Product Review of Northern Light SinglePoint

In-depth, independent review of the product,
plus links to related resources

*"There are very few companies, if any, which can aggregate web news, secondary
research and a client's own internal market research content and Northern Light is
unique in being able to operate on both sides of the firewall to harvest this content..."*

November 2013

Contents

FreePint® Reports

FreePint raises the value of information in the enterprise, by publishing articles, reports and resources that support information practice, information content and information strategy.

A FreePint Subscription provides customers with full access to everything we publish. Customers can share individual articles and reports with anyone at their organisations as part of the terms and conditions of their license. Some license levels also enable customers to place materials on their intranets.

FreePint publishes four free updates each month, to keep you informed about latest articles, reports and webinars on critical topics. Register to receive one or all:

- **Sources Update:** Staying Informed and Aware about Sources
- **Technology Update:** Improving Information Work with Technology
- **ROI Update:** Maximising Value for Information Work and Investment
- **Compliance Update:** Aligning Regulation, Policy and Practice

To learn more about FreePint, visit http://www.freepint.com/

Disclaimer

FreePint Report: Product Review of Northern Light SinglePoint (ISBN 978-1-78123-122-7) is a FreePint report published by Free Pint Limited.

Contact Information

Free Pint Limited
4-6 Station Approach, Ashford,
Middlesex, TW15 2QN, United Kingdom
Registered Office: Delaport Coach House, Lamer Lane, Wheathampstead, Herts, AL4 8RQ
Registered Number: 3754481

Telephone: 01784 605000
International: +44 1784 605000
Email: support@freepint.com
Web: http://www.freepint.com/

Introduction, Value and FreePint's View

Sophie Alexander
View Author Biography

Introduction

Northern Light has been providing strategic research portals, business research content, and search technology to global enterprises since 1996. Their SinglePoint strategic research portal provides a single point of access for all of a client's internal and external research and is fully customisable.

It integrates a company's internal market research with licensed secondary research via a single, securely hosted solution. The client simply creates, licenses or identifies the content they wish to include within the portal and Northern Light handles all other aspects including configuration, deployment, content aggregation, indexing and search, text analytics, collaboration, user management, document security and reporting.

Northern Light currently has just over 25 clients which include Fortune 100 market leaders in information technology, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, energy, financial services, transportation, retailing, and consumer products. Two of their biggest clients are Hewlett-Packard and Verizon.

Northern Light applies powerful text analytics to the full text of documents, using its search engine known as MI Analyst™ which is optimised for business research. The next step is the automatic application of MI Analyst filters which are text analytics that are further customised to the interests of the specific industries. Because the facets of MI Analyst differ by industry, the results and analytics will also differ, which gives the user a better search result.

Value

There are very few companies, if any, which can aggregate web news, secondary research and a client's own internal market research content and Northern Light is unique in being able to operate on both sides of the firewall to harvest this content. The client can have any content in any format on their portal as long as they have legal rights to that content or because it can be harvested from the web, a social media site or a government database. Northern Light say they can aggregate it, index it and deliver it to authorised users anywhere in the world 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The SinglePoint portal claims to have a high ROI and pays for itself "ten to twenty times per year".

The portal can significantly speed up and enhance the process of analysing markets, tracking competitors, understanding customers, forecasting technologies and developing new products. It can help to win sales and develop new business and can potentially save millions of pounds per year.

SinglePoint clients have reported quantifiable savings in several areas which provide good metrics which can be useful when the time comes to present the financial case for implementing a strategic research portal. Some of which include:

- **Value of time saved**: because SinglePoint clients don't need to search multiple market research analyst firm websites or execute generalised web searches they are able to save a lot of time. One SinglePoint client estimated that its SinglePoint research portal saved 1.5 hours per user session. With a suggested metric of $100 x

1.5 hours, a typical Northern Light client experiences 18,000 user sessions per year on the portal resulting in saving of staff time valued at $2.7 million per year.

- **Consolidated purchasing of information**: many organisations have underutilised or duplicated information contracts but SinglePoint consolidates licensing and enterprise-wide sharing of licensed content, resulting in cost savings for the organisation. A typical SinglePoint client has 15 sources and 6,000 user accounts and would experience a saving of $900,000 per year in avoided duplicate report purchases.

- **Reduced number of websites/portals**: departments within organisations often create and manage many internal websites, each for a different audience such as sales or marketing, in multiple organisations and geographies. One SharePoint client was able to greatly reduce the cost of providing internal research as their portal allowed them to discontinue 150 intranet sites in their divisions around the world. They estimated a saving of $1.5 million per year for IT alone, including the cost of hardware, software and especially IT systems administration. This was converted into $10,000 per duplicate portal eliminated per year.

- **Supporting a larger number of users with fewer staff**: when organisations are facing budget cuts and staff reductions, SinglePoint can support a wide number of users with a very limited internal staff. One SinglePoint client has one person supporting 5,000 users of secondary research via a SinglePoint portal. Whilst another client has five people supporting over 70,000 users of secondary research. Without the portals more staff would be needed to help the users of research find the reports.

