Visionaries Invade the 2003 Search Engine Magic Quadrant

More visionaries, two leaders and several niche vendors address enterprises' needs for locating information. New vendors in the perennially volatile search engine market contribute to price pressure, confusion and variety.

Gartner's Magic Quadrant is designed to evaluate vendors on the basis of completeness of vision and ability to execute. A vendor's vision enables it not only to serve an enterprise's needs today but also to prepare for its future circumstances. Similarly, ability to execute implies that a vendor sees the technological challenges enterprises will face and has the resources and viability to respond.

Enterprises should not select a vendor based solely on the vendor's position in a Magic Quadrant. Because of the variable vertical specialties that vendors demonstrate, in terms of industry and targeted functionality, enterprises must make their decisions not on a degree of difference in a specific quadrant, but on a number of more-subtle factors. These factors include necessary vertical specialties, interface requirements, user expectations, financial considerations, project life span and architectural needs.

Gartner used many criteria to evaluate vendors for the 2003 Search Engine Magic Quadrant.

Completeness of Vision

- Relevancy determination: Enterprises overwhelmingly identify relevance as their key criterion for selecting a vendor in any given price range. The power of a relevancy system, as applied to an individual set of searches, enables the search engine to improve performance and provide return on investment.

- Indexing and security: The ability to collect data from all relevant sources in a secure and efficient manner is the foundation for a search engine's breadth and broad applicability.
• Input/output flexibility: Search engines that can respond to a variety of input methods (including multiple languages and natural language expressions) and provide output flexibility offer the greatest value for the largest number of tasks.

• Scalability and architecture: Enterprises with strategic installations need to store large indexes and manage substantial query volumes. Search vendor product architecture is fundamental to an engine’s long-term value to an enterprise, particularly to react dynamically to new requirements for data sources and search-output consumers. Gartner places a high premium on service-oriented architectures in vendors’ product lines.

Ability to Execute

• Financial strength: Gartner considers vendors’ cash on hand and their financial performance.

• Service leverage: Gartner factors together vendors’ ability to provide services directly to enterprises and to engineer their provision from an indirect channel.

• Enterprise visibility and installed base: Vendors’ appearance in inquiry and their success in having completed sales to satisfied enterprises are important considerations.

• Pricing flexibility and appeal: Pricing models from search vendors vary from appliance-based, time-limited licenses to per-page models, to traditional enterprise deployment models. Gartner considers these models in relation to functionality and cost.

There are 21 vendors in the 2003 Search Engine Magic Quadrant (see Figure 1).
Vendors are listed alphabetically within the quadrants in which they appear.

**Leaders**


Autonomy remains highly adept at pattern-matching and word-independent consideration of the content it indexes and processes. However, because it lacks a direct service division, it is handicapped in developing marquee installations and installations for midsize businesses that sometimes prefer not to use expensive systems integrators. It provides a broad spectrum of pricing options but tends to be priced higher, on average, than other vendors.

Verity's roots in keyword location and related relevancy analysis, where the word is the critical foundation for comprehension, is different than the Autonomy approach. Just as Autonomy has
developed a credible search product, Verity has expanded its ability to address high-sophistication pattern matching and is now capable of matching Autonomy in many deals. Verity's acquisition of Ultraseek is simultaneously a cause for concern and a reason to be hopeful. Verity will find it challenging to produce a one-size-fits-all, variably priced product from the purchase. Success in doing so would benefit its status as a leader.

**Visionaries**

All vendors in this category demonstrated strong flexibility for query input and results output. They also provide flexible, service-oriented architectures capable of interacting dynamically with applications that do not generate documents as output, but that generate values, details or reports.

Ask Jeeves — The enterprise software arm of the dot-com pioneer swept together the results of its acquisition of Octopus with the intelligence it has gathered from its popular Web search site to develop a credible product named JeevesOne. The software, which has most of its success so far in self-service, is notable for its flexibility in data source inclusion, including particular relational database management systems. Gartner's chief concern is the potential of distraction from enterprise search that the "Ask.com" site represents, and the limited capability Ask Jeeves has to leverage systems integration partners.

Convera — Substantial financial challenges during 2002 placed Convera in a difficult position with many enterprise prospects. However, it maintained a considerable flow of new customers and continues to provide remarkable scale and a variety of critical features, including cross-lingual search and retrieval for internationalization and government practices. Convera has stemmed losses through significant staff reductions to focus on enterprise search. It continues to offer multimedia-centric search through its Screening Room product.

Endeca — The specialist in addressing e-commerce catalogs lined up a credible set of new customers in 2002, a substantial portion of which fall outside e-commerce and in enterprise search. Endeca provides highly effective "guided navigation," which combines logical categoric browsing and search for structured data sets. Its greatest challenge will be in building visibility beyond e-commerce.

Fast — A dramatic movement up and to the right compared to the 2002 Visionaries quadrant may be credited to Fast's substantial success in developing new customers in 2002, with signature wins from major enterprises with substantial problems.
Fast's sale of its Web search business additionally implies a significant improvement in strategy, and the cash grants it improved stability.

