

Free Open Source vs Enterprise Knowledge Base - Which is Better?

📅 203 🧑 Rinky Batra 📅 June 5, 2020 📁 Knowledge Management

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Every business wants to provide the best experience to your customers as possible. Satisfied customers means more business, which means a bigger payday for your company. For customer satisfaction it is important to keep them informed, engaged, and coming back for more is making sure they have access to what they need, when they need it. Customers shift to a competitor's product when they don't get proper customer support from the company. With an **efficient knowledge base**, business can avoid these issues and create a better experience for your customers.

With a knowledge base in place, you can allow your team to get quick answers to their day-to-day queries without having the need for a subject matter expert to help. It's also good if you have customers to support because they can self-help themselves, reducing the need for customer support interactions. Therefore, the first is the step of finding the **right knowledge base** for your business. The first question that came to mind is which knowledge base software to use; free open source or enterprise knowledge base?

Free Open Source Knowledge Base

An open source knowledge base is a knowledge base that is built with open source software. The term "**open source**" refers to original source code that is freely available and can be modified. It's openly accessible to the public and there is a lack of organizational bureaucracy structure that is in proprietary software. When businesses want to offer a self-service knowledge base to their customers, using an open source solution can seem like a good fit for start-ups and SOHO companies. That's because the software is "free", customizable, and readily available. However, there are **some downsides** – not to mention, especially when compared to using an enterprise-level knowledge base solution. Open source knowledge base has limited features and are basically used to keep users informed.

Enterprise Knowledge Base

The alternative to an open source knowledge base is using a proprietary software. They are actively developed, secure, highly performant and are backed by the 24x7 support of team that develops/maintains it. Moreover, when it comes to storage of company's intellectual property (knowledge) and sharing that knowledge with its customers and employees, it is not recommended to use an open-source solution for companies seeking to invest in their self-service customer support. An enterprise-level knowledge base management solution is highly optimized for use by support agents and technical writers in the customer support software stack. An enterprise knowledge base tool ensures consistency in its flow, facilitates quick & easy knowledge findability, integrates with existing tools, and can be deployed across various touch points for internal and external use. Maintaining a knowledge base requires a platform enriched with easy-to-understand guides and troubleshooting steps, so that users can find relevant answers as required. They can be used as an external knowledge base for customers to self-help themselves or as an internal knowledge base for employees. Enterprise-level knowledge base software generally offer two types of solutions for knowledge base deployment; Owned (Self Hosted) and SaaS (Cloud Hosted).

Table of Contents

- [Free Open Source Knowledge Base](#)
- [Enterprise Knowledge Base](#)
 - [Owned Enterprise Knowledge Base](#)
 - [SaaS Knowledge Base](#)
- [Comparison: Free & Open Source vs Enterprise Knowledge Base](#)
 - [Free Knowledge Base Benefits](#)
 - [Free of Cost](#)
 - [Self-Hosted](#)
 - [Free Knowledge Base Drawbacks](#)
 - [Hidden Cost](#)
 - [Not Secure](#)
 - [Lack of Support](#)
 - [Basic Features](#)
 - [Enterprise Knowledge Base Benefits](#)
 - [Easy Deployment](#)
 - [Customer Support](#)
 - [Feature Rich](#)
 - [Low Cost of Ownership](#)
 - [Secure](#)
 - [Enterprise Knowledge Base Drawbacks](#)
 - [Limited Scalability](#)
 - [Costly](#)

Owned Enterprise Knowledge Base

A knowledge base with one time cost can be easily installed on your server. It comes with complete source code that you can change to suit your own requirements and support team helps you with all technical issues.

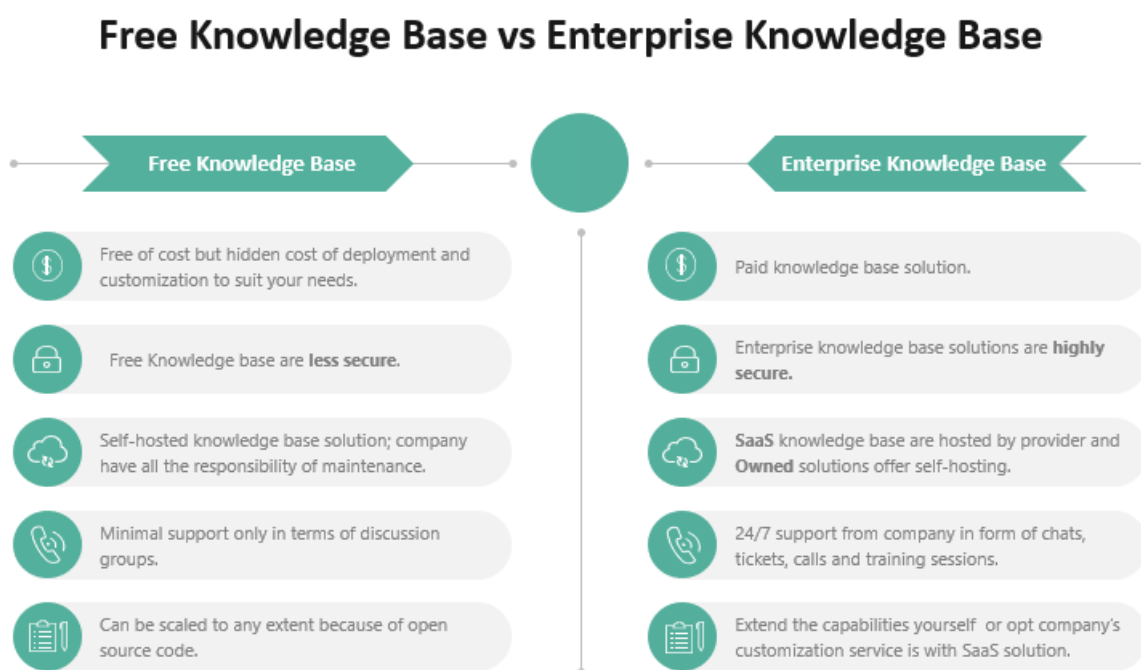
SaaS Enterprise Knowledge Base

SaaS is a service where knowledge base company host and operate your knowledge base for you, fully managed. Typically, this is the go-to for businesses that don't want to fuss with creating a knowledge base themselves. It can be very affordable and easy-to-use. But you get less customization, integrations, and scalability.