- **Obtaining new business**: most of Northern Light's clients use SinglePoint portals to help them prepare for sales presentations, customer briefings, or to find persuasive analyst support for their products to make them more compelling to potential customers. One of SinglePoint's clients identified tens of millions of dollars of increased sales as a result of the direct support to the sales and marketing teams that was provided by its SinglePoint portal.

- **Intellectual property issues and fair use**: users can easily and unknowingly violate the usage terms of their agreements with sources of secondary research, as happens when users post documents to multiple internal portals without any system for enforcing licensing arrangements. This can often result in market research analyst firms invoicing the organisation for hundreds of thousands of dollars because market research reports were posted to websites without proper access controls. SinglePoint enforces the terms of the content licensed so organisations no longer have to worry about this issue.

- **Primary research savings:** SinglePoint can consolidate primary research into a single repository and make it available to authorised users throughout the organisation. This eliminates the need for duplicate primary research, saving substantial amounts of money.

- **Improved decision making**: critical strategic research projects need well informed and high-quality information. With SinglePoint, users have the best information available on every search easily and quickly. Northern Light claims that the value this entails could easily dwarf the millions of dollars of cost savings identified above.

There is a good example of this on their website which highlights how one client avoided making a $50 million mistake when a business unit used their SinglePoint portal to find that the market being addressed by a company they were considering buying had been previously studied by other business units in other geographies and product segments. These studies found that there were serious threats to the long term potential of this marketplace. The client said that

without SinglePoint, the acquisition team would not have known about these studies and would have moved forward with an offer of $50 million designed to be the winning bid.

- **Developing new products faster**: having a SinglePoint strategic research portal can speed the time to insight in product research. By having easy access to all licensing and primary research, researchers can spend less time looking for information and more time considering it. Using Northern Light's text analytics applied to business research can help greatly with the process of product research. For example, all relationships between technologies or scientific concepts (e.g., drugs, diseases, genes) can be automatically identified and displayed to the researcher.

Another feature being rapidly rolled out by SinglePoint's clients to save workers time and make them more efficient is the API/Web Parts collection. This functionality lets the portal administrators put the content and search facilities of the portal right in front of the users on the intranet websites where they naturally spend their workdays. The company reports that aggressive use of the API and WebParts can increase portal content consumption by three times. That triples the return on investment if you are measuring it as time saved or cost per download.

Audience

SinglePoint's main users include market and competitive intelligence staff, market research departments, sales teams, product, marketing and purchasing managers, product developers, technology researchers, IT practitioners and executive business leaders, predominantly from large organisations.

Most of their clients reside in Europe or the US but it's difficult to pinpoint exactly where all their clients are because responsibility for the portal may be split between two different countries as many companies now have operations all over the world.

FreePint's View

One of the limitations of an enterprise-wide search application is that it cannot predict a particular user's context or search skills and they are generally optimised around simple search terms and unable to use metadata or advanced query syntax, which produces the "lowest common denominator" search.

One solution often adopted by firms is federated search, which avoids the need to index a local repository on the enterprise network, but this solution is also limited because the indexing strategies, supported search syntax and taxonomies vary depending on the content source. In addition, accurate relevance ranking isn't possible because each of the search engines returns search results based on their particular relevance ranking method.

What Northern Light does is aggregate all the content by obtaining a full-text original copy of every document from every source and then indexes it with their search engine, MI Analyst using consistent indexing, taxonomy, and text analytic strategies uniformly across all sources. This produces an integrated index that can behave the same way across all sources in terms of search syntax and relevance ranking.

Because Northern Light has been solely focused on providing strategic research portals since 1996, they've been able to gain a unique insight into what works and what doesn't and as a result have developed a sophisticated portal with unequalled content aggregation capability that spans a client's entire research collection, both

internal and external. They report that they've developed trusted relationships with all content providers and cultivated their search engine to accommodate specific industry needs. Having a client such as Hewlett-Packard, who are themselves very skilled in information technology, underscores Northern Light's unique expertise in this area - and no other company appears to do what they do.

The SinglePoint user interface, referred to as their "Best Practices" user interface, is clear and easy to use and despite the wealth of information available it doesn't appear cluttered. It has built-in collaboration features that encourage the sharing of expertise within an organisation and the portal can be customised according to the look and feel of the client organisation. Most clients will have their own branding on SinglePoint ensuring the portal feels natural to them, with many users not even aware they've left their own company's intranet.

Northern Light's SinglePoint supports the most commonly used browsers including Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5 and newer, Firefox, Opera 8 and higher and Safari. This review was carried out using the latest version of Firefox.

