THE SINGLEPOINT ROI
WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU
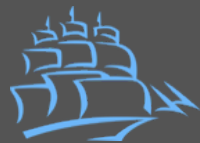
Northern Light

When you spend $20 million a year on market research to help you better understand your customers, your industry, and your competitors, you expect that research to help make better business decisions throughout the company in every marketing, sales, and product development department. These were exactly the expectations of one of America's largest telecommunications service providers. But while the industry giant did indeed command a major share of the nation's telecom market, it felt it wasn't getting a proper return on its sizeable market research investment. Relevant market research wasn't being found, shared, disseminated, and – most importantly – used.

For many years, the telecommunications leader conducted and cataloged its market research without a centralized single point of access. Marketing professionals had subscriptions to many third-party research sources, but they had to visit each research supplier's website separately and conduct multiple searches, which was time consuming and painful.   The company also tasked employees with digging up internal documents and reports as needed to forecast market conditions, and trying to remember "Didn't Mary Smith do that study last year" was hit or miss. Discoveries made by one researcher weren't automatically available to any other. Information became siloed, and the pace of innovation wound down.

The market research process was slow, uncoordinated, and unacceptably costly.

Seeing a better option, the company switched to a single, enterprise-wide portal through which users could find all the company's market research and competitive intelligence (CI), from both external and internal collections, using a common user interface. This portal delivered as promised, measurably reducing research time and producing significantly better search results. It also made information gleaned from internal and external sources available enterprise-wide.

So, were the improvements worth the cost? And, what was the company's ROI on this purchase? The organization estimates it currently saves 1.5 hours per user session using its new portal compared to the decentralized one. Using $100 per hour as the value of professional time, it is easy to calculate the value of such time-saving based on the 2,500 portal user sessions the company performs monthly. With a cost reduction of $150 per session, the company saves about **$375,000 per month**, or approximately **$4.5 million per year!**

This is just one example of how companies can enjoy a significant ROI by investing in a Competitive Intelligence / Market Research Portal.

In this e-book, we will cover:
- what a Competitive Intelligence / Market Research Portal is,
- what it can do, and
- the value it can bring your organization.

We're also going to make the case, through examples like this, that a CI/market research portal isn't just a piece of "nice-to-have" technology, but rather an <u>essential</u> tool that delivers obvious bottom-line dividends any company leader would be crazy to ignore.

It's been said we are living in the Information Age. And for good reason. There's a lot of information out there. A LOT of information. How much? Experts estimate the amount of data produced each year is greater than the combined amount of data from all previous years — going all the way back to the invention of writing 5,200 years ago. Heck, we're not just swimming in data…we're drowning in it.

The problem is most of that data is just noise. It's everywhere…and nowhere. Your company's challenge is finding those bits of information that are actually useful. This takes real intelligence. More precisely, it takes artificial intelligence. Also known as machine learning, this is the kind of technology that until only recently has been the stuff of science fiction. Ladies and gentlemen, meet SinglePoint.

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."
- Benjamin Franklin
"If you think the cost of education is high – try ignorance."
- Derek Bok, Former President, Harvard University

SinglePoint is a market research portal created by Northern Light that uses the power of machine learning to blast through the noise of today's Information Age and reveal the gleaming diamonds of insight representing real value. The goal: To help you discover information and insights that can turn your company into a competitive behemoth. Because, like we said, knowledge is power.

Now, the good stuff. Each SinglePoint portal is built to order. It includes an entire ecosystem of tools (strategic dashboards, personal dashboards, newsletters, alerts, RSS feeds, automated insights reports, recommendations) to disseminate, share, and socialize market and competitive insights from an impressively wide range of content. Collections can include:

Primary Internal Market Research

If your company is like most, you are overflowing with reports, spreadsheets, and presentations, much of which is poorly organized and difficult to retrieve. Some of the research is on shared network drives in a folder structure that is inscrutable; some is on various brand and team Microsoft SharePoint sites with inconsistent tagging (if any!) and suffering from SharePoint's infamously poor search; and worst of all, some is on the notorious "laptop repository", accessible only from the computer of the researcher that created the document to start with. And in this day and age that person might be across the globe.

With SinglePoint, your employees can efficiently search your research content that already exists from across the organization, regardless of its source or format. The insights achieved through this process can be eye-opening. (You'd be surprised to learn how many companies don't know how much they already know!) We securely host your documents in an encrypted format using the same algorithm the U.S. Military uses to encrypt its battlefield communications (now that is Security with a capital "S") or you can host your documents yourself on your enterprise intranet servers and we'll automatically destroy our copies after indexing.

