



Four Steps to Managing a Crisis

With Yext

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With the rise of natural language processing (NLP) and artificial intelligence (AI), the ways in which people engage with brands have drastically changed. To keep up with developing situations, you need to pivot, stay informed, and evolve your communications strategy in real time.

Further, people now ask questions about brands anywhere they can: on your own website and across a growing ecosystem of search engines and digital assistants. For business continuity, companies must be able to answer those customer questions wherever they are being asked. Wrong answers are costly for businesses every day, but the stakes are never higher than in times of crisis – when having accurate, up-to-date information could mean life or death.

Yext is here to help. Our mission is to help businesses everywhere become **answers-ready**, so they can provide the most important facts to their customers – and the broader public – wherever and whenever they are needed. To that end, we have developed these four steps to support your crisis communications strategy in today's world of NLP and AI – and to explain how Yext's products enable you to be better prepared when unforeseen circumstances threaten to disrupt your regular flow of business.

1. Don't just talk, listen.

The first step in any communications strategy is to determine the most urgent messages you need to share. For instance, are you cancelling an event? Changing your hours of operation? Have you run out of inventory temporarily? Focus first on the **key updates** that are most critical to your customers and for your business. Email is an incredibly important channel that lets you tap into your database of customers and deliver the most pressing updates to their inbox.

However, despite your best efforts to proactively communicate what you believe is top-of-mind for your customers, they often have **new, more specific questions that you don't necessarily see coming**. This is particularly true in the event of a longer-term crisis, such as a natural disaster, health crisis, market crash, or political instability. Call centers (or the business's main number itself) can become flooded with concerned customers, many of whom often ask the same or similar questions. This is when your website becomes your most valuable asset.

But you must be set up to best leverage your website. To get a sense of public sentiment around your brand, or an issue potentially affecting it, you can **monitor search data** from Google Analytics. For insight into search terms and queries specific to your brand, you can tap into your site search provider to see the *direct* questions your customers have for you. The results may surprise you, and this data can play an important role in informing the custom content you develop.

At Yext, we build a Knowledge Graph for our customers, which organises and stores all of their most important business information for easy deployment. The Knowledge Graph, along with our Analytics, allows a company to add custom content immediately based on the kinds of new questions that people are asking. On any given day, interesting new queries can surface that may inform a business. But in a moment of crisis, those unforeseen questions could affect an individual's well being. **At Yext, being answers-ready also means being customer-ready – at all times.**

In fact, Yext has seen a flurry of new questions being asked to our own customers in the wake of COVID-19. No matter the business vertical, customers have specific questions pertaining to their safety and well-being:

