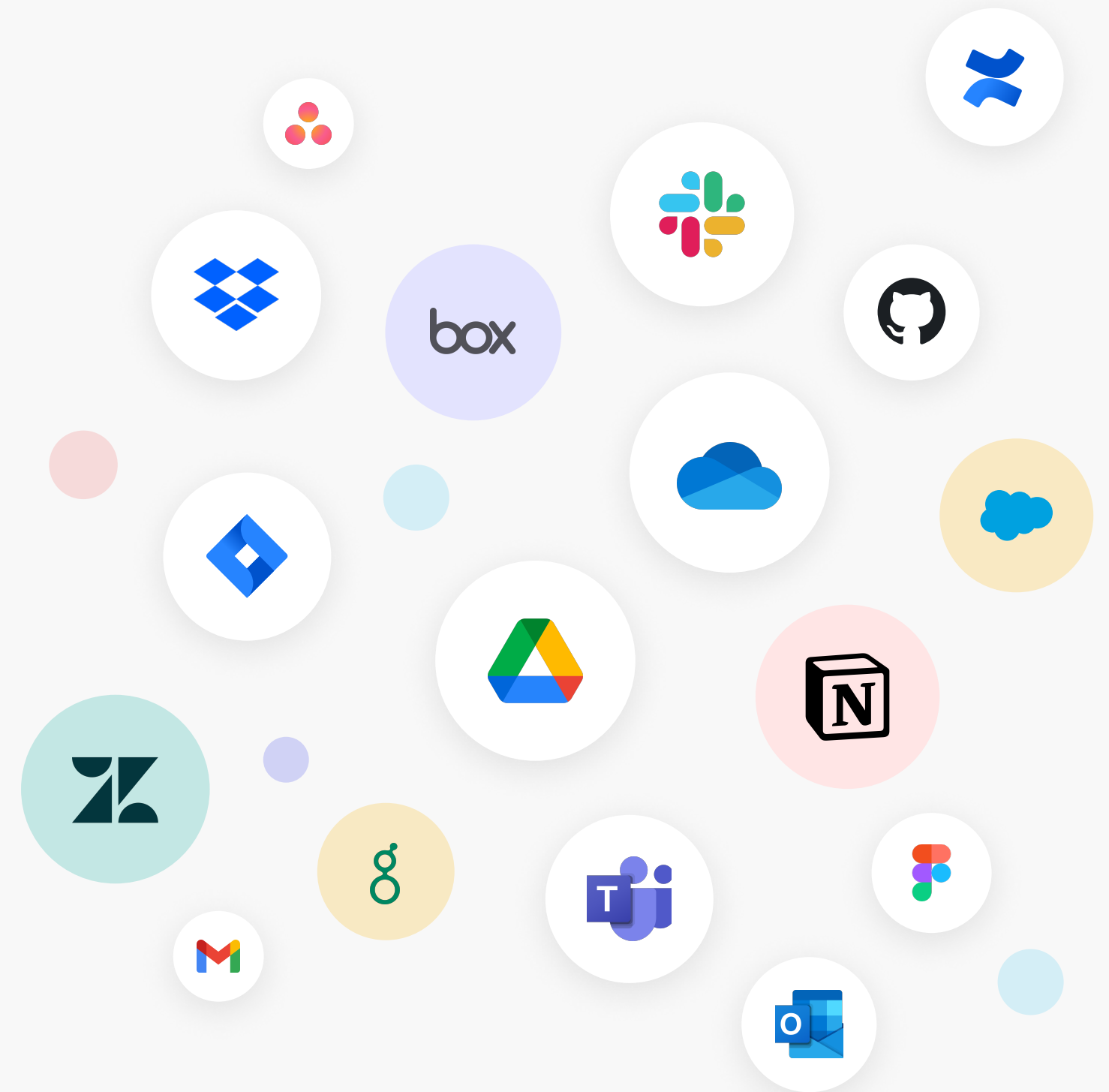
Connector library

Enterprise search platforms are only as good as their ability to connect with systems where content is stored. Each platform uses connectors to ingest content from other systems, which means the size of a given platform's library of connectors is critical to its utility. Buyers should ensure that a given enterprise search platform can connect to their enterprise's key systems, because users will deprioritize searching platforms that don't contain all of the search results they expect.