Northern Light SinglePoint : FreePint's View

✓ *Seamlessly integrates a client's internal and external research*

✓ *Avoids the need for a huge investment required to replicate SinglePoint's capabilities and the financial liability that may be incurred from hosting third party content on an enterprise network*

✓ *Search technology developed specifically for strategic business and technology search applications including indexing and relevance ranking*

✓ *Reduces duplication of subscriptions and the number of websites needed to visit as it's all centralised, which is a huge time saver*

✓ *Northern Light handles all aspects of implementation including configuration, deployment, content aggregation, indexing and search, text analytics, collaboration, document security and reporting, saving both time and money*

✓ *Built in collaboration tools encourage the sharing of expertise within an organisation*

✖ *The portal is geared towards larger organisations but smaller firms would also benefit from using this product, however, the cost may be prohibitive.*

This chapter is also published as an article in your FreePint Subscription:
My FreePint Subscription

SinglePoint: Introduction, Value and FreePint's View

Click to login now and read online »

Need more than an introduction and less than a full review?

Go online now to access the executive summary:
Product Review of Northern Light SinglePoint: Executive Summary
http://web.freepint.com/go/sub/article/70749

If you're looking to significantly speed up and enhance the process of analysing markets, tracking competitors, forecasting technologies or developing new products, then a Northern Light SinglePoint strategic research portal may be just what your company needs. Aggregating all of a company's internal and external market research via a single point of access, the portals are fully customisable. Using powerful text analytics to filter search results according to industry, they are also able to deliver more focused search results. Sophie Alexander's executive summary of SinglePoint highlights some of the product's best features and identifies how it offers a high return on investment.
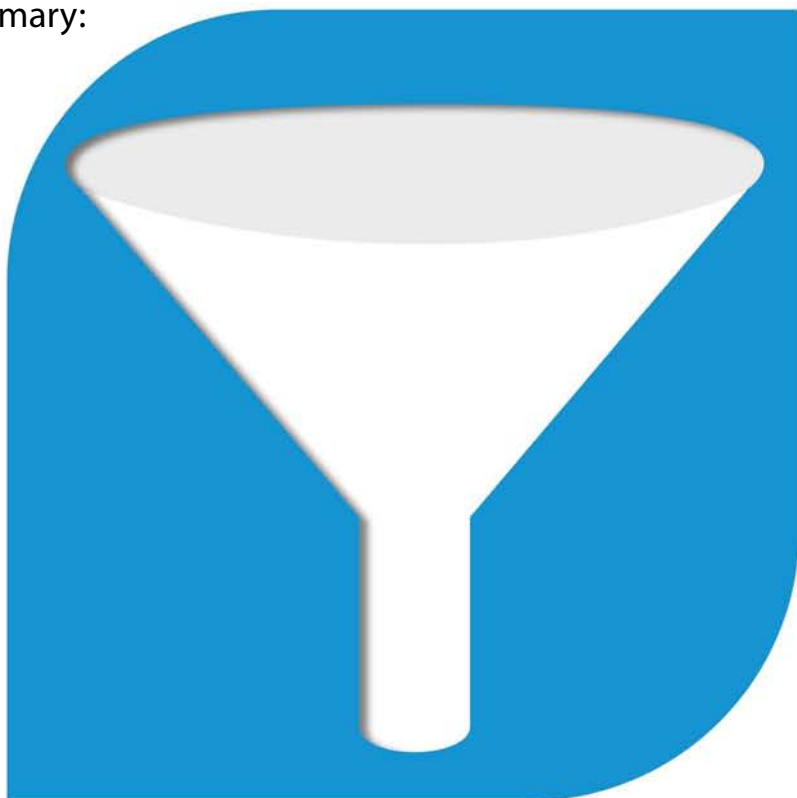
You will need to login to view this executive summary. If you do not have a full user account for your organisation's FreePint Subscription, contact support@freepint.com for help.

Find more articles on similar topics:

- Information purchasing
- Competitive Intelligence
- Industry sources
- News sources
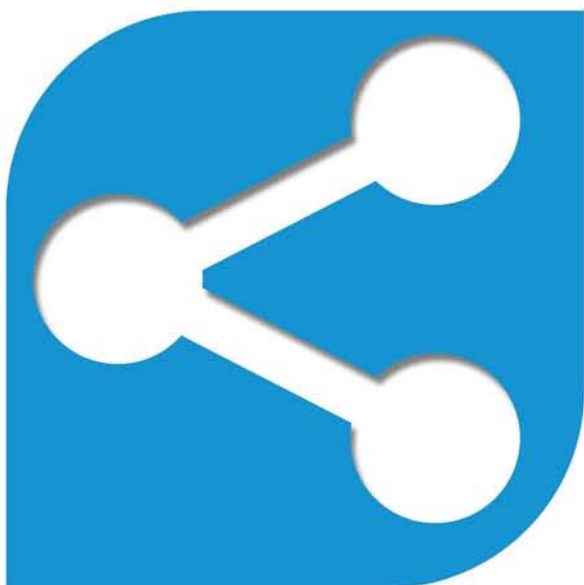
Did someone share this report with you?

FreePint Subscription articles and reports can be shared with anyone at your organisation, as part of the terms and conditions of your organisation's FreePint Subscription.

