

KnowledgeWatch mines Niagara of data for useful content

As Seen In The Great Lakes Innovation and Technology Report



The great thing about the Internet is the billions of sources of information.

The awful thing about the Internet is the billions of sources of information.



Enter KnowledgeWatch, an Ann Arbor company that will turn that uncontrolled Niagara Falls torrent of information into a useful, navigable, organized stream.

At its heart, KnowledgeWatch is an information aggregator and search system that allows professional organizations, enterprise departments and knowledge workers to customize aggregated information from the Web or other sources to provide a meaningful information stream for their particular interest and need.

Essentially, KnowledgeWatch pulls the needles out of the haystack of chaotic information online. KnowledgeWatch saves time, labor and money, while providing a way to power innovation for knowledge workers and their enterprises.

The company was founded 10 years ago by Donald Hogan, a veteran of 30 years of business experience split evenly between software product development and sales and marketing management. He started his career with what was then Burroughs Corp. in Wayne, Pa. in mainframe software product development, and then moved into sales to Burroughs headquarters in Detroit. He left Burroughs just before the merger with Sperry that created Unisys.

Hogan then spent a couple of years at Wang Laboratories, then two Michigan-based software companies, where he was working when he got the idea that became Knowledge Watch.

The system's first customer was MedAxiom, a Web-based information provider for very large cardiology practices. Knowledge Watch mines a wide variety of online sources for news of interest for MedAxiom to provide to its audience of 5,500 heart doctors.

Joe Sasson, vice president of knowledge-based systems at MedAxom, said "they really help us out a lot. Their nifty software really helps us get a lot of things done quickly."

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Most recently, KnowledgeWatch signed a strategic alliance with MichBio, Michigan's life sciences industry association, to provide a dedicated, vetted news feed for its members. Hogan said the resulting Life Science NewsWatch will be marketed to the nation's 45 other state biotech organizations as well. The company is aiming at the target market for news and information of interest to the nation's 17,000 professional organizations.

Said MichBio president Stephen Rapundalo: "The problem that we have is that a lot of industry-relevant news, first of all there's a lot of it, and secondly it comes from all sorts of sources, many of which require some sort of subscription. We wanted to develop a basic news feed that could be culled on a daily basis and then something more specific for devices, something for pharma, something for ag biotech. We could offer a basic news feed to our members, and if our members wanted to have something more specific to their needs, they could get their own subscription from Knowledge Watch at a discounted rate because they are MichBio members."

Of the development effort, Rapundalo said: "They've got an innovative product. So far so good."

Hogan said the company's latest efforts have included building an executive team – a marketing manager, an operations manager, an implementation manager -- and redeveloping the company's Web-based software so it can be scaled up for larger and larger audiences.

"It's an automated knowledge harvesting and management system now, not just a news feed," said John Boulahanis, the company's director of business development and strategy. "And it can be applied to any subject domain for any industry."

More at www.knowledgewatch.com.