

## Small yet Beautiful Lightweight Knowledge Management: Postprint of the Knowledge Management Forum Interview with WizNote CEO Mr. Li Jun

**Authors:** Wang Zheng, Liu Yuanying

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### Abstract

In this issue of the “Expert Interview” column, we interviewed Mr. Li Jun, CEO of Beijing Wozhi Technology Co., Ltd. Regarding the company’s product — WizNote, many are likely familiar with it. In present-day China, an increasing number of users are beginning to engage with, appreciate, and rely upon note-taking software applications, integrating them into their daily lives, studies, and work, and consequently beginning to spontaneously apply the concepts and methods of knowledge management. Note-taking software has also gradually expanded from personal applications to team and enterprise applications, extending from simple information recording functions to support knowledge management functions such as knowledge acquisition, knowledge organization, knowledge search, knowledge sharing, and knowledge co-creation. WizNote, in particular, stands as a pioneer and leader among the many note-taking software applications currently available, acclaimed as a cloud-based note-taking service better suited for Chinese users, and has established a strong reputation among a growing number of individual and enterprise users.

The development team of WizNote has traversed a five-year journey since the company’s founding in 2011 until this year. These five years have been precisely a period when various IT technologies including mobile internet, cloud computing, big data, and artificial intelligence have been developing at a rapid pace and are still in the ascendant, resulting in unprecedented changes in the knowledge environment of society as a whole. The development trajectory of WizNote also provides an excellent window for observing the evolution and advancement of knowledge management tools during these five years.

Mr. Li Jun worked at Kingsoft over a decade ago and is among the earliest generation of internet programmers in China. He later embarked on entrepreneurship

and possesses extensive experience and profound insights in internet software tool development and services, knowledge management, and related domains. We believe this interview will certainly yield new insights into understanding knowledge management from a tools perspective.

## Full Text

### Preamble

In this issue's "Expert Interview" column, we speak with Mr. Li Jun, CEO of Beijing Wozhi Technology Co., Ltd. The company's product—WizNote—has become familiar to many. In contemporary China, an increasing number of users have begun to engage with, appreciate, and rely on note-taking software applications, integrating them into their daily lives, studies, and work, and spontaneously applying concepts and methods of knowledge management. Note-taking software has gradually expanded from personal use to team and enterprise applications, evolving from simple information recording to supporting comprehensive knowledge management functions including knowledge acquisition, organization, search, sharing, and co-creation. Among the many note-taking applications available today, WizNote stands as a pioneer and leader, acclaimed as a cloud-based note-taking solution better suited for Chinese users, building its reputation among a growing base of individual and corporate customers.

The WizNote development team founded their company in 2011, marking five years of operation. These five years have witnessed rapid and ongoing development in mobile internet, cloud computing, big data, artificial intelligence, and other IT technologies, bringing unprecedented transformation to society's knowledge environment. WizNote's development trajectory provides an excellent window through which to observe the evolution of knowledge management tools during this period. Mr. Li Jun previously worked at Kingsoft Software over a decade ago, belonging to China's first generation of internet programmers, before embarking on entrepreneurship. He possesses extensive experience and profound insights in internet software tool development, services, and knowledge management. This interview promises fresh perspectives on understanding knowledge management from a tools-based viewpoint.

**Interviewers:** Wang Zheng and Liu Yuanying, Editorial Department of *Knowledge Management Forum* (KMF)

**Interviewee:** Li Jun, CEO of Beijing Wozhi Technology Co., Ltd.

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## 1. WizNote's Development Journey

**KMF:** Mr. Li, we observe that an increasing number of domestic users are now employing note-taking products for personal knowledge management, with many enterprises also utilizing such tools for departmental and team knowledge management. WizNote is among the earliest note-taking software developed domestically and has gained growing user favor. However, the development team behind this tool remains relatively unknown. Could you first share the story behind the software's development and basic information about your company?

**Li Jun:** We originally had two founders—myself and Wei Shijun—both product enthusiasts and geeks who belong to China's first generation of internet programmers. Back then, we didn't really distinguish between product managers and programmers; whenever we had an interest, we would simply write code and build products. Our earliest experience was developing WPS at "Kingsoft Office," and that accumulation has significant relevance to what our company does today. During our spare time, we developed shareware. Around 2002, China experienced a wave of shareware development, with talented programmers creating such software during their free time or as a full-time occupation. The predecessor of WizNote, "CyberArticle," was one such shareware product developed during this period.