Stay informed about articles and reports you might be interested in:

- Register to receive the FreePint Newsletter and Topic Updates
- Get the RSS feed for any article category of interest

Request access via any full user of your organisation's FreePint Subscription. If you do not know who that person is, contact support@freepint.com for help.

Sources, Content and Coverage

Virtually all the SinglePoint portals involve subscription-based published research from analysts and Northern Light has agreements with some of the world's leading technology and industry research content providers. They currently integrate over 160 premium sources and add new sources constantly. Nor is a client limited to the sources listed, if they want to add a provider that isn't listed Northern Light can arrange this. They claim to have never once been turned down by a premium content vendor when they needed to access their content. The company has a good reputation for being flexible when it comes to working with providers, allowing them to determine how they want to do the technical integration.

Table 1: List of current content partners

451 Group	EagleEye	IHS Global Insight	Retail Forward
ABI Research	ECSCO Biomedical Corporate	Incidence & Prevalence Database	Saugatuck Technology
Aberdeen Group	ECSCO Business Source Corporate	InfoBase	Scrip News
ACM Digital Library	Economist Intelligence Unit	Infonetics	Sirius Decisions
Adis Business Intelligence	EDGAR SEC filings	Informa Research	SlideShare
Adis Insights	Elsevier FDC (Pink, Tan, Gold, etc sheets)	InfoTech Research Group	Society for Neuroscience
American Banker	Elsevier Health News Daily	Info Trends	Springboard Research
American Diabetes Research Database	Elsevier Pharmaceuticals Monthly	In-Stat/MDR	Stat!Ref
AMI-Partners	Elsevier Science Direct	iSuppli	Strategic Business Insights
Analysys Mason (f/k/a OSS Observer)	eMarketer	LeadDiscovery Daily Updates	Synergy Research Group
API for YouTube	Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG)	Lexis Nexus Publisher	Tabb Group
ARC Advisory	Euromonitor International	Light Reading	TBRi
Business Insights	Everest Research Group	LinkedIn	TDR (Timely Data Resources)
Business Monitor	Facebook	McKinsey Quarterly	TechInsights (Portelligent)
Canalys	Faulkner Research	Medline	Themis
CardWeb	FDA Orange Book	Melcrum	Thomson Reuters Broker Reports
CCS Insights	FedBizOps	MetaFacts	Thomson Reuters Company Financial Data
Celent Communications	First Research	Mintel (Oxygen/Comperemedia)	Thomson Reuters Drug News
Centurion Research	FirstWord Pharma PLUS	Mintel Food + Drink	Thomson Reuters IDRAC
CISR	Forrester Research	Mintel Global New Products Database (GNPD)	Thomson Reuters Knowledge Data
Citeline	Frost & Sullivan	NelsonHall	Thomson Reuters News
ClinicalTrials.gov	Futures Company	Northern Light Business News	Thomson Pharma
Compass Intelligence	GAP Intelligence	Northern Light Industry Analyst Blogs	Tower Group
Comtex Newswires	Gartner Group	Northern Light IT White Paper Collection	Twitter
Conference Board	GBI	Northern Light Life Sciences Conference Abstracts	US Clinical Trials
Corporate Executive Board	GBI Research	Ovum	USPTO for Life Sciences
Corporate Insight	getAbstract	Oxford Economics	VDC
Current Analysis	GfK NOP	Parks Associates	WARC
Cutter Consortium	Global Markets Direct	ParnerPath (ex-Amazon Consulting)	WatchIT
Datamonitor	Google	Patricia Seybold Group	WHO ICTRP
Decision Resources	Health Ace	Photizo Group	Yankee Group
DiabetesPro SmartBrief	Heavy Reading	Photofinishing News	YouTube
Directions on Microsoft	i4cp	Pierre Audoin Consultants	Zapthink
DisplaySearch	IDC Research	ProQuest	
Drugs@FDA	Ideas International	PubMedCentral	
Dun & Bradstreet	IEEE	Pyramid Research	

The research firms simultaneously publish content to their own repositories as well as Northern Light's who then index the full text for their clients. They index every word on every page and apply sophisticated text analytics throughout the document and this is one of the things that makes them different, as previously mentioned.

The client can also include their own internal research within the portal and there are multiple ways that Northern Light can integrate it. They can either give the client a Microsoft SharePoint crawler that will systematically browse their SharePoint installation and extract part of the information for their portal. There's also an upload system that comes with the portal whereby clients can add documents directly to it or can use FTP transfers from other types of repositories.

The portals can be deployed within 90 days, including integrating, searching and providing authorised access to all of a company's research content.

A Typical Client Installation

A typical SinglePoint research portal will contain 5-40 licensed external research sources, an internal primary research repository, Northern Light Business News as well as a licensed news feed and custom harvesting of content from the government databases and the web. It will typically be used by approximately 5,000 staff within a company.

