KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SPECIAL

CIO Review

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The Navigator for Enterprise Solutions

Mitchell Stewart,
Co-Founder & CTO

Rick Nucci,
Co-Founder & CEO

GURU

WITH GURU, YOU'RE ALWAYS IN THE KNOW

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COVER STORY

Most Integrated
Knowledge Management Solution

> “Today, we live in the Knowledge Economy. Access to valuable knowledge creates economic value”

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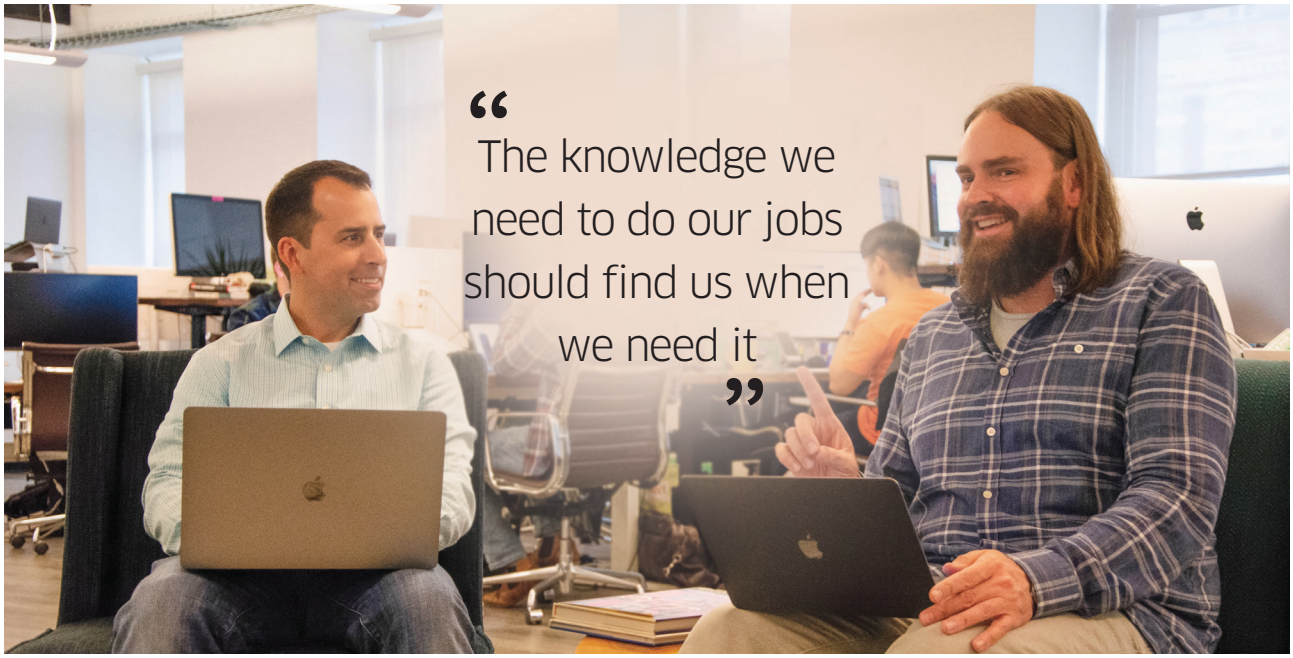
By Vishnu Keloth

It's no secret that data is big business. Big Data, data-driven decisions, data science, and now data to drive artificial intelligence efforts. Data, for the most part, gets a lot of attention. Except for one specific class of data - the internal know-how and institutional knowledge that powers companies.

Philadelphia-based Guru (www.getguru.com) believes that a company's institutional knowledge is its biggest secret weapon. They define knowledge as all the information you need to do your job well. This can include technical product information if you're a support agent. Or information about your competitors if you're a salesperson. Or even new hire on-boarding guides. Guru takes the best aspects from historical data and knowledge management approaches and combines them into a one-stop shop that works alongside your employees, empowering them to be more confident — and more productive.

Knowledge management is a big space, one that has been filled piecemeal. Internal wikis, digital asset management solutions, and analytics services live in separate instances that don't talk to each other. Often, these services are implemented only within some departments. This leads to many conflicting solutions within one enterprise, which need regular upkeep.

That's why Guru co-founder and CEO Rick Nucci's approach to knowledge management is a revolution. Guru makes adding new knowledge easy and lives wherever employees spend their days. It also unifies any pre-existing sources of knowledge within an organization. Finally, everything an employee finds in Guru is periodically verified as up-to-date



and correct. Founded in 2013, Guru counts more than 700 companies across the world as clients. Its customers include publicly traded enterprises such as Square (NYSE:SQ), Shopify (NYSE:SHOP), Yext (NYSE:YEXT). Guru's customers in sales speed up sales cycles, increase win rates, and reduce the onboarding time of new sales reps. Guru customers in customer service increase customer delight, generate more revenue from existing customers, and stave off competitors from stealing their customers.

Guru's new approach has set it apart from competitors old and new. So what made Nucci take the leap after Dell acquired his previous startup, Boomi, in 2010? Where does he see opportunity?

HISTORIC KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ROADBLOCKS

"The 1800s was the Agrarian Economy, where access to land created economic value. The 1900s was the Industrial Economy, where access to machines created economic value. Today, we live in the Knowledge Economy. Access to valuable knowledge creates economic value for individuals, companies, and the world at large," explains Nucci.

Here's how he sees the problem: the rapid growth of cloud-based software has led to a fragmentation of information in organizations. Knowledge and data live in multiple systems in multiple formats. Although 'enterprise search' solutions may appear to solve the problem, these solutions are obsolete if the source of knowledge is out of date or wrong. Garbage in, garbage out.