Early versions of CyberArticle focused primarily on capturing and saving web pages. At that time, internet costs were high, and search engine technology was not yet powerful—many things, once viewed, could never be found again through search. Consequently, many people saved web pages in local folders for offline reading. CyberArticle met this user need as an early internet product based on web browsers. When we started our venture in 2009, the mobile internet era had arrived with the emergence of iPhone and Android, so we naturally adapted this product for mobile experiences while retaining the desktop version. This multi-platform product architecture continues to this day.

**KMF:** Your description reveals that WizNote's development has synchronized with recent information technology advances. Your company was established in 2011, and the past five years have witnessed rapid development and widespread adoption of smartphones, mobile internet, and cloud computing. From your perspective, what changes have occurred in the knowledge environment during these five years, and how has WizNote responded and adapted to these changes?

**Li Jun:** We began our venture in 2009 and formally established the company in 2011, with the mobile version also launching that year. We were able to develop the product quickly thanks to the momentum of venture capital investment. We were early adopters in cloud service applications and mobile product experiences. At that time, cloud services were not yet widely 普及, and many service models that now seem commonplace were still controversial. For instance, there was debate over whether to use cloud services and infrastructure—placing functions in the cloud—or to build self-hosted services. We stood at this crossroads while many were still 观望, but we chose the "cloud" direction, partnering with

Alibaba Cloud for technical integration. Today, foundational cloud infrastructure like Alibaba Cloud has become widely 普及 in China, with its reliability fully validated, proving our choice correct. Thus, WizNote's development has grown alongside the application of cloud services in China.

**KMF:** How do you view the mobile experience, and how have you approached it?

**Li Jun:** In the early days of mobile applications, there weren't many developers. Before WeChat emerged, everyone was developing apps; after WeChat appeared, the app craze cooled, and developers rushed to create WeChat applications. In fact, user experiences on WeChat differ significantly. WizNote is not a purely mobile application but rather a product where mobile and PC desktop versions complement each other and coexist. When mobile applications first rose to prominence, many companies focused all their resources on mobile, completely disregarding desktop software experiences. This caused product focus to deviate and drift. Throughout our process, however, we have prioritized what users actually want, maintaining a philosophy of complementarity and balance between mobile and desktop, between desktop software and mobile apps. We make improvements based on where users obtain their information. For example, when Weibo emerged, we provided Weibo integration; when WeChat appeared, we developed WeChat integration. Without open APIs, we find alternative ways to help users capture data, such as our collection features for Weibo and WeChat, which we implemented earlier than competing products.

**KMF:** According to my understanding, many domestic users also prefer using note-taking software on PC desktops. What reasons and behavioral motivations lie behind this?

**Li Jun:** This represents a typical characteristic of our users, which we later studied specifically. We found that the user demographic for personal note-taking in China is quite unique. Unlike abroad—particularly in the United States and Japan—where note-taking has become a daily habit and life necessity, a rational behavior (KMF: Indeed, we see many Japanese publications introducing note-taking methods for life and work), the situation in the U.S. is different. One of Evernote's earliest use cases was photographing daily bills, as electronic billing is essential in America. In China, such behavioral trends may gradually emerge in the future, but currently, cloud note-taking will not become a daily, mass-market tool for casual record-keeping.

Based on this understanding, we positioned our product to serve knowledge workers and knowledge employees. For these individuals, their truly effective work or creative tools remain PCs, though they also have fragmented time and mobile usage scenarios where phones provide necessary auxiliary support. We believe both desktop and mobile versions are needed, but their usage scenarios differ, as do their functions, so we developed both simultaneously. Current usage patterns show that users employ multiple platforms together—primarily PC during work hours, with mobile usage increasing after hours. We have data

analytics supporting these observations, allowing us to clearly understand how users employ this type of product and continuously optimize and improve based on these insights.

## 2. Understanding Knowledge Workers and Knowledge Employees

**KMF:** You just mentioned knowledge workers and knowledge employees. This should also be a distinguishing feature of WizNote's positioning compared to other note-taking products. Could you elaborate further on your understanding of knowledge workers and knowledge employees?

**Li Jun:** Certainly. As I mentioned earlier, we recognized early on that cloud note-taking would not quickly become a mass-market daily recording tool in China. Therefore, we focused more on office workers or learners, such as university students in their third or fourth years and graduate students. You'll find they share significant commonalities. I've been involved with the knowledge management industry for a long time and have developed my own knowledge management habits. Everyone may understand the concept of knowledge management differently, but in my view, it essentially concerns how individuals—especially these knowledge workers in information-based organizations—can leverage their brainpower to create more value. Particularly in business environments without mass production and economies of scale, such as small and medium-sized enterprises and micro-enterprises, the capabilities of knowledge employees essentially represent the company's productivity. I believe knowledge management is about managing this group of people.

Our team happens to specialize in efficiency tools, so we also hope to create good tools that can help these individuals work more effectively and reduce repetitive labor. Regarding reducing repetitive work, the simplest example is that solutions I've found online don't need to be searched for again—either I've already recorded and organized them in real-time, or I've saved them in my notes where they can be searched. As individuals, when you record useful information in your personal notes, it doesn't matter if you can't use it immediately, today, or even within a week. However, when other colleagues in your company or team need it, that note becomes valuable.

**KMF:** Your product targets knowledge workers, so it is not merely a personal knowledge management tool but must also serve groups and teams. Based on your understanding, what are the differences and connections between personal knowledge management and team knowledge management in terms of business models?

**Li Jun:** Indeed, we started with personal knowledge management and individual users. Providing team services is closely related to our business model and the Chinese context. This type of software initially operates on a free trial basis. Especially in China, people generally consider such software should be free by default, only paying when they truly use it well and derive value from

it. Moreover, early software piracy was rampant, with people seeking cracked versions online—this was not a healthy ecosystem. Therefore, during the initial popularization phase, the proportion of paying users was extremely low. For our company, we were only able to successfully develop the product thanks to the venture capital trend; ordinary companies might not have survived.

However, future prospects should improve, and business models will become clearer. Gradually, you'll notice trends brought by companies like Apple: on one hand, software prices have been lowered to acceptable levels; on the other hand, electronic payment systems have become increasingly 普及, and people have grown more accustomed to spending ten or twenty yuan to purchase legitimate software, with stronger habits of paying for and using genuine products. Additionally, people have gradually developed habits of using cloud services—things that were extremely difficult just a few years ago. But fundamentally, when a user's company purchases a commercial product, everyone believes payment is appropriate because they see that tools can bring value to the company or users, making them willing to pay.

### 3. Enterprise Knowledge Management Scenarios and Challenges

**KMF:** Which enterprise departments and teams use WizNote, and what motivations and scenarios drive their usage?

**Li Jun:** Software provided through the SaaS model largely targets small and medium-sized enterprises and what we now call micro-enterprises. Companies bold enough to use cloud services have primarily been startups or internet e-commerce enterprises from the early days to the present. These online operation-oriented enterprises share a significant characteristic: their concern for information security is smaller than their pursuit of efficiency. Additionally, micro-enterprises lack the resources to spend hundreds of thousands on consulting products, focusing instead on cost and efficiency. Moreover, our model of letting others use the product for free and only pay when they find it useful forces us to genuinely solve core knowledge management problems.

Specifically, when enterprise-level clients from traditional large companies see our product, they often hope we can provide a solution similar to traditional knowledge management systems, or that we can act as an implementation or consulting team to help them undertake enterprise knowledge management projects. In their expectations, our emerging company should possess both cloud architecture capabilities and mobile capabilities while also providing a traditional knowledge management system or solution.

However, we hold a different perspective on this. We must first consider why we should create such a product and why we should follow traditional knowledge management software service providers in building large-scale knowledge management systems. Over the past decade, we've observed this market segment shrinking. Therefore, we focus more on solving problems from the source, from

users themselves, learning and growing together with users rather than copying others' products from the start and transplanting similar functions to mobile or cloud platforms. Moreover, even abroad, few successful products or services exist for reference. In short, we believe knowledge management tools should help users solve practical problems, not merely create an information system that satisfies bosses and enterprise managers.

**KMF:** Following this line of thinking, what specific problems do you believe current enterprise knowledge management work faces, and which issues should be addressed first?

**Li