The details of these connectors and their capabilities is also critical: some platforms rely on third-party service providers to configure and manage connectors, rather than building them in-house, which then means that customers must pay for consulting services to unlock those connectors for their own use.

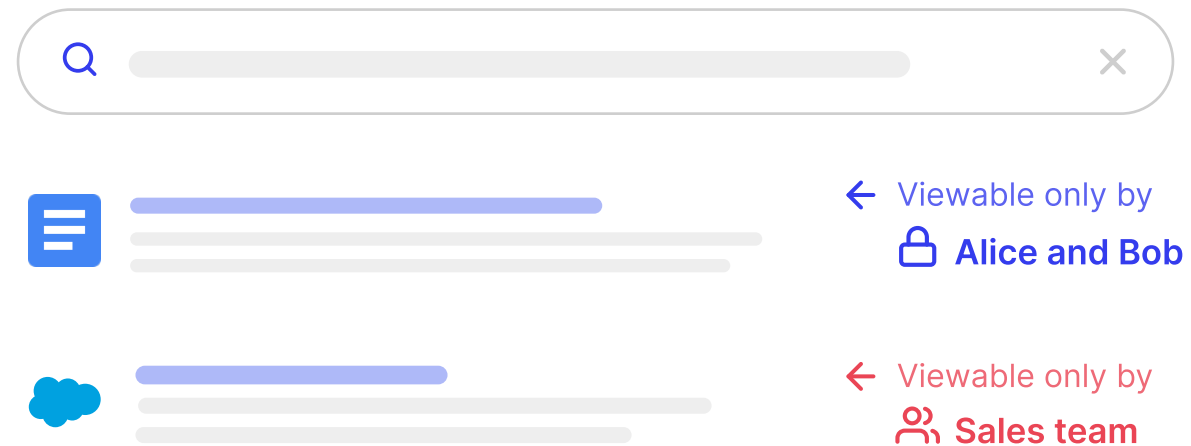
Key questions:

- Does the platform have all the connectors that my company needs to have effective data coverage?
- How quickly is a platform adding new connectors?
- Do connectors require additional consulting to install or configure?



Security and permissions

It is paramount that enterprise search platforms surface the right information for the right people. To do that, they need to keep company information secure and respect the permissions for source files to ensure that information does not leak across the company. The best platforms will handle this permissioning automatically, without requiring manual effort to restrict results from data sources.



Furthermore, platforms should be able to clearly articulate how they balance surfacing results to drive information discovery while ensuring that information is not shared more broadly than is necessary or appropriate.

Finally, the best search platforms will offer additional features for administrators to help govern company information. These features can include sensitive content detection (to ensure that secure information is not leaked) and analytics (to see what content is being accessed), among other capabilities.

Key questions:

- Does the search platform automatically respect the permissions of source documents?
- How does the platform prioritize ensuring information security while also enabling information discovery?
- What additional features does the search platform offer to ensure proper information governance?