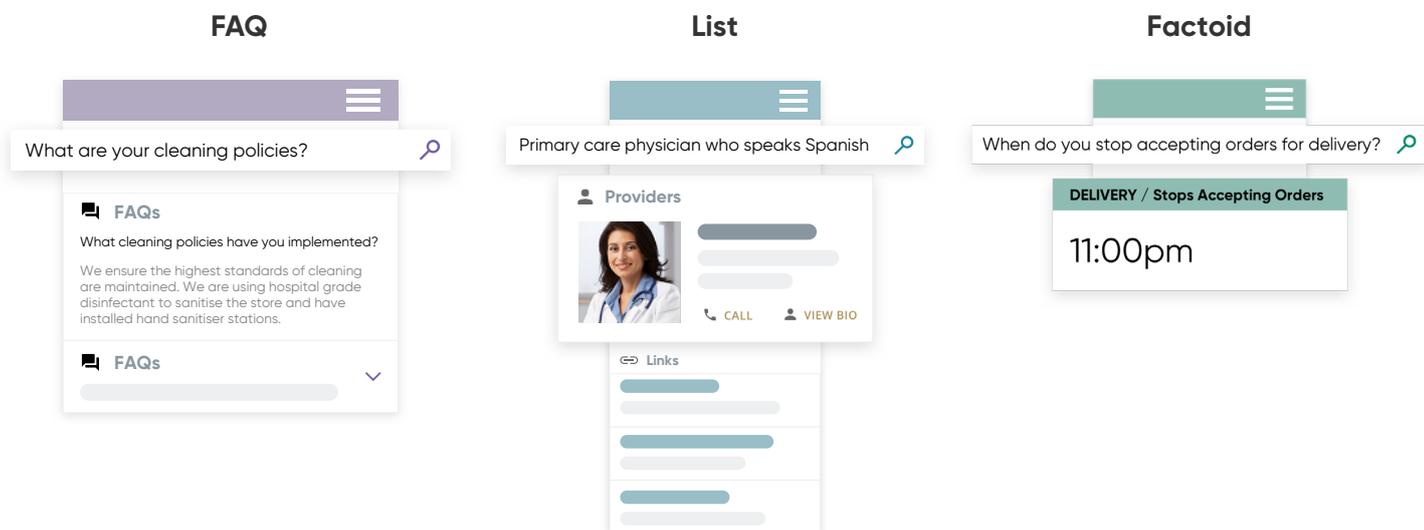
Financial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this outbreak impact the stock market? Interest rates? • What steps should wealth management clients take to respond to a steep drop in the market? • Will your customer support center remain open 24/7? • Can I use an ATM even if the branch where it's located is closed? • Should I refinance my mortgage with the market down?
Fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you keeping your gyms and studios clean? • Are any classes cancelled or rescheduled? If so, are cancellation fees waived?
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your restaurants closed? Are they doing takeout or delivery? • Is your food safe to eat? Where is it sourced from? • What cleanliness standards do you comply with to prevent the spread of disease? • Will your hourly employees be offered paid sick leave to ensure they stay home if they feel ill?
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you seeing patients? • Should patients call ahead or walk in if they feel ill? • Do you offer testing? If so, where? • How do I protect myself? • What are your urgent care hours? Will these be extended?
Hospitality & Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you cleaning and sanitising rooms to prevent the spread of disease? • Are cancellation fees waived during an outbreak? • Are any of your locations closing or changing their operating hours? • Where can visitors find hand sanitiser or wash stations? • Are your restaurants doing takeout or delivery? • Will your customer support center remain open 24/7?
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your stores closed? Do they have limited hours? Which locations? • Is your product inventory low? If so, what item(s) are out of stock? When do you expect another shipment? • Will your hourly employees be offered paid sick leave to ensure they stay home if they feel ill?
Shipping & Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you experiencing freight delays? • What products or ingredients are prohibited?
Telecommunications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you experiencing any service disruptions or outages? • Will you waive overage charges under certain circumstances?

So while email is a critical “first responder” channel, **your website can help scale answers** to common questions while alleviating the burden on other parts of your business (such as the customer service department). And with Yext, you get valuable insights in real time, which lets you be more nimble and customer-centric.

2. Make your website your MVP.

As mentioned, your website is a crucial source of information for your customers – especially in a time of crisis. **Yext Answers** powers a seamless onsite search experience that allows people to ask you any kind of question they may have.

Unlike traditional site search, which indexes pages on your site and returns a list of blue links, Yext Answers gives your customers **direct answers to their questions**. Brands like IHA and BBVA use it to answer critical questions about their policies, professionals, products, and more:



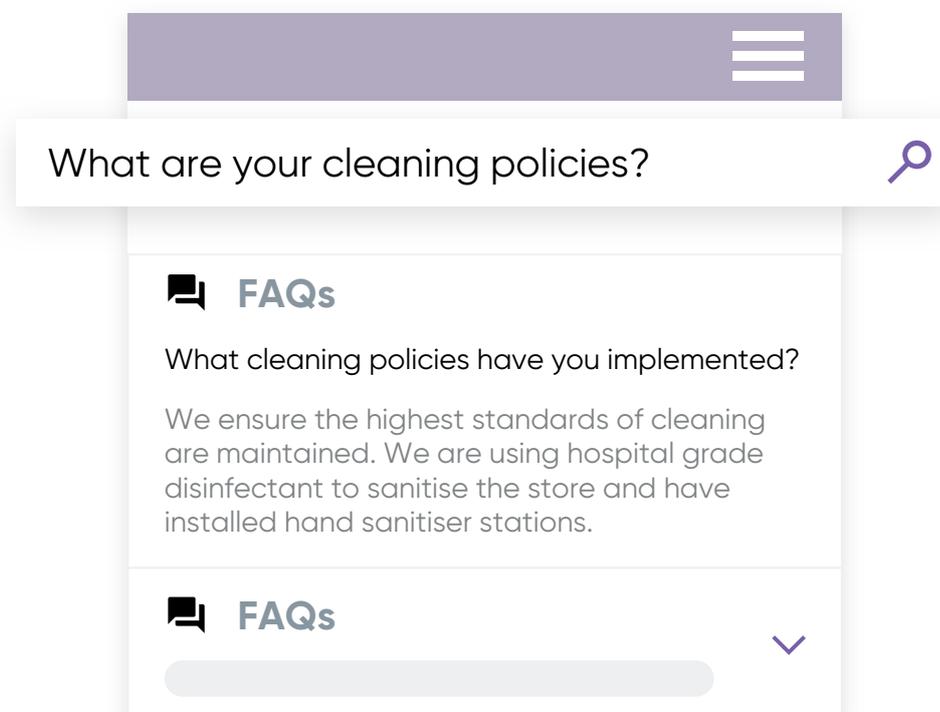
Adding FAQs to your Answers experience is one of the fastest ways to publish information during a crisis. You can do so directly in the Yext Knowledge Graph: simply add an FAQ entity and type in your content.

Entity Type: FAQ

Core Information	
Name	What cleaning policies have you implemented?
Entity ID <small>(i)</small>	3378875337593726703

Answer	
Answer	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"><p>We ensure the highest standards of cleaning are maintained. We are using hospital grade disinfectant to sanitise the store and have installed hand sanitiser stations.</p></div> <p>Save Cancel</p>

This FAQ will then appear in the results on your Answers experience.



In addition to FAQs, your Answers experience can **ensure consumers see the most up-to-date information** about your opening hours, event status, products, and many more details that can be impacted during a crisis. You simply make any edits to this information inside the Knowledge Graph, then click "Save." The change automatically populates inside your Answers results, so the next time a user asks a question like "Is the Covent Garden location still open?" or "Is the 8pm show cancelled tonight?" they'll get the right answer, instantly.

Yext Answers also provides you with incredible **insights into your customers**. It logs all the questions people ask on your website, including the ones you don't answer today, and shows you what things they click on and interact with most. This means you're able to see what matters most to your customers in real time – giving you the opportunity to modify your content strategy, and also to make strategic changes to your business that are informed by consumer intent.