Their oldest and largest client is Hewlett Packard which has 70,000 users on the system and Northern Light integrates approximately 40 market research sources for them. Each SinglePoint client has a custom search index built from the specific content providers and content services that they license or wish to have in their strategic research portal.

Content

Some of the content that can be included within a SinglePoint research portal includes:

- **Secondary Research Reports**: from leading market and technology research vendors

- **The Client's Proprietary Research:** for example, content created by market intelligence or competitive intelligence staff

- **Northern Light Business News:** features around 40,000 news articles daily from 5,000 business-focused news sites such as The Economist, PR Newswire, Financial Times, Forbes and the New York Times. It also includes business wires, trade journal and association sites, and industry authority bloggers. Any other news, periodical, or journal collections that a client licenses can be included too. Northern Light maintains an 18-month archive of 15 million articles in total. The service also features MI Analyst™

- **Industry Authority Blogs:** 2,000 daily blog posts from 3,000 industry blogs from authoritative sources such as an industry research analyst, a journalist for a recognised trade publication, or an industry executive

- **White Papers:** 44,000 white papers from 800 leading information technology companies including HP, IBM, Oracle, Cisco, Microsoft and Dell and hundreds more

- **Social Media:** Northern Light harvests posts from larger social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Blogs, and YouTube

- **Life Sciences Conference Proceedings Abstracts:** Northern Light aggregates and indexes thousands of abstracts, posters and proceedings from Life Sciences conferences

- **Government Databases:** such as Medline, clinical trials, patents, or Federal purchasing opportunities

- **Custom Web Search:** Northern Light can crawl any part of the web and include a searchable index of that material. This could include industry trade sites or competitors' websites.

Note: *Northern Light's Business News is the offering around which Northern Light has fashioned a "rescue programme" for customers looking for a cost-effective, high quality* alternative to Factiva *and is included as a feature of SinglePoint custom portals.*

This chapter is also published as an article in your FreePint Subscription:
SinglePoint: Sources, Content and Coverage

Click to login now and read online »

Search and Outputs

Search

SinglePoint displays several tabs along the top of the screen which can be customised for a company or department. Each client sets their own tabs based on their use case (e.g. market research, competitive intelligence, technology research, etc.) along with their content choices. Having said that, many users choose to stay close to the "Best Practices" user interface which we saw during our demonstration because they are tried and tested.

We were provided with six tabs for the purposes of this trial:

- Dashboard
- Search
- My SinglePoint
- Connect
- Thomson Reuters
- Events Radar.

The key features of these are outlined below.

Dashboard

The strategic dashboards are the most popular feature of SinglePoint and clients can have as many as they want, with one client currently using 19 dashboards and another considering 100! The strategic dashboards are where an expert, such as a market intelligence professional, presents an organised view of a topic to a user group of more casual users.

These are aimed at people who consume research and news as part of their job but their job is not to find or organise it and they really just want to "get to the good stuff fast". These include sales people, product managers and executive business leaders and they make up 80% of SinglePoint's users. Even though the strategic dashboards are geared towards the more casual user, there are still plenty of options available for the more experienced searcher, such as those in market or competitive intelligence, as will be seen later in the review.

The dashboards can be customised for different departments and business requirements or even geographical regions and the client can decide how to organise them. More topics can be added if necessary but a default layout will typically have four. The page may start to feel cluttered if too many are added, so it would be better to focus on just the most relevant information here. FreePint had three topics set up *(see Figure 1)* including *FreePint Topics*, *Content and Publishing* and *Data Analytics*. An IT firm might choose *Cloud Computing*, *Data Analytics* and *Mobile Computing*.

Each topic features the latest news and reports as well as a useful graphic to the right of the screen for users who just want a quick visual overview. Videos would also work well in this area. For example, in a competitive intelligence setting you might have a YouTube video showing the CEO of a competitor company describing his business strategy.

Figure 1: Dashboard

The dashboards are not personalised other than the user being able to choose which dashboards they're looking at. There are two places, however, that can have personal dashboards and they include the "My SinglePoint" homepage and the "My Headlines" topic tracker.

To the left of the screen is an accordion menu with a *Quick Search* box at the top along with several categories beneath this including *Companies*, *Hot Topics in the News* and *Hot Topics in Research*. Each of these has a drop-down box revealing further topics. Clicking on any of the links will run an expertly crafted search for the user giving them the best possible results. The advantage of this for the casual user is that they don't have to write a search query as all the best results are returned for them just by clicking on the link.

The client can set up as many categories and topics as they want.

Some of the *Hot Topics in the News* listed:

- Aggregation
- Business and Competitive Intelligence
- Collaborative and Social Tools
- Intranets
- Knowledge Management
- Social Analytics.

The *Companies* category listed:

- EBSCO
- Factiva
- Meltwater
- NewsEdge
- Nexis
- ProQuest.

Clicking on *Factiva*, for example, opened up a separate browser window *(see Figure 2)* and returned all the relevant results mentioning that company. These results could be organised by date or relevance and by source. The results were arranged into collections, mentioned previously, with the option to search within these results and narrow them down further.