And just so you know, file formats are never an issue. Our market intelligence content automation system can extract and index both text and metadata from MS Office documents, PDFs, XML, and HTML. We can even extract and index metadata for the non-text-based file formats used for graphics, logos, videos, and other media, and use automated OCR for image files of text-based documents. Seriously.

Licensed Secondary Market Research

There's a whole universe of information — useful information — out there just waiting to be collected. Northern Light aggregates and indexes the entire collections of more than 160 IT analyst, market research, corporate research, think tanks, and technology research firms including Forrester, IDC, Informa, Kantar, Mintel, Decision Resources, Euromonitor, Strategy Analytics, The 451and many others.

Business News

Northern Light mines the web to create a comprehensive collection of online business news, and industry authority blogs for up-to-the-minute competitive and market intelligence, information that could impact your marketing strategies and business decisions.

Northern Light Business News contains 40,000 stories per business day from 6,500 individual online news sources. We pay particular attention to vertical industry news websites, such as CNET (IT/Telecom) and FiercePharma (Life Sciences) and we have more than 2,000 such vertical industry news sites in the news collection. Industry news sites are where the deep expertise resides. Unlike the general business reporters at newspapers, journalists at industry news sites write about their industries every day. They know what the trends and issues are, they can tell a significant press release from a trivial one, and they have contacts that can tip them off to impending big stories. Worried about fake news? Worry no more. The journalists at the publications in Northern Light Business News are too experienced and savvy to fall for anything that is not spot on.

We also allow you to search more than 2,000 daily blog posts from 3,000 industry authority sites on any given day. (To be deemed an "industry authority," a blogger must be a recognized industry research analyst, a journalist for a recognized trade publication, an industry executive, an official company blog at a substantial industry player, or an industry pundit or guru.) Moreover, industry authority bloggers are the influencers and trend setters who set the tone for public discourse about companies and their products. What they say can have a direct bearing on competitive intelligence and marketing strategy analysis.

Of course, mining data is one thing. Presenting information in a way that makes sense and is actionable is another challenge altogether. Um, challenge accepted!

Social Media

What are people talking about? And what are they saying? More importantly, what are they saying about you? The SinglePoint portal harvests posts from -relevant social media platforms, including Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Industry vertical social media platforms can be included as well.

Aggregated technology intelligence from the Web

We've also indexed more than 44,000 white papers from 800 leading information technology companies, revealing the platforms, product roadmaps, and technical strategies used by industry leaders including HP, IBM, Oracle, Cisco, Microsoft, SAP, Red Hat, Dell, EMC, Accenture, PWC, KPMG, Fiserv, Novell, Google, Adobe, CA, Intel, AMD, Nokia, RIM, and Motorola.

Not only that, we have aggregated and indexed over 2 million abstracts and posters from more than 2,500 life sciences conferences — often the first place new life sciences research is presented — making them a particularly rich source of competitive intelligence. Additionally, we have access to Medline, clinical trials, patents, and FDA databases. And based on client requests, Northern Light is adding new sources all the time to deliver premium knowledge management solutions. Bottom line? If the information is out there, we're going to find it for you. And make it super easy to access it.

Large companies tend to spend lots of money — sometimes millions of dollars — purchasing licenses from syndicated research firms. When an organization is multi-national, its local and regional divisions, various brand groups, and dispersed functional departments often don't know what licenses other groups are buying, or at what price, which can result in costly redundancies and duplications.

A major Silicon Valley-based manufacturer of home and office computers and peripherals faced this exact problem. With offices and departments all over the world, the company long suffered from duplicated and underutilized information contracts.

Then the computer giant began using SinglePoint to consolidate its licensing information to make possible the enterprise-wide sharing of purchased content. Today, it estimates its SinglePoint portal allows it to save approximately **$1.25 million** per year through the avoidance of duplicated research purchases worldwide. The company reports that at the time its study was done, it had 5,000 user accounts and syndicated market research from 25 sources, so you may save more or less than that depending on your metrics.

That would buy a lot of replacement ink cartridges!

No offense to computers, but they used to be dumb. Basically, they were toasters good at math. But times change. Nowadays, machines are getting smarter. And smart people are learning how to use them to their advantage.

The power of SinglePoint lies in its sophisticated deployment of machine learning. SinglePoint can read the market research search studies on your search result and then write a report for you on what it finds.

And here's the really good part: SinglePoint presents its findings in ways that are easy to understand and even suggests additional readings that can add further value, all within a single knowledge management portal.

