Reprint

Information Today

The Newspaper for Users and Producers of Electronic Information Services | www.infotoday.com

Product News & Reviews

A Knovel Approach to Sharing Engineering Data

FEATURED PRODUCT

Engineers don't have much wiggle room when it comes to design and implementation. Projects have to work right the first time, every time. And that's just one of the reasons why Knovel's Engineering Cases have proven to be so popular.

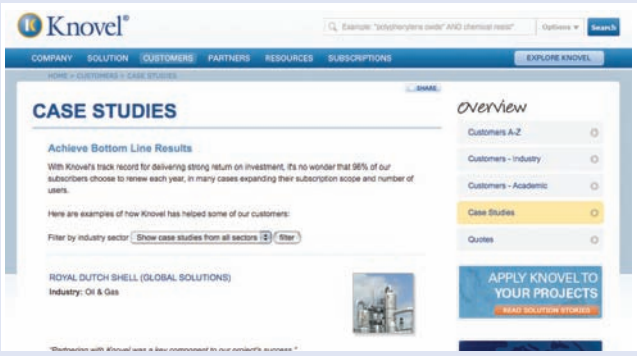
"The Engineering Cases have been a big hit," says Amy Burnis, director of marketing communications at Knovel. "Engineers learn from colleagues who share their experiences in a condensed problem-solution format that isn't always possible in a peer-reviewed journal."

Building a trusted network is key to Knovel's push in the marketplace. Products and services such as My Knovel let engineers save and take their valued tools, resources, and community of experts along with them wherever they may go, says Christopher Forbes, president and CEO.

Knovel users safeguard their resources and tools of the trade from college to retirement, he says. Today, the engineer's three-ring binder has gone digital, along with expert contacts who may be halfway around the world and not just halfway down the hallway.

"During the last 2 years, we spent a huge amount of resources—time and money—to solve the big information-gathering problems that engineers face," says Forbes. And despite a challenging economy with its resulting budget trimming and cost cutting, Knovel is doing well, says Forbes. "We grew last year by 7%, while retaining nearly 95% of customers."

Forbes says Knovel's "secret sauce" lies in its extensive collection of interactive data, which allows users to extract content as needed from resources to solve equations or interpolate data along any curves. "End users come to Knovel for vetted data that can be used easily and manipulated for their specific needs," he says. The calculators embedded in the charts, graphs, and tables give users exact data when they need it.



Burnis says Knovel is responding to trends in the engineering environment, including safety issues (e.g., the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico) and preparing the next generation of engineers (especially in aerospace, engineering design and construction, and oil and gas), as well as information related to materials and corrosion.

But engineers aren't the only ones ramping up for the challenges ahead. Librarians, who have always been important partners and advocates for Knovel, understand the value of quality content and can assess these engineering sources. "We're seeing a growing disconnect between the buyers (librarians) and end users (practicing engineers) of Knovel as content becomes more interactive and tied to engineering workflows," Burnis says. "But we're working on it." The new applications of content and interactive tools require buyers to have a greater understanding of an engineer's job challenges and workflow, so it's becoming more difficult for librarians to know how content is used in different engineering processes.

Forbes is adjusting Knovel's offerings to meet the changing needs of the engineering market. "We're already working on something radically different than what's out there in ebooks and how we deliver them," he says, with his sights set on more innovations being rolled out this year.

"We're responding to the changing environment," says Forbes. "Knovel even has a Facebook page with 13,000 fans and climbing. We're very carefully defined with our people."

—Barbara Brynko

This article is reprinted in its entirety from the June 2010 issue of *Information Today*, published by Information Today, Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved. Individuals may download, store, and print a single copy. All commercial uses, including making printed copies for distribution in bulk at trade shows or in marketing campaigns and all commercial reprints require additional permission from the publisher. www. infotoday.com