Learn From What People Ask



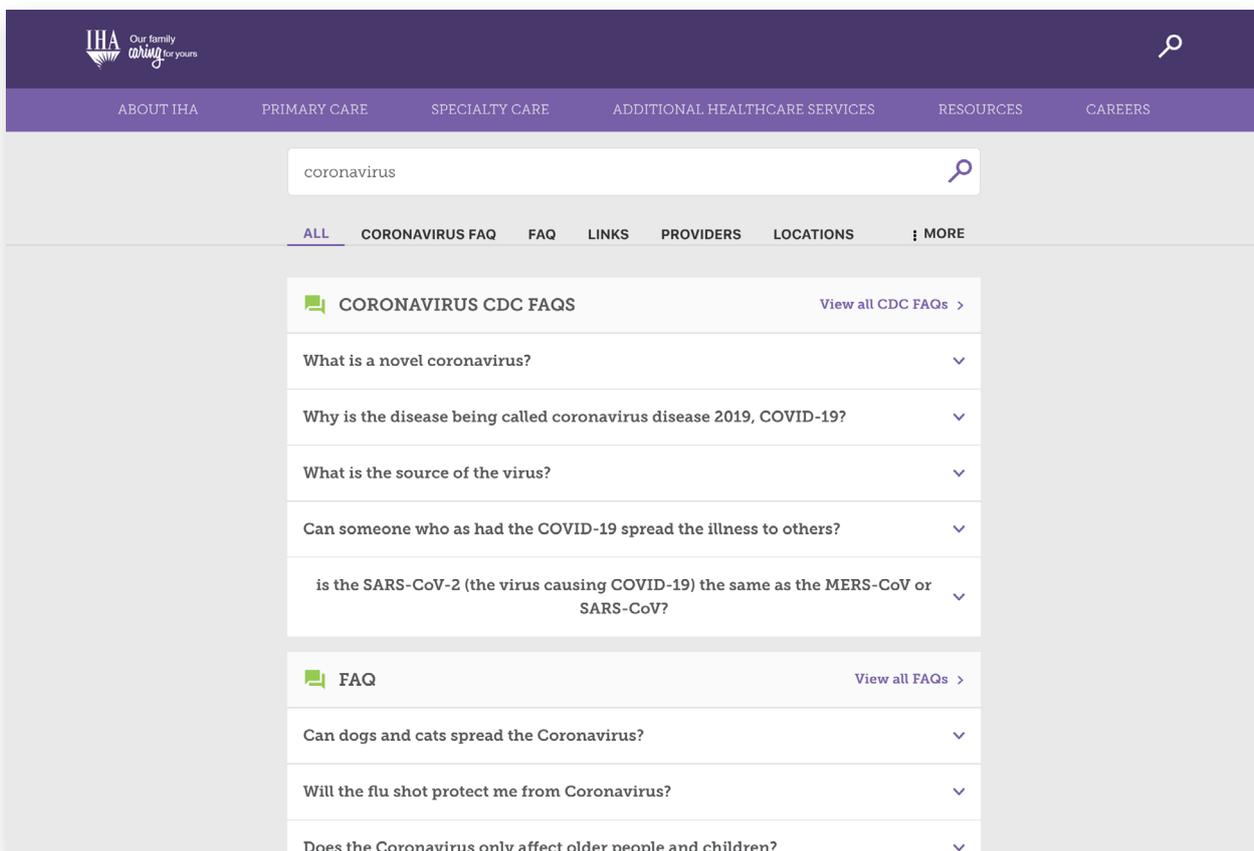
“Yext Answers has given us much more intel into our queries than we had in the past. We identified query trends and prioritised creating some topical FAQs with conversion opportunities to populate the answers tool. For example, we saw multiple combinations of searches for ‘bill pay’ or ‘how do I pay my bill online,’ so we created a simple FAQ with our Client Services phone number, and a hyperlink to online bill pay in our Patient Portal.”

–**Meghan Brescia**, Brand Strategy Manager, IHA

What if you don’t know the best answer?

You know your brand best – but sometimes, people may come to your website and ask questions about a situation at large.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Yext offered all US Answers customers a free plug-in to display FAQs from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This enabled health systems like IHA and Healthcare Associates of Texas to provide patients with the latest CDC guidance, without needing to copy the content into their own Knowledge Graphs or keep it updated anytime the CDC made a change.