InQuira — The relatively unknown, small vendor's focus on natural language and other input models pushed it into the Visionaries quadrant. Its focus on self-service provides it with a lucrative niche (which it shares with established vendors such as Verity and specialist rivals, including iPhrase) from which it seeks to expand.

iPhrase — iPhrase added a substantial number of customers to its installed base. This includes a significant number of contracts in which varying modules are deployed in a variety of environments (such as self-service, sales and call center support). Factors in this success included expansion from its 2001 focus on high-priced contracts and its expansion out of a niche of mostly targeting natural-language processing. Its greatest strength is its ability in particular functional area and vertical industries to produce quick, complex answers without resorting to document lists.

**Niche Vendors**

80-20 Software — This vendor provides a combination of search and taxonomy features for strong relevancy flexibility. It also takes the unusual measure of selling a search engine for local desktop content such as office documents and e-mail. However, it is weak in incorporating dynamic data sources and, like a few other vendors, only supports Microsoft platforms.

AltaVista — This Web portal (particularly attractive to discerning users in the mid- and late-1990s) and enterprise search vendor has a substantial customer base, strong partnerships with systems integrators, adequate technology and an extremely uncertain future. The enterprise search product, for which former owner CMGI's goals were ambiguous, is part of a proposed sale to portal service vendor Overture Services. Until Overture's plans are explicitly stated and backed up with commitment through YE03, enterprises should approach AltaVista with caution. Its relatively strong position in the Niche Players quadrant reflects its historical customer base, fair architecture and potential.

Atomz — Atomz has a significant client base for its recently introduced enterprise application service provider (ASP) search service. (Atomz introduced its small-site service in 1999.) Many enterprises will find such a model unacceptable; those that welcome it will find a useful and attractively priced fundamental product. Atomz also provides content management as an integrated ASP service.
EasyAsk — EasyAsk has developed a strong client base in e-commerce and has improved its capability to address the unique challenges inherent in merchandising and marketing since 2002. It will be ready to present a more-credible self-service and enterprise search story if it expands its relevancy models, adds connectors for Web content management repositories and continues development of enterprisewide search functions.

Google — The Web search engine and advertising vendor’s innovative appliance continues to ride its brand power, general utility and low price to success among enterprises. It convincingly demonstrates that its Web-wide relevancy innovation of "PageRank" (which analyzes links among Web sites, and factors the popularity picture into results order) is not its only means of providing useful results. However, Google has fewer ways to manage relevancy, limited methods for indexing data in nonstatic repositories and only simple approaches to query syntax. Its three business divisions — Google.com, portal services and the search appliance — raise the potential for distraction.

Hummingbird — The smart enterprise suite vendor possesses venerable search assets from its acquisition of search pioneers PC-Docs and Fulcrum, but it has not yet translated these into contemporary strong products. It has a formidable customer base, but has not modernized its relevancy determination systems or developed the necessary connectors for Web content management systems.

Intelliseek — An early vendor of metasearch tools, Intelliseek provides an innovative enterprise search tool with a strong architecture that is intended to incorporate external data sources into its index and results. The vendor, which has added a variety of technologies through six acquisitions, lays out an approach focused on managing specific problems for return on investment.

Odyssey Development — This vendor has experienced the majority of its substantial success in small businesses and workgroups. Its architecture is significantly oriented toward querying information in documents and databases, but lacks the content management integration orientation necessary in enterprise products. It also lacks a Unix-based product, a significant detriment for larger enterprises.

Mercado Software — The e-commerce search pioneer has introduced an enterprise search product with a strong architecture, but a slender early customer list. Its e-commerce-focused IntuiFind software remains a competitor in retail and customer service projects.
Mondosoft — This vendor began as a pure ASP, but now also offers its product through a traditional licensing mode. The licensed product does not run on Unix platforms, which handicaps it in major enterprises. It is appropriate for limited installations and is attractively priced for tactical projects.

Recommind — This vendor demonstrates significant vision and creativity in query and document analysis but, like many new search vendors, possesses limited variety outside its core approaches. Expansion of its relevancy determination method will win it a broader position.

Thunderstone — This veteran vendor maintains its hold on the vast eBay search engine and has a substantial customer base attracted to its basic functionality and SQL foundation. Thunderstone is attractive for projects with low budgets and strong development support. It also offers the widest range among search vendors for operating system support, including FreeBSD and Compaq Tru64. Enterprises requiring less-versatile functions can buy a slimmer, less-expensive version of Texis.

YourAmigo — This vendor provides basic search capability with some creative relevancy determination models, but has limited flexibility for query input and weak inclusion of nondocument sources. It provides a particularly deep interface for database inclusion.

Not on the Magic Quadrant this year are SAP, Microsoft, IBM Lotus and Oracle. These vendors provide credible search products as elements of other, larger suites or more-substantial products. None of these vendors offers its search engine for sale as an independent product from its infrastructure or applications, but all are credible within the niche of IS organizations that prefer their products. Each should be included on any shortlist by enterprises that own the products associated with these vendors. They are not included here because they do not provide independent search engine products.

**Bottom Line:** The number of search engine vendors has expanded, not contracted, since 2002, as many observers might have expected. The volatility and relentless advance that has defined enterprise search in the Internet era shows no sign of abating. Through at least YE05, enterprises should expect no unqualified dominant leader of the search market.