Figure 2: Factiva News Results

One particularly nice feature is how the news headlines use a very space efficient layout showing just the date, title and citation information as can be seen in *Figure 1*. When you hover over any of the stories you get a pop-up box that gives you a summary of the story with enough information to decide whether you want to click on the link and read further.

Alongside the headline is an "Actions" box and when you hover over this it gives you the option to *retrieve the article*, *bookmark* it, *email* it or *copy the URL*. You can also save your search by clicking on the *"Subscribe to this Expert Search"* link to the right of the search box. Expert Searches are described in the Search tab section later.

If you choose to retrieve an article, a new window opens taking you to the article on the website it came from, assuming you have access rights. This will be clear before you click on the link as there will be a locked or unlocked icon to the right of the article. If it's locked then access can be requested from the department that has access. A no entry icon indicates that the report is not available to the user's organisation but a summary is still available. Northern Light uses rigorous security measures to ensure that a client's documents remain confidential and only those with authorisation rights can access a document.

Alternatively, you can run a search using your chosen keywords in the *Quick Search* box and choose a collection from the drop-down box underneath. The choices were *Business News*, *Life Sciences News, White Papers* and *IT Analysts Social Web*. After running your search, you have the option to *Refine This Search* which takes you to the advanced search page discussed later.

Or to the left of the screen you can *Analyze Your Search* by *Business Issues, Companies, Venture Funded Companies, IT Technologies* and *Global Risk Factors.* These results are powered by Northern Light's search engine, *MI Analyst™*, described in the introduction, which is designed specifically for business research. The MI Analyst identifies business and research issues contained in the documents on the search results which allows the user to quickly analyse research content and find patterns and relationships that imply meaning.

There is also useful pie chart on the results page which can be changed to a bar or list chart from the drop-down box at the top. Hovering the mouse over these topics enlarges the graphic and highlights the part of the pie chart that corresponds to your selected topic. There were more topics listed under these but due to lack of space it wasn't possible to show them all on one screenshot. These included *Government Agencies, Global Markets, IT Markets, Industries, Job Titles, Strategic Scenarios, Sources, Analysts, Authors* and *Political Entities*. There were subtopics for each of these along with the number of documents in brackets to the right.

After selecting your choice a new screen opens in a separate window listing all the topics along with a trends graph which can be adjusted using a drop-down box to show trends for just the last 7 days or up to 2 years. You can hover your mouse over any datapoint on the trends chart to see a document count for that time period *(see Figure 3)* and even launch a search result from that which opens in a separate window. It's also possible to click on the coloured rectangle in the text display above the trends chart to toggle a line on or off, which is a nice feature and makes it easier to only see the data you want.
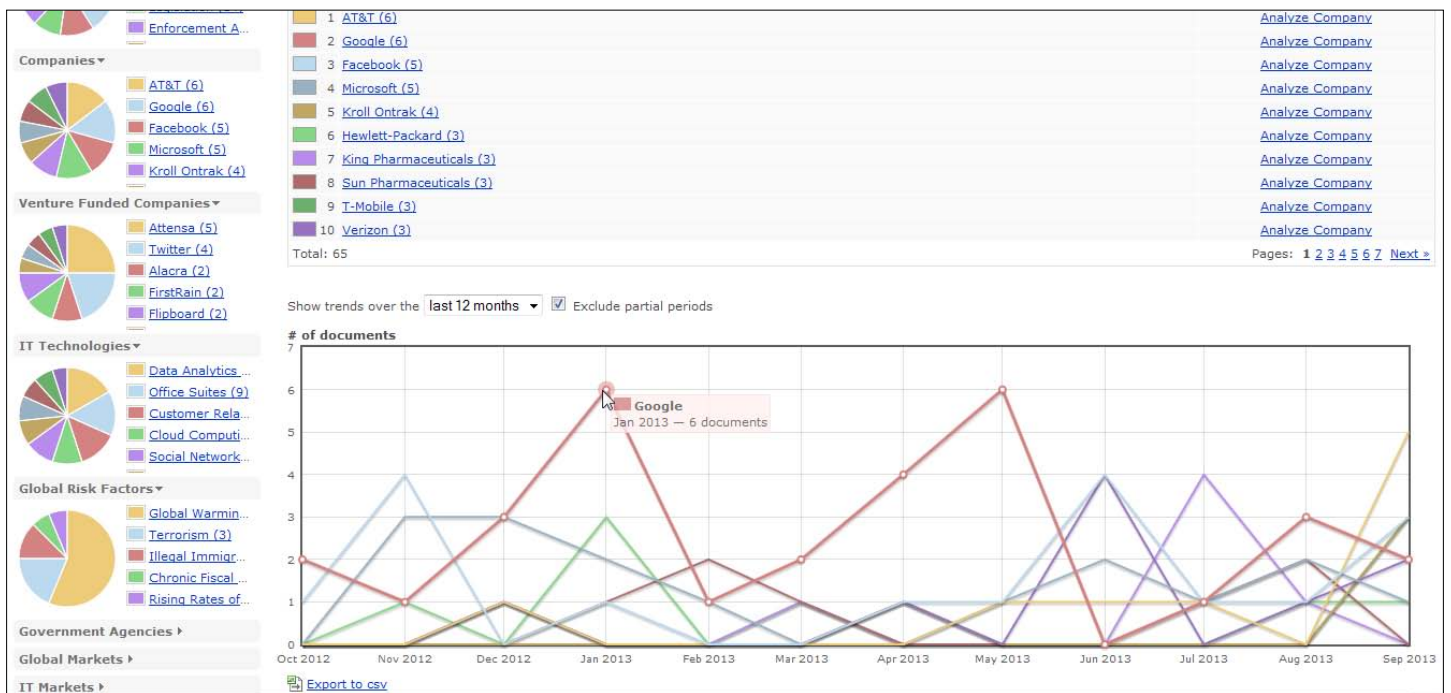

