Combined Knowledge succeeds by finding new markets for Nintex training.

Steve Smith

Chief Executive Officer

Combined Knowledge

www.combined-knowledge.com

+44 (0)1455 200 520

UK-based Combined Knowledge has specialized in the development and delivery of SharePoint education and support since 2003. Twelve years later, it has expanded beyond its origins in live, classroom training to also provide its services to partners and customers worldwide in an ever-broadening range of formats including private courses, public online and on-demand courses, and self-support products.

In 2007, Combined Knowledge added Nintex content to its SharePoint course portfolio and today offers courses—onsite, online, and on-demand—for every aspect of the Nintex workflow platform. We recently spoke with Steve Smith, Chief Executive Officer of Combined Knowledge, about how he developed a successful training business, what role Nintex has played in that success, and what's ahead for Combined Knowledge in a rapidly changing market for support and education.

How do you differentiate your offerings in the market for SharePoint training?

Our key aim is not only to deliver the best training classes available, but also to provide organizations with a complete, end-to-end solution for their SharePoint deployment. We do this by providing training for all steps of deployment, from facilitating product installation, development and use, through to ensuring complete user adoption. We support that user-adoption goal through the use of on-demand support and helpdesk software for all users from a single, central source. We make it easy for an organization with many locations to ensure that all of its users receive the same understanding and knowledge, wherever those users are based.

Another way we differentiate our offerings is through our comprehensive content on Nintex. We offer courses on Nintex Workflow, Workflow for Project Server, Forms, and Mobile—and for every platform version, 2007, 2010 through to 2013 and Office 365.

How did you get into Nintex training?

Nintex approached us to deliver training to its partners and their customers, and we responded with classroom training for early partner adoption and customer use, with the goal of enabling customers to get the most out of their Nintex investment as quickly as possible.

We started with public training venues throughout Europe, the US, and Australia for Nintex partners. Our trainers really traveled the world. As our relationship with Nintex progressed, so did our business model for Nintex training. Our courses became a way for partners to train their customers, and evolved through the delivery of online classes catering to global time zones.

> "We made a strategic decision right from the beginning to offer not just a single Nintex course, but to truly help companies by educating them on the full range of the Nintex platform."

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How significant is Nintex to your business now?

In terms of revenue, Nintex-related offerings are about 5% of our business. As we've expanded our offerings, we've expanded the ways that partners can use those offerings—for example, they can be trained by us, they can use our content to train customers, they can resell our on-demand content, and they can rent seats in our hosted environment.

What has been the big shift in your Nintex training?

Without question, it is the move from classroom training to online training, which is now about 80% of our Nintex class delivery. In 2009, we began to invest heavily in online training, building our own hosting datacenter for the virtual machine labs as a way to scale out faster than we could with the classroom model. We now offer a regular schedule of public online classes in different regions—Asia Pacific, AMEA [Africa, Middle East], and North America. We don't offer public Nintex classroom training any more, but do continue to deliver private onsite training for our customers.

What's the next evolution in your training offerings?

We now provide Training+ offerings for SharePoint and Nintex. Training+ is a collection of premium Combined Knowledge training courses delivered in high-definition video-on-demand to everyone in a customer's organization.

Each module is divided into convenient, short chunks allowing users to learn at their own pace and to stop and start as the obligations of their day-to-day job roles allow. Training+ for Nintex Workflow provides a series of on demand videos covering everything you need to know to install and use Nintex Workflow 2010 and 2013, whether you are new to the product or already have some experience this course has something for everyone.

The course is built on long term expertise in the Nintex range of products and is dedicated to teaching you how to build and manage workflows, starting small with simple approval workflows but soon growing in sophistication as the workflows grow and you learn how to work with a variety of techniques including serial approval, loops, variables, database connections, error handling and state machines.

This course is perfect for all levels of user; from information workers and sales people, through to developers.

Why did you create Training+?
It's another way to fulfill our mission of helping customers to maximize user adoption and ROI, and reduce support costs, on SharePoint and Nintex. It does that by making it possible for the customer to extend training cost-effectively to more people in its organization than it could afford to reach before. The more of its people that an organization can train, the more benefit it can realize from its investment in SharePoint and Nintex.

Training+ is available via our hosted App subscription model or deployed in full for our on-premises customers.

This is also a way for you to grow your Nintex business.

Yes. We traditionally play most strongly in the enterprise and midmarket space. Because Training+ is a highly cost-effective option for customers, it extends our reach to a segment of the market we didn't cover before—customers with as few as 25 seats. So, this is an offering that makes both our customers and Combined Knowledge more successful.

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