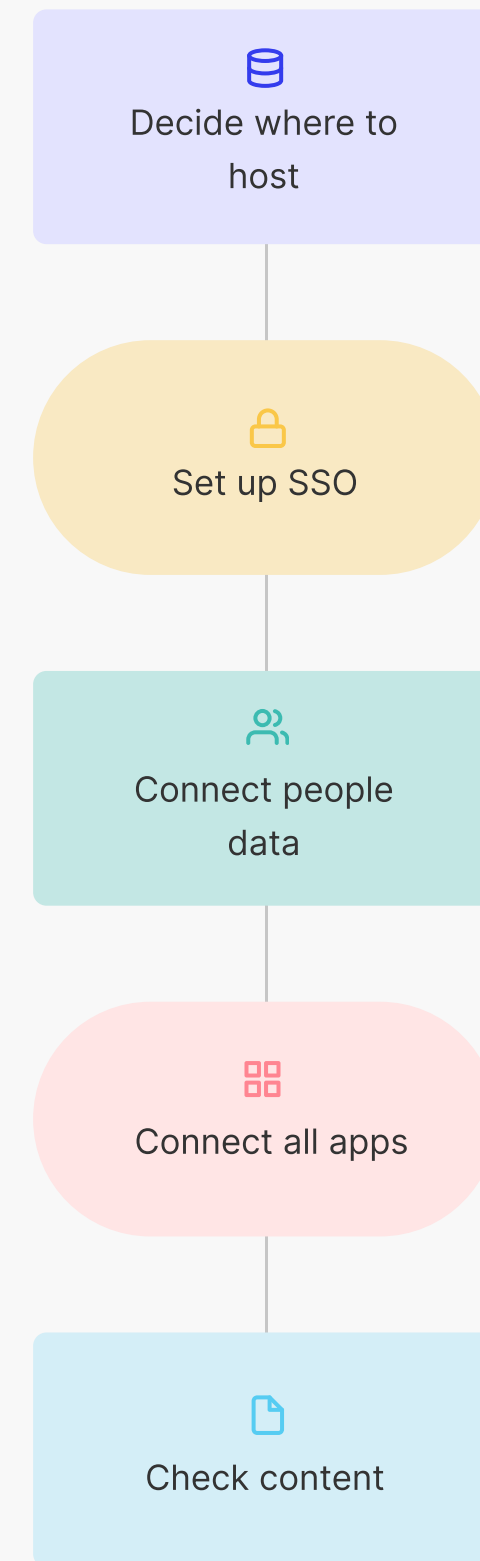
Ease of setup

In the modern cloud-based workplace, applications should be simple to set up and quick to deliver value. Enterprise search is no exception. Traditional enterprise search platforms often saddle IT teams with significant workloads just to get them set up, sometimes requiring third-party consulting engagements just to start providing search results. Newer platforms with robust connector libraries deliver high-quality results more quickly and cheaply than legacy approaches.

Given the complexity of this task, setup will always require work, but the best platforms will build capabilities that simplify it to the greatest extent, thereby maximizing time to value for customers.

Key questions:

- How long will it take before a platform can start returning results to users?
- Will implementing the platform require the assistance of contractors or new staff?