Figure 3: Trends Chart

For the more experienced searcher there is also an Advanced Search link which takes you to the Search tab which is discussed next.

Search

This tab allows you to carry out a more advanced search within each of the collections mentioned previously and the search interface is slightly different for each collection apart from the ability to enter keywords in each one. Northern Light supports full Boolean capability including parenthetical expressions and there is no limit to the level of nesting which you can use in a search query. It also supports two truncation symbols in queries. The ***** (asterisk) can be used to replace multiple characters. The **%** (percent) symbol is used to replace only one character. You can use the proximity operators NEAR and WITHIN to find documents that contain terms that are no more than a defined number of words away from each other.

For Business News *(see Figure 4)*, the user could search on the title, the publication name, URL, Bookmark tag or by language. There are 18 languages listed:

- Chinese
- Danish
- Dutch
- English
- Finnish
- French
- German
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Norwegian
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Romanian
- Spanish
- Swedish
- Turkish.

You can select a date range and sort results by relevance or date. You can also change the number of results per page to 10, 20, 30, 50 or 100 and limit the search to certain types of news including Business and Technology, IT analyst blogs, Industry authority blogs, national and global new, US regional news or international regional news. A user also has the option to change the default values for the search.

Figure 4: Advanced Search Page

The Life Sciences search page was exactly the same but without the IT analyst blogs and the search page for White Papers didn't have the option to search in different languages or on certain types of news. The search page for IT Analysts Social Web gave the option to search on words in title or bookmark tag, a date range and the ability to sort by relevance or date but no language options either. The user also had the option of limiting their search to IT Analyst Blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and SlideShare.

Expert Searches: a library of searches created by experts such as the market intelligence staff or Northern Light's team of online researchers. Because they are created by experts and intended to be reused many times, they can be very elaborate and often exploit Northern Light's rich search options extensively. Expert Searches can be subscribed to by users as Search Alerts, or can be used in Headline Boxes or Strategic Dashboards or placed on personal dashboards such as My Headlines and can also be used to power Microsoft Web Parts for distribution on a company's intranet.

My SinglePoint

This is a personalised page with widgets and content selected by and for each user. The tab is divided into the following headings: *My Headlines, My Saved Searches, My Bookmarks, Bookmarked for Me* and *Resources.*

My Headlines: displays a list of all the latest headlines and looks similar to the dashboard page. The user can assign up to eight of their favourite personal saved searches or expert searches to headline widgets, allowing them to easily see the most recent or relevant results for their favourite searches. By clicking on "Add Another Headline" box the user can assign a search to each of eight widgets. Once the widget is set up you can change the search assigned to it by clicking on the small gearwheel icon in the upper right corner of the widget. Widgets can be moved around, minimised and maximised.

My Saved Searches: where all the user's saved searches are stored in folders. You can create as many folders and subfolders as you like and this is done by clicking on the *Create Folder* button. If you don't create any folders your searches will simply be saved under "*My Saved Searches*". As mentioned previously, you can create a saved search using the *"Save this Search"* link from any results list.

To access an RSS feed for any Saved Search, click on the RSS button next to the saved search, which opens up a new window for you to save the search to a reader. This worked seamlessly when I tried this using Feedly.

My Bookmarks: contains a collection of a user's favourites. Bookmarks can be used to keep links to a user's favourite articles, blogs, reports and documents, or to share your favourites with colleagues or explore your colleagues' bookmarks to discover new things.

There is a search box to the left of the screen and a tag cloud which is more flexible than folders. You can assign as many tags to a bookmark as you like. You can tag and save documents by clicking on the star icon from the results list or by clicking the *Share this Document* button on the *Full Summary* page. A box will pop up *(see Figure 5)* where you can enter notes and tags about the document and share it with members of your network. You can also mark bookmarks as private.

Figure 5: Bookmark

Bookmarked for Me: contains all the links saved for you by other people and is designed to encourage the sharing of expertise within an organisation.