3. Distribute across the web.

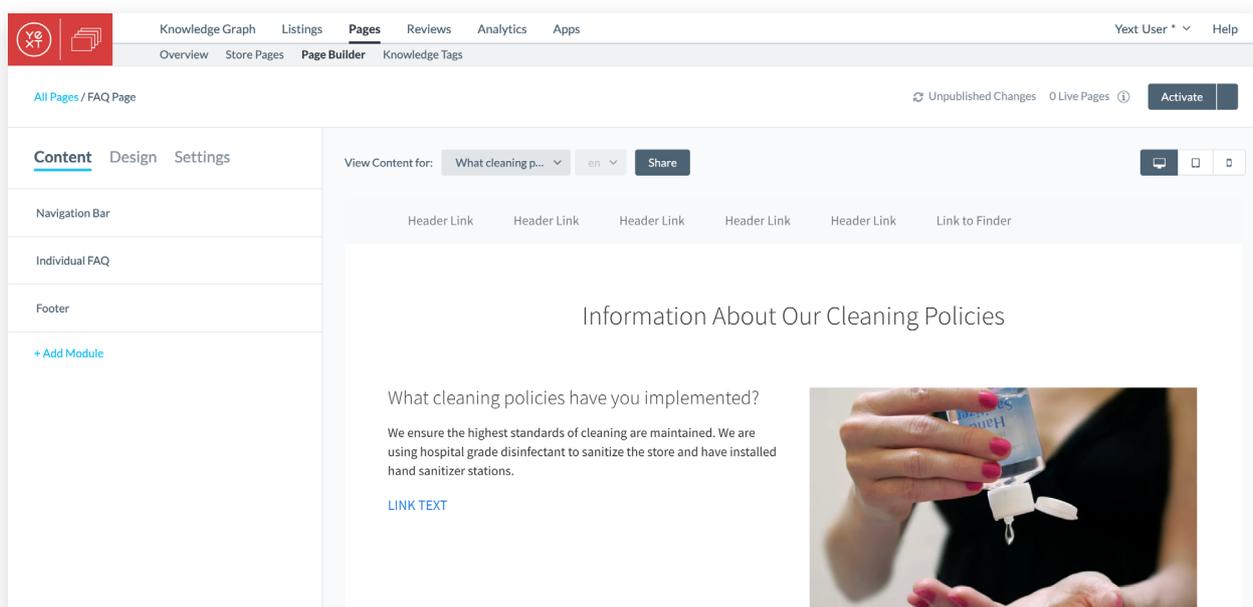
For customers and new users who ask questions about you on Google, Bing, or Amazon Alexa, **Yext Pages** and **Yext Listings** help you answer these questions – and direct that traffic from a search engine or voice assistant back to your website.

Yext Pages allows you to create intent-based landing pages that help power rich search results, like the Google featured snippet below. This means that when a customer asks a question about your brand on a third-party search engine, you have a higher likelihood of powering the results that appear.

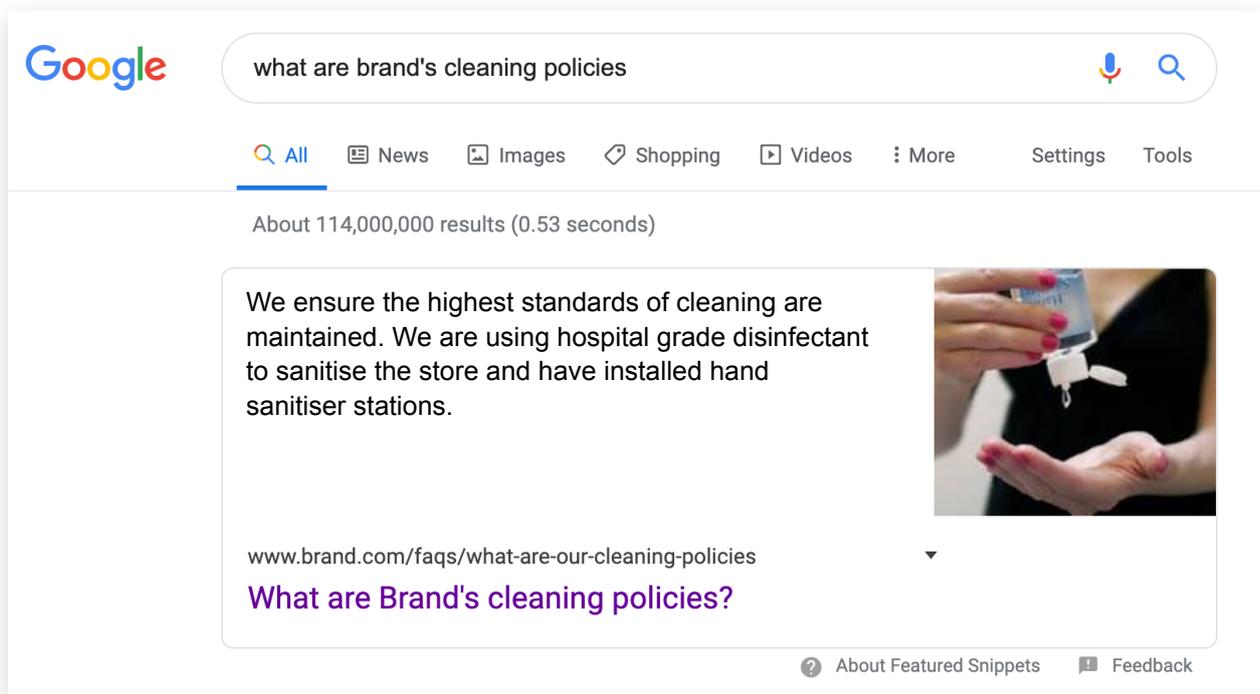
For example, a telecommunications company could create a page on their website for any outages they may be experiencing. With proper Schema tagging on the page, a search engine is more likely to return that page (and possibly even a rich snippet with some of the page's content) for searches like "4G outage in Leeds."

Adding FAQs to your Knowledge Graph can do more than display them in your Answers-powered site search results. You can also create **FAQ pages** to answer those same questions on third-party search engines.

Once you have an FAQ in your Knowledge Graph, use the Page Builder to create a page for it. You can match the layout and user interface to the rest of your website for a seamless experience.



Once the page is published and indexed, its built-in Schema.org markup makes search engines like Google more likely to display it in results for searches related to that FAQ.

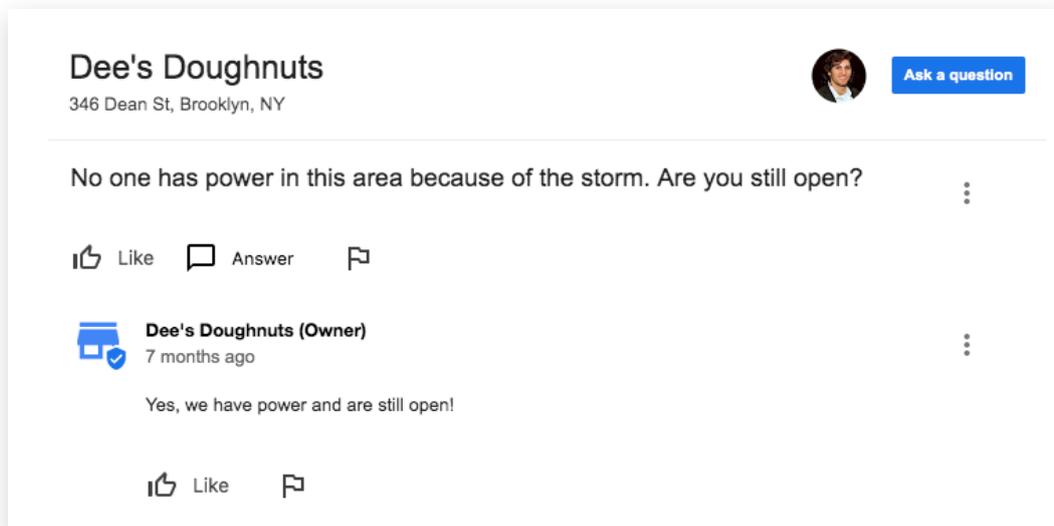


Yext Listings syncs the data in your Knowledge Graph directly with third-party search engines, mapping apps, and digital assistants like Google Maps, Amazon Alexa, Siri, Cortana, and more. It also allows you to supplement your maps listings on certain services with rich content like FAQs.



If you need to close a location temporarily, make sure the digital ecosystem knows it's *not* closed for good by using the *Holiday Hours* feature. Simply select the location(s) you'd like to mark as temporarily closed. In the *Holiday Hours* field, choose a date, and select *Closed*. Repeat this for any subsequent days when the location will remain closed. This ensures search engines know that you're closed on the days you've specified, but not for good. If consumers search for your business on a service like Google Maps during the temporary closure, they'll see that the location is closed on that day.

Google Q&A is another key feature to consider during an emergency. Did you know that Google Maps allows users to ask questions about a business, and to answer those questions themselves? This content will then appear to other Google Maps users.



Rather than leaving the answers to questions about your business up to any user, respond to them directly, via Yext Listings, to **put authoritative information online**. Once you respond to a question, you can also proactively add it as an FAQ, so consumers can see that content the next time they view your Maps listing.

Pay attention to the types of questions consumers ask in this experience. It can help you uncover trends that will define what other content you make available in the future.

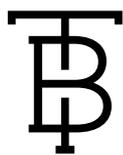
Using Yext During Weather Emergencies



"When Hurricane Florence hit the Carolinas, the storm affected hundreds of our locations. I was able to send over a daily report saying which locations were closed, which ones were open, if they just had adjusted hours, and Yext was able to get that information updated online as quickly as possible. That meant people searching on Google could see which locations were actually closed and when they were going to open again."

—**Brook Warnhoff**, Senior Digital Marketing Specialist, Enterprise Holdings

Using Yext During Weather Emergencies



"In one of our stores, there was a flood and we had to mark it closed on all of the major [search engines]. We didn't have to wait overnight. We could automatically do it. That immediacy, that's what sets Yext apart."

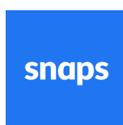
—**Glenn Zabal**, Senior SEO Manager, Tailored Brands

4. Keep your other systems informed.

The Yext Knowledge Graph not only helps you power search experiences; it can also connect with the other systems you use to help manage your business. Yext's App Directory and robust APIs let you share critical updates with systems like your chatbot, support center, facilities management, and more. This ensures you have **integrated communications at all times**, but especially during a crisis when it's most critical that everyone has the same information.

- Have a chatbot on your website? Allow it to pull all the latest details from your Knowledge Graph. Yext has out-of-the-box integrations with *LivePerson*, *Snaps*, *Guestfriend*, *Voicify*, and *Octane AI*.
- Connect the Knowledge Graph with *Smartling* to translate your content.
- Make sure your latest menu content is up-to-date everywhere with the *Olo*, *OpenMenu*, *Certistar*, and *Trabon MenuNet* apps.

For a full list of all Yext's turnkey integrations with other business systems, visit apps.yext.com. To explore building a custom integration, visit developer.yext.com.

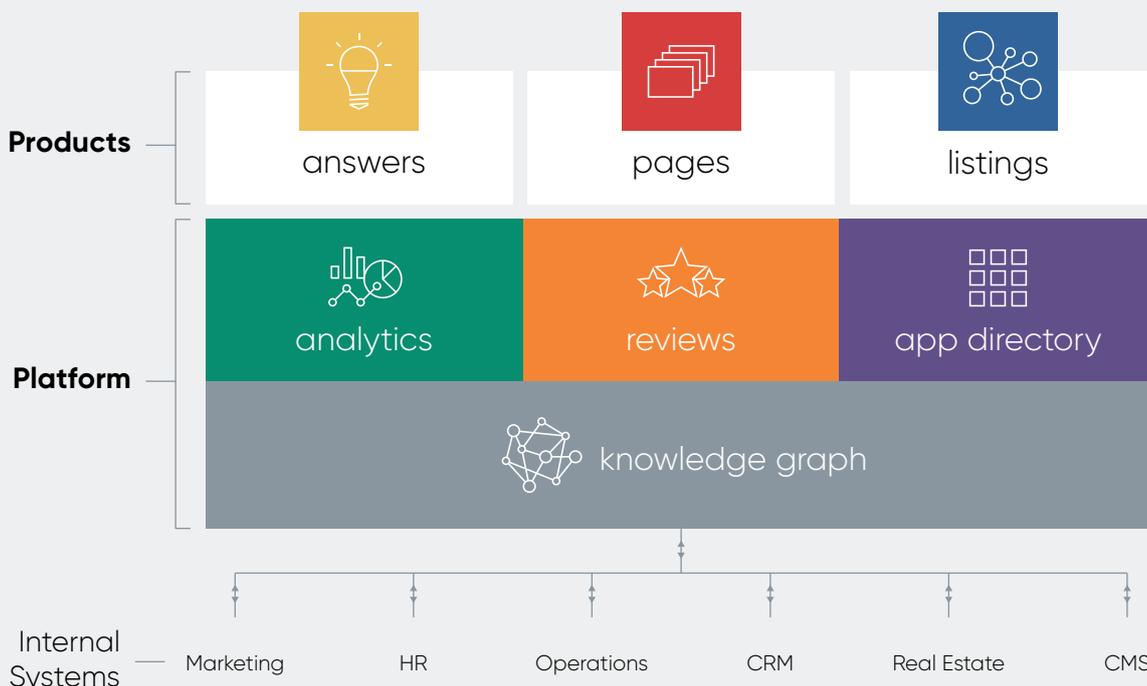


The Yext Search Experience Cloud

With a mission to provide perfect answers everywhere, Yext's Search Experience Cloud puts you in control of your business's facts online. By providing complete, accurate answers on your own website – then across search engines, maps, apps, voice assistants and chatbots – Yext helps you take back control of the customer journey and ensure people see your most critical updates wherever they search.

At the foundation of our offering is the **Yext Knowledge Graph**, the single source of truth for the many public facts about your brand. With the Knowledge Graph, you can create, connect, and optimise all the facts about your brand to answer customers' questions. Brands around the world use the Yext Knowledge Graph to manage information from store locations and open jobs, to menu items and their nutritional information, to doctors and their specialties and educational backgrounds. When they open new stores, host new events, or add new jobs, they simply add those to their Knowledge Graph.

Then, the services on top of the Knowledge Graph let you power answers anywhere a customer could ask for them. **Yext Answers** delivers a natural-language search experience on your website and other owned properties, where customers can search your Knowledge Graph and get direct answers. **Yext Pages** helps you create dynamic landing pages for your stores, events, doctors, Frequently Asked Questions, or any other facts inside your Knowledge Graph to power rich search results. And, **Yext Listings** integrates your Knowledge Graph directly with more than 150 voice assistants, mapping apps, and other third-party services, like Google Maps, Amazon Alexa, Bing, Facebook, and many more.



In times of crisis or uncertainty, you need to keep your customers and the broader public informed. But that doesn't mean you should relax when things calm down. Delivering the best possible experience across the entire search ecosystem means you'll never leave customers in the dark – and that can only result in a stronger business.

Visit nowronganswers.com for a free trial of our Answers product. Or, if you're evaluating solutions, check out our guide [What to Look For in a Search Experience Solution](#). If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to your Yext representative for more guidance.



The customer journey starts with a question, and every day consumers search for answers about brands. However, they are increasingly served false or misleading information from sources other than the brand. Yext, the Search Experience Cloud company, exists to help brands regain and maintain a direct relationship with their customers. With a mission to provide perfect answers everywhere, Yext puts businesses in control of their facts online by delivering brand verified answers straight from the source – wherever their customers are searching. Companies like Tesco, Marriott, Jaguar-Land Rover, and businesses around the world use Yext to take back control of the customer journey, starting on their own website.

Yext has been named a Best Place to Work by Fortune and Great Place to Work[®], as well as a Best Workplace for Women. Yext is headquartered in New York City with offices in Amsterdam, Berlin, Chicago, Dallas, Geneva, London, Miami, Milan, Paris, San Francisco, Shanghai, Tokyo, and the Washington, D.C. area.

For more information, visit yext.co.uk.