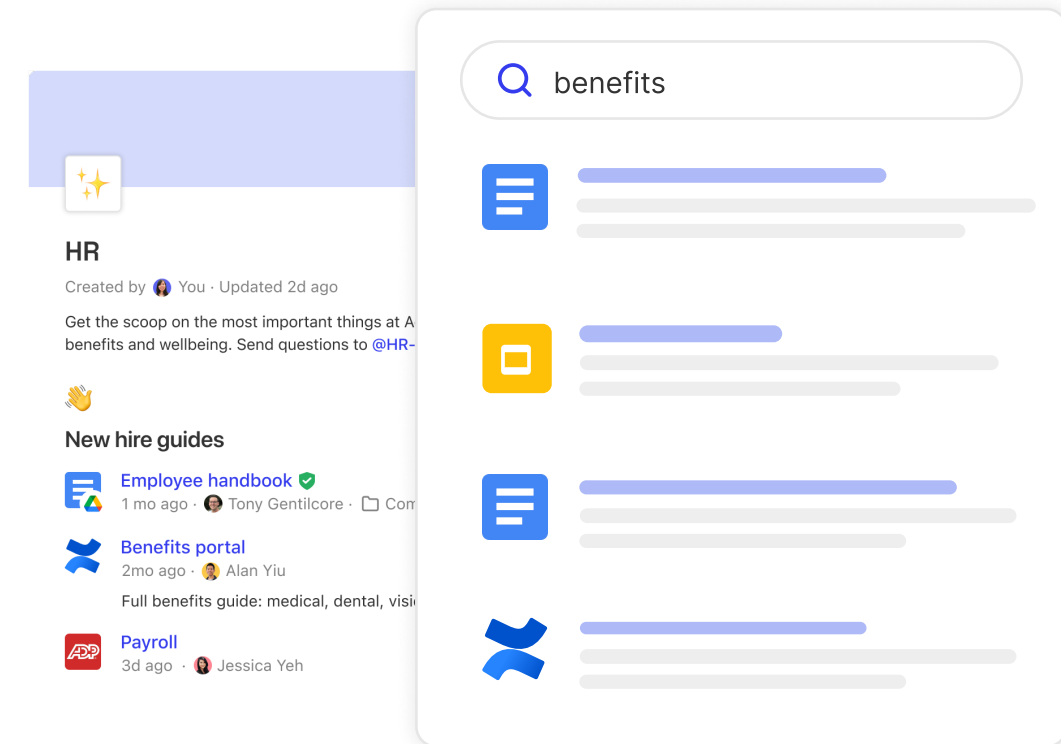


End user experience

Enterprise search platforms without high-quality, engaging user experiences are like drivetrains without car bodies: the important parts are all there, but they're still not that useful in the real world. Employees are used to high-quality, feature-rich search platforms from their personal lives, and expect the same capabilities from their enterprise search experience.

This begins with the search result experience itself: the best platforms have intelligent autocomplete capabilities, and surface all of the results from across the company on one page, so users can get quick access to their necessary answers. But a rich user experience in enterprise search goes beyond that table stakes functionality. It can be difficult to find all of the information related to a key topic (such as a product or set of company policies) through a single search query, so a search platform should make it possible for users to organize information and disseminate it.

In addition, queries for people represent a significant portion of enterprise search volume. The best platforms will provide a rich experience that will help employees understand how they relate to their coworkers, and the broader organization. It's also best to avoid generalized search engines – they'll require a lot of time to configure for an internal search use case, and employees are stuck with a sub-par experience.



Finally, all of these experiences should be available across a wide variety of access points: in a web browser, integrated with chat applications like Slack and Teams, on mobile devices and beyond.

Key questions:

- Do users find this platform easy and engaging to use?
- Is it possible to organize information found in search?
- Does the search platform make it easy for employees to connect with one another?
- Can users access their company's search from the access points they use for work?

Conclusion

Enterprise search unlocks the potential of the modern workplace. Rather than fighting disparate systems of knowledge and work, employees can access all of them in one place. The latest advances in artificial intelligence and cloud computing mean that it is possible for enterprises to quickly benefit from search, without requiring time-consuming and costly consulting engagements.

As companies evaluate search solutions, they should look for those that take advantage of the latest technology to provide high-quality, personalized results. These systems need a large library of connectors, and security and governance capabilities to match. And on top of all that, they must provide a robust user experience that satisfies employees.

Enterprise search feature checklist

Does an enterprise search platform have what it takes to help your company? This checklist can help with that determination.

Core search capabilities

- Data indexing to ensure quick access to results
- Semantic search
- Deep learning models adapted to individual customers
- Deep, automatic personalization of search results for end users

Overall user experience

- Support for rich people and teams results
- Ability to organize indexed content
- Approachable, engaging user interface
- Availability of search across key platforms (Web, mobile, chat, etc.)

Connectors

- Large native connector library that supports key company systems:
 - Core productivity suite (Office 365, G Suite)
 - Chat (Teams, Slack)
 - Source code management (GitHub, GitLab)
 - Ticketing (Jira, Zendesk)
 - Sales (Salesforce, Highspot, Seismic)
 - Human Resources (BambooHR, Lattice, Lessonly)
- Easy to set up connectors
- Use of native permissions from source systems to inform search results



Enterprise search that checks all the boxes.

Glean is the enterprise search platform that helps every employee at a company find the information that they need when they need it. Our platform uses the latest advancements in machine learning to understand an enterprise's unique language and provide users with the most personalized results for their queries. With a large (and ever-growing) library of connectors, Glean can unlock the knowledge across all of a company's key systems and surface information in an easy-to-use and powerful interface.

For more information about how Glean can help your organization, contact our team.

[Get a demo](#)