Nucci understands that one problem with traditional knowledge management is that of "create and forget." There's a huge effort to get a system up and running with as much knowledge as possible...and then they're left to stagnate. This leaves the employees who rely on them in the lurch. A company's knowledge should help sales, support, and other revenue-generating teams. Unfortunately, outdated knowledge leads to confusion, which results in a terrible customer experience.

In the rare cases when a knowledge system hasn't been neglected, the next problem is the time required to run regular verification checks. As a company's workforce grows, internal experts are burdened with answering the same questions repeatedly when newer employees can't find answers elsewhere.

Worse, none of these approaches solve the biggest question of all: how much of the knowledge in your system is actually being used? Is anyone even looking at that 15-page FAQ? Do they even know it exists?

ENTER GURU

In the original Sanskrit, **'गुरु'** (gu.ˈru) translates exactly to "a spiritual teacher." Its export to Western cultures has made it synonymous with the word "guide." That's where Nucci drew inspiration for his human-centered approach to knowledge management. The software-as-guide concept means that employees can look to Guru as an advisor that sits with them and empowers them with the tools to build their own success — and the success of their company.

So how does it work? Guru unifies all information and knowledge across all leading cloud applications including Google's G Suite, Microsoft's Office 365 Suite, Salesforce, Zendesk, and Slack. Guru also houses a verification engine to ensure the accuracy of the knowledge that lives inside it.

Guru's verification engine reminds subject matter experts to reaffirm or update knowledge at set intervals. This gives users the confidence to know they have the most up-to-date knowledge at all times. If a card goes unverified, it's identifiable as untrusted, with a red border and exclamation mark. This tells the viewer that a particular card may be out of date. Trusted cards get green borders and a checkmark. This novel approach benefits SMEs, who won't receive questions about whether something is up to date. It also benefits knowledge seekers, who don't have to waste anyone's time.

We live in a world where customers have come to expect instantaneous,

thoughtful responses from brands. This means that real-time access to knowledge matters more than ever. For customer-facing professionals and teams, information must be accurate and available, always. By combining verified knowledge from across disparate systems with its browser extension and native Slack integration, Guru brings useful information to employees, instead of forcing them to waste time looking for it.

POWERED BY AI

Even the most technically savvy employee can't match the search and response time of a machine. That's why Guru goes a step further, using AI to identify and learn the data patterns of its customers. This means that Guru can proactively suggest the right knowledge at the right time. Nucci puts it this way: "Guru knows what knowledge is used within an organization. It also knows when and why it is used. Guru's AI stack is also capable of spotting the knowledge gaps that exist within an organization. These are some of the features that are a byproduct of unifying knowledge, verifying its accuracy, and empowering teams with it where they work." Guru's AI works with structured data, like that which powers CRM platforms. More interestingly, Guru also tackles unstructured data, such as employee know-how. This combination drives serious value for Guru's customers.

Within weeks of being "live" at a new customer, Guru creates what is essentially an active network of knowledge in that organization. Imagine knowledge flying from one employee to another in real time, thousands of times every day. This results in an empowered enterprise that can move faster than its competitors, offer superior customer service, and grow revenue more efficiently and profitably, regardless of its industry or size.

IN GOOD COMPANY

Nucci knows that there can't be a one-size-fits-all approach to knowledge management. That's why Guru works closely with clients from the beginning of the rollout process to help them optimize for their goals. In addition to the standard Guru web application, all of Guru's subscription plans come bundled with active extensions for all major web browsers, a deep Slack integration, roles and groups, and knowledge import from external sources.

They also put the employee experience front and center. "We don't want to be the 18th browser tab that employees need to open up," says Nucci. And they aren't. Guru users build daily habits around it. This shows up in Guru's DAU/MAU ratio (daily active users to daily monthly users) of 45%. For typical enterprise software, this number is usually between 10% and 20%. When users build daily habits around software, they become experts at using it. This means they turn to it every time, which makes it even more effective. Guru benefits from this positive snowball effect.

That's why they have the support of the big kids on the block. Companies like BuzzFeed, Lever, and Bitly use Guru for knowledge management after failures with historical platforms. For instance, Bitly's engineering teams were constantly bogged down by repetitive queries. These queries came from the company's sales team, who could not find the answers they needed inside Slack. They implemented Guru, which quickly became the company's central knowledge repository. Now, the sales and customer success teams simply query Guru's Slackbot to see if there's already an answer. The engineering team has seen a big decrease in duplicate questions, leading to higher productivity. It's a win-win.

> "Guru not only knows what knowledge is used, but also the context of when and why it is being used"

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO MARKET LEADERSHIP

The factors that spurred the conception of Guru go back to the inefficiencies that Nucci and co-founder Mitchell Stewart — who serves as Guru's CTO — faced in their previous venture. "We were living a lot of the pain that Guru now solves. We used to release product updates rapidly. Corresponding knowledge had to be communicated to sales, customer service, and revenue professionals. No matter what we tried, be it emailing employee base, or setting up a wiki, our employees would soon forget to use and refer to the resource. We had to stand and watch the downward spiral of passive knowledge going stale," recalls Rick. "Guru is our second big bet. Portals are dying, and the knowledge we need to do our jobs should find us when we need it," he wrote on a blog post in March 2015, denoting the company's vision.

Today, Guru serves hundreds of companies across five continents. Nucci and the hundred-person Guru team, with offices in Philadelphia and San Francisco, don't look to be slowing down anytime soon. He says, "we look forward to serving companies interested in out-competing their competition, delivering world-class experiences to their customers, and empowering their employees to do the best work of their lives." CR