The ways SinglePoint dashboard presents information include:

Automated Insights Reports

Users complain about search for business research tasks, which they view as laborious and time consuming. They ask, "Why do we have to read all those reports and articles on a search result? Why can't the search engine just read them for me and tell me what it found that I should know about?" Well, that wasn't possible until recently. But now it is.

SinglePoint actually "reads" the documents on your search result, identifies key ideas, then writes a report on the fly revealing insights your team is likely to find relevant. If you are in a hurry you can read the Insights Report and know more about the topic than if you just picked one report from the search result, even if it was the most relevant one. And if you have the time for in-depth research, the Insights Report helps you identify the key issues quickly so your drill down will be better informed and productive.
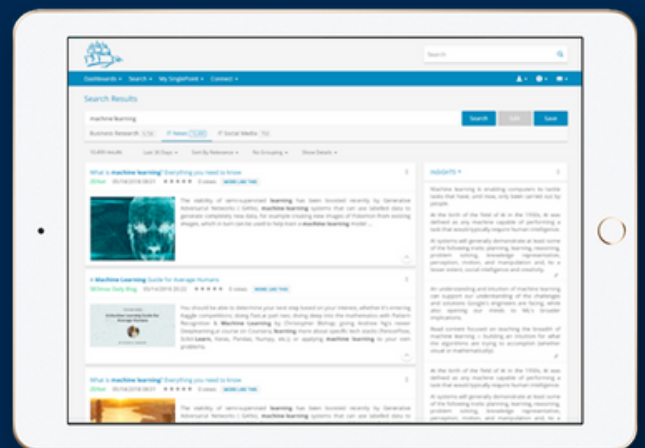
"More Like This"

You select documents of interest from the original search results list, click the "More Like This" button, at which point SinglePoint rewrites the search query to automatically generate a new, refined search of the topic that is way more powerful and comprehensive than any query a user, even a power user, could write. The machine-written query automatically incorporates synonyms, related topics, and the weighting of topics to produce spot-on results.

Recommended Reading List

What if Siri or Alexa could help you do your work instead of just helping you find a nearby pizza restaurant? Based on what you download, SinglePoint will build a smart search agent that will generate its own content recommendations for you. In other words, instead of you having to search for relevant content, the relevant content finds you. The platform continuously monitors the incoming content flow and proactively alerts you to new material it believes you will find useful. In effect, you have a personal smart search agent working for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Okay, here is another SinglePoint success story from the world of consumer electronics. Like many companies, our industry giant client once provided its Sales, Marketing, IT, and Product Management teams with their own intranet sites. Prior to getting SinglePoint, it built and maintained 150 distinct internal websites worldwide that all had some smattering of market research on them. However, with SinglePoint, the company was able to reduce the number of intranet sites from 150 to just one. On the IT side alone, the company estimates this improvement saves $1.5 million per year in hardware, software, and, especially, IT systems administration. This can be converted into a metric of $10,000 per duplicate portal eliminated per year.

Research and Development (R&D) receives high priority in the pharmaceutical industry. Over time, companies can spend literally billions of dollars developing a new drug. It is therefore critical that a pharmaceutical company have a keen sense of where the industry stands, including what drugs are being developed elsewhere, what research avenues are being pursued, and in what stage the development of a particular drug might be. In other words, primary research.

One of our pharmaceutical clients uses SinglePoint to perform such primary research prior to determining its annual R&D budget. Often, such research has already been performed but the reports are neither widely known nor easily findable since they are scattered on network folders and laptops or held in repositories, like Microsoft SharePoint, with ineffective search technology.

