

CASE STUDY

Knovel[®]

BP

Nimble research and development and improved productivity



SUMMARY

For thousands of engineers at BP, Knovel is an always-on, unified and integrated resource that ensures vital advances and challenging problems would not remain unresolved for lack of easily accessible technical information.

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– Environmental Engineer at BP

BP operates worldwide in the exploration, production, refinement and distribution of a variety of energy sources, chief among them, oil and gas. For a company BP’s size – employer of over 80,000 people with 6 brands, 3 key business segments and operations in over 80 countries – it makes sense to enable different business units with the tools required to respond effectively to opportunities in the marketplace. Part of that strategy involves the sharing of resources, and that’s exactly what BP does with Knovel and other service providers offering information and shared learning applications.

Beyond Traditional Information Resources

To serve the multidisciplinary needs of global project teams, BP needed a resource offering the reference information necessary for employees to perform their many varied functions across diverse business units. Because of BP’s scope, the information also needed to be available to multiple users, around the world and around the clock.

Knovel was a resource BP chose. A strictly online operation, not tied to the traditional brick and mortar model of a reference collection, Knovel allowed BP to be more nimble when it came to research and development. It also ensured that vital advances and challenging problems would not remain unresolved for lack of easily accessible technical information.

The BP Way, a Knovel Approach

Each of BP’s business units provides their new employees with manuals or training outlining the various information-gathering resources at their disposal. Because each of BP’s business divisions requires diverse engineering techniques and business practices, these manuals

differ in the type of content they offer. What is similar across all of BP is the way in which employees are able to access research tools such as Knovel. Whether an employee is working at a refinery, on alternative energies such as wind, solar and bio-fuel, or at a research facility, they are able to use Knovel as a BP tool for engineering and research.

A Standardized Knowledge-Base

BP’s Director of Global Engineering Standards is responsible for the development and worldwide management of the process for developing engineering technical specifications across of all of BP’s businesses. He leads a small team that travels the globe to ensure that engineers throughout the organization understand how to use the group systems providing easy access to accepted standards, best practices and other technical and engineering information.

BP’s approach to information gathering for its engineers is one of unification and integration. There is one central portal through which all employees can reach whatever information they need to do their jobs effectively. From this hub, BP



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employees worldwide have access to both structured and unstructured tools like forums and Subject Matter Expert-verified postings. This encourages the sharing of information, research results, technical and production insights, as well as successful engineering practices. Inserted into this dynamic information-sharing environment, the benefit of BP’s subscription to Knovel is magnified. It provides timely and accurate information that engineers and other employees can use as the basis of thoughtful discussion in their research and business efforts.

“Knovel not only makes available many of engineering’s sacred texts,” says the director, “but also includes interactive tools that can extract data from tables, charts, graphs and mathematical equations to shorten the time spent on looking up information and testing ‘what if’ scenarios. The results provide a wealth of useful information across a broad spectrum of disciplines.”

The Engineering Standards group routinely keeps its employees updated about the Knovel service and other services through the use of strategically placed pop-ups on the web portal, which notify users of updates and enhancements as they’re added to the service.

According to BP employees who use Knovel in their research, the service helps them to “find the best literature available.” It also “facilitates communications and interactions with...colleagues.”

Tangible time savings and problem-solving benefits

Time savings are significant when engineers use Knovel, and BP has reaped the benefits. For example, an environmental engineer at a BP refinery figures he saves several hours a month compiling technical data using Knovel. In order to come to an informed decision, “the process would be long and tedious,” the engineer says. “However, by using Knovel’s search menu, I was able to obtain the needed data in half the time.”

But the benefits aren’t just quantitative. Take the work of a mechanical engineer at a BP facility in Trinidad. He saves considerable time using Knovel and was recently working on a project involving the hydro testing of piping. With the relevant information he quickly located with Knovel, he was able to resolve issues with a contractor and even ensure the integrity of the tested system.

With over 10,000 global engineers, the productivity gains experienced by BP are significant. “We now have over 2,300 active users,” the director added.



Satisfaction That Speaks Volumes

BP's Director of Global Engineering Standards suggests that the most telling evidence that Knovel is working well for BP is the fact that use is high and that he rarely ever hears about it. Knovel has become part of the process. If anything, he receives requests for even more specialized references and tools.

As the Global Engineering Standards team travels the globe ensuring BP's standards are available easily throughout the organization, their phones don't ring with engineers and managers on the other end of the line, complaining that they're unable to find the information they need. And they don't hear that work is being held up for lack of easily available reference content. In short, Knovel provides BP's people with the consistent factual materials they need as they develop the world's energy resources.

"When we look at the use combined with user feedback on time savings, it clearly illustrates the value of the content the Knovel subscription provides to BP."

Because BP has investments and interests across the entire energy sector, its people have technical expertise and specialized knowledge that can't be found anywhere else. The work that BP's people do not only covers a broad scope of engineering and technology in many areas, it is also highly specialized. The same can be said of Knovel.

What's more, Knovel delivers this content quickly whenever and wherever BP needs it. The effort and energy BP employees used to spend tracking down science and engineering source material they can now devote to solving problems instead.

What better praise could Knovel's user-friendly and completely searchable resources earn from a company like BP than they save energy?