Resources: has a list of all the sources a company uses.

Connect

SinglePoint encourages collaboration and this is where users can create and manage groups and share research content with colleagues or other groups to enable them to benefit from the experience of the whole group or other people's expertise. My Groups are listed on the left and clicking on the relevant group takes you to the *Groups* page *(see Figure 6)* which lists *Group Bookmarks* and *Headlines*.

Figure 6: The Groups page

There is a tag cloud on the left which allows users to see what other users are searching on and saving. Under this are various *Group Options* where a user can view members, discussions, bookmarks, change the layout of the page and subscribe or unsubscribe from discussions and bookmarks.

One advantage of allowing collaboration within the SinglePoint research portal is that document access rights can still be enforced so only those with specific access rights get to see the right documents. Another advantage is that users can see which documents and reports are read the most and by whom.

Thomson Reuters

This tab contains an overview of the top 200 companies in IT and Life Sciences. The Thomson Reuters IT Company Radar is not an included feature by default and is an optional add on that requires the content licence.

Clicking on a company name gives you a Business and Financial Summary whilst Company Links takes you directly to the company's homepage, news releases, investor relations, financial information, corporate history/profile, executives, products/services and employment opportunities. There is also a brief company overview, incorporation information, contact information and to the right of the page is a graph showing price history. You can also see executive biographies, financials, ratios and Web News related to a company.

Events Radar

This is where you can find a list of conferences, seminars, and similar events for IT and Life Sciences. The IT radar lists over a year's worth of events and Life Sciences had over three years' worth, so plenty of information there. If a client is interested in tracking another industry or company then these can be added. Clicking on the conference link takes you to the relevant website. There is also an archive of events.

Outputs

SinglePoint can include the client's proprietary research in several formats including Word, Excel, PDF, PPT, XML and HTML. Documents can also be printed, emailed, bookmarked or saved as an alert.

The dashboards also work well on an iPad, Android or Windows 8 tablet which would be really useful for someone on their way to a meeting as it means they can get the most up-to-date news or reports.

This chapter is also published as an article in your FreePint Subscription:

SinglePoint: Search and Outputs

Click to login now and read online »

Customer Support, Pricing & Contact Details

Customer Support

SinglePoint offers "help where you need it" in the form of context-specific on-screen tips, prompts and links to more information for power users who need to access the deeper features. SinglePoint is geared more towards the casual user and their strategic dashboards are designed so that you do not need training or experience when using them. Many users find they never need to go deeper than the dashboards or simple search to receive value from the portal.

However, for the deep features, there are extensive online tips displayed at the place they are most useful throughout the portal. Northern Light provides the text for these in the initial configuration and portal administrators are given edit rights for the online system to enable them to precisely tune the online help for each specific client. Portal administrators are also given extensive training during the initial configuration period.

There are many on-screen prompts that encourage users to take action. For example, *Save this search as an alert* is at the top of every search result along with *Sort by date/ relevance*. The pull down action menu prompts users to *Bookmark* or *email* links to documents, or *Analyze your search* for MI Analyst. There are also links to more extensive information when that would be helpful, for example, the *Search Hints* link to the right of the search term entry box describes Northern Light's advanced search syntax options such as Boolean and proximity operators.

In addition to this Northern Light typically offers webinar training to its users every few months. They also meet with each client every other week to review any changes or adjustments to the portal and its contents, with a more strategic meeting on an annual basis, during which Northern Light will present roadmap ideas for clients to react and contribute to.

Pricing

Northern Light was unable to give exact pricing information as this is a customisable product and there are so many feature options available. A SinglePoint news portal with only Northern Light's news feed when replacing Factiva as an enterprise-wide application is $96,000 per year, but when licensed secondary content and other collections are added to the portal the price would generally be over $150,000 per year as it is an enterprise-wide application. The cost depends on what clients select, how many sources they have, and which custom features Northern Light adds.

Contact Details

Northern Light Group, LLC
One Constitution Center
Boston
MA 02129
USA
Tel (US): 617 674 2074
Email: sales@northernlight.com
Website: www.northernlight.com

FreePint Subscribers can log in now to read more about Northern Light in our Q&A with Northern Light: a SinglePoint for a Company's Strategic Research Needs.

This chapter is also published as an article in your FreePint Subscription:
SinglePoint: Customer Support, Pricing & Contact Details
Click to login now and read online »

About the Reviewer

Sophie Alexander is a business researcher and provides customised research to companies in a wide variety of industries with a particular interest in investigative research. She has a BA Hons in Law and a Diploma in Information Studies along with over 15 year's experience in both the public and private sector. Sophie can be reached via her website at www.alexanderinformation.co.uk.

Share this report

You can share individual reports and articles with anyone in your organisation, as part of your FreePint Subscription.

This PDF report can be emailed to anyone in your organisation but may only be placed on your intranet or other collaborative workspace if your license level allows. If you have questions about your license level, please contact support@freepint.com.