With SinglePoint, our client was able to consolidate its primary research into a single repository and make it available to authorized users throughout the organization. This strategy eliminated the need for duplicate primary research efforts, saving substantial amounts of money. It has saved about 10% in its research budget by avoiding duplicate, unnecessary, or dead-end research projects. This amounts to **$1.0 million** per month, or **$12 million** per year, in savings.
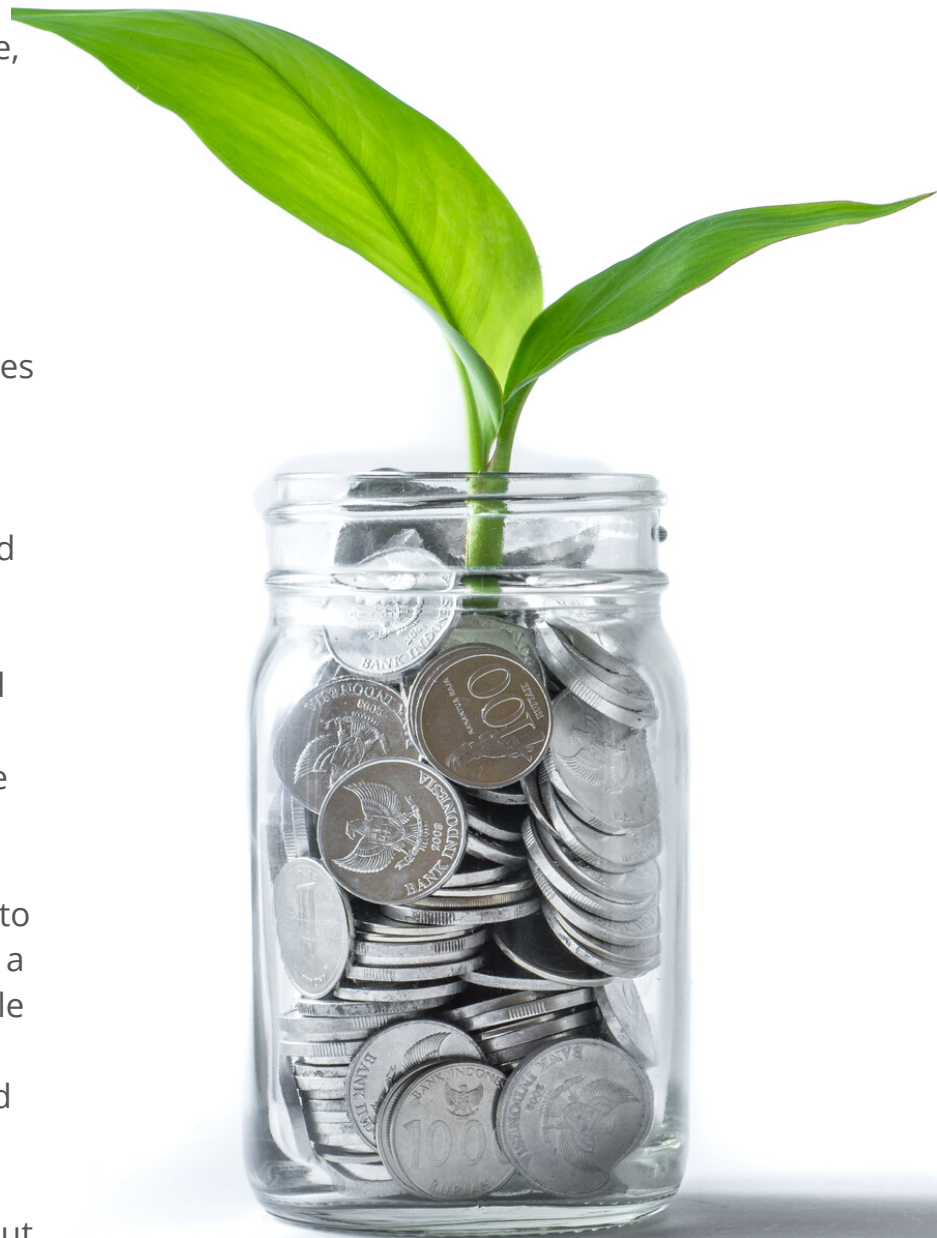
We've just seen how some high-profile companies realized a substantial ROI with SinglePoint. Using SinglePoint, they successfully:

- Reduced research time.
- Consolidated information contracts.
- Reduced the number of intranet sites and portals.
- Lowered the cost of primary research.
- Improved their decision-making.

Impressive? Absolutely! But that's just half the story. Here are other ways Northern Light customers are using SinglePoint to save money, boost sales, and increase profits:

Support a large number of users with a limited staff.

Many companies have hundreds, perhaps thousands of employees conducting market research searches, but don't have the budget to pay for the necessary support staff. SinglePoint makes it possible to keep such personnel to a bare minimum. For example, one of our clients has just one person supporting 5,000 users of secondary research via its SinglePoint portal. Another has just five people supporting more than 60,000 users of secondary research. In yet another case, just six internal market research professionals produce and distribute important original research reports on-demand to a marketing department of 300.

Develop new products faster.

Strategic research is a key part of product development. It can reveal customer preferences, market strengths, weaknesses and competitor plans and activities. This is sometimes where having access to syndicated research comes into play, as well as having one global repository for your primary market research. If you can find a study from a syndicated source or a study that had already been done, you can get the answers the product team need faster by avoiding a time-consuming new study. One client estimated that their SinglePoint portal and the philosophy "search SinglePoint first" for new research proposals resulted in a reduction by six months in the time to launch new products, the benefit of which the company quantified to be in the billions of dollars.

Manage potential intellectual property and fair use issues.

It is easy for online researchers to unknowingly violate a secondary source's terms of use. Usually, this happens when users post documents to multiple internal portals without any system for enforcing licensing arrangements. Market research analyst firms have been known to present invoices for hundreds of thousands of dollars to companies when research reports that had been purchased on a one-seat license were posted to internal websites sites without proper access controls. Northern Light SinglePoint can help your company avoid this kind of exposure by automatically enforcing the terms of licensed content.

VIII. SAMPLE CALCULATION OF A RESEARCH PORTAL ROI

Let's cut to the chase. The upshot. Dollars and cents. To calculate the potential ROI of a SinglePoint research portal, we're going to use figures describing the "average" Northern Light customer (Note: Your mileage may vary).

- 30,000 annual user sessions
- $20 million annual primary research budget
- 6,000 average user accounts
- 15 external research sources
- 20 intranet sites providing research in product/geographic units

There are many more measurements and estimates required for a full calculation, such as the contribution the portal made to closing new business, how the research portal speeded new products to market, etc. (Since these measurements and estimates are not available to Northern Light for most clients, we will not calculate a value for items requiring those figures, restricting our calculations to the first three categories.)

What follows are the value of research time saved by the client's professional staff and the value of duplicate purchases avoided.

Value of Time Saved by Client Professional Staff
30,000 user sessions x 1.5 hours per user session x $100 per hour =

$4,500,000

Value of Avoided Primary Research Studies
$20,000,000 x 10% =

$2,000,000

Value of Duplicate Purchases of Market Research Studies
$1,250,000 x (6,000/5,000 users) x (15/25 sources) =

$900,000

Value of Consolidating Multiple Research Sites and Repositories
20 intranet sites x $10,000 per site =

$200,000 (in IT costs)

Grand Total **$7,600,000**

Once again, not calculated here, but even larger than the figures above by one or more orders of magnitude, is the contribution made by the SinglePoint portal to winning new business, making more informed business decisions, and getting new products developed faster.

Digging up actionable information is difficult. It takes time. It takes money. It takes effort. In fact, it's so painful many companies often perform only minimal due diligence before making even major decisions. They get just the amount of information they believe they need. Nothing more.

But what you don't know really can hurt you. And cost you. Big time. For example, one of our pharmaceutical clients was on the cusp of acquiring a smaller company for $100 million. The weekend before the merger was to finalize, the acquisition team performed a deep dive using SinglePoint. This uncovered reports seriously challenging the market forecasts and technology future for their targeted acquisition. Immediately, the company called off the acquisition. Without SinglePoint, the deal likely would have gone through. *A $100 million disaster.* By impacting this one decision alone, the SinglePoint portal paid for itself for the next 375 years!

So, what have we learned? First, a strategic research portal can help your company greatly speed up and enhance the processes of analyzing markets, tracking your competition, understanding customers, forecasting technologies, and developing new products. If that's not enough, it can help you win sales and develop new business while providing invaluable support for guiding product plans and new product strategies across the organization.

But that's not all. It can save your company millions of dollars per year while earning you greater revenues. Headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts, Northern Light has a single mission: to provide strategic research portals to global, new product, technology, and innovation-driven businesses across all industries.

250,000 user accounts at the world's best companies: we see a huge daily volume of market research queries

Four of the top ten
IT companies

Four of the top ten
Pharmaceutical
companies

Four of the top ten
Financial Services
companies

One of the top three
Telecom companies

One of the top three
Delivery Services
companies

Three of the top ten
Consumer Packaged Goods
companies

Two of the top ten
Hotel operators

Four of the top ten
STEM & Legal publishers

One of the top three
Strategy Consulting
firms

Two of the top ten
Healthcare companies

One of the top three
Heavy Equipment
manufacturers

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Our client list reads like a who's who in industry and technology and includes global leaders in:

- Pharmaceuticals
- Information Technology
- Telecommunications
- Financial Services
- Consumer products
- Manufacturing
- Agribusiness Logistics
- Strategy consulting
- Hospitality

Read enough to know knowledge is power — and profitable? Let us build a strategic market research portal for you today so you can start earning more revenue while reducing costs. To start a conversation, contact Priscilla Seuss now @ **priscilla@northernlight.com.**