PHPKB is the most popular knowledge base software that keeps information organized, accessible, and easy to manage for internal teams and external customers and provides both kinds of licenses, owned and hosted model.

Comparison: Free & Open Source vs Enterprise Knowledge Base

The basic features of both are now mature and standardized, but developments in using artificial intelligence to automate and personalize knowledge management at scale is sparking a shift away from open-source enterprise knowledge base solutions.



Free Knowledge Base Benefits

Going the open source route essentially means that you are going to custom build your knowledge base in house or employ a developer to build it for you. It really offers a lot of possibilities when it comes to customization.

Free of Cost

Open source knowledge bases are mostly free of cost with code available for modification. However, note that this does not account for the time or money it will take to build the knowledge base yourself or hire a developer to build it for you. Another related issue is that it can tempt to add more and more features to your knowledge base. This can cause your platform to become bloated, overly complicated to use and difficult to maintain.

Self-Hosted

You can host the open source knowledge base on your own servers. Even though self-hosted systems are more secure, but it comes with additional efforts of maintenance such as back up generation, keeping facilitating softwares up to date and maintaining the servers.

Free Knowledge Base Drawbacks

Now, going with an open source knowledge base may already sound like the right solution for your business, however there are some drawbacks.

Hidden Cost

Open source doesn't necessarily mean **free** because it takes time and money to either build it out yourself or hire a developer. And it can be a lengthy, involved process. Most business owners know little about software development and outsource this work. But this comes at a cost. If you are a larger company, this could be equal to or more than the cost of paying for an Enterprise Wiki which has already been developed as per business needs.

Not Secure

Mostly open source softwares have security loopholes. Therefore, such softwares can only be used if you are thinking of launching the knowledge base at smaller platform and where security is not much concern. However, if you are establishing a knowledge base for your stakeholders and employees, then security gap can cost at even your brand reputation.

Lack of Support

Unlike an efficient enterprise knowledge base where you are authorised to get 24/7 support either through chat, tickets or call, in open source knowledge base no customer specific support facility is available. You have to rely on forums and discussion groups for any kind of help.

Basic Features

If your business likely uses a wide range of applications and tools, so having a fully integrated knowledge base is a huge benefit. The open source knowledge base has basic functionalities and if you use open source knowledge base, then you might need to develop a lot of custom features yourself. However, with enterprise knowledge base you can integrate it with your knowledge base with API calls and with support team.

Enterprise Knowledge Base Benefits

Enterprise level knowledge base has its own pros and cons.

Easy Deployment

Compared to an open source knowledge base solution, an enterprise knowledge base is easy to use because most of the processes and resources are outlined for you—and, really, you don't have any of the struggles of having to build it out yourself. With SaaS option, you know that you have a dedicated software provider that has made the process as simple as possible.

Customer Support

Since the enterprise knowledge base software is provided by well-established company, you will have access to better customer support. Customer support is all but non-existent with a free knowledge base solution. This is great for busy business owners that don't have the time to build the knowledge base themselves or even hire a developer to do it. With an enterprise solution, when an issue occurs, you will have someone to reach out to for help.




Feature Rich

The enterprise knowledge bases are full of features which makes it easy for you to share any kind of knowledge such as rich text, files, embedded attachments, video tutorials, etc. Many of the features that you might need to develop with a free knowledge base already built into the platform. That makes it easy for you or anyone on your team to tweak the software to fit your business's unique needs. Enterprise knowledge base solution you choose will probably be built with your industry in mind and will provide most of the custom options that you need.

Low Cost of Ownership

Enterprise knowledge base companies provide software and support to thousands of businesses and websites. That means that they can usually offer lower costs to users compared to the cost of working one-on-one with a development team. Modifying a free knowledge base to suit your needs might cost you thousands of dollars, however, deploying an already developed application will cost you very less.

 PHPKB knowledge management software is best in its class knowledge base, which has [different pricing options](#) to suit every business's pocket.

Secure

Enterprise knowledge base is secure and also more secluded. Primarily developed for business purposes, it allows you to

share knowledge with people who have authorized access. The code is developed by team of experts and has evolved over time. The testing is not left on users but is part of company process in enterprise level knowledge bases.

Enterprise Knowledge Base Drawbacks

Below are few downsides of enterprise level knowledge base solutions.

Limited Scalability

With SaaS option of enterprise knowledge base, you are not provided with source code so chances of modifying the software as per your need are less. However, with owned license you have provision to change the code. A best enterprise knowledge base company will provide you with customization facility at a reasonable price. You can opt for the customization service, which is generally cheaper than the cost of hiring a developer.

Fortunately, PHPKB provides customization service and do the customizations for you! The same can't be said for a lot of other enterprise level knowledge base solutions.

Costly

Going with an enterprise knowledge base necessarily means that you are paying for a solution. This can be expensive depending on the provider and your needs. But remember, going open source carries its own costs. That's why it's important to consider your business needs and budget.

Online URL: <https://www.phpkb.com/kb/article/free-open-source-vs-enterprise-knowledge-base-which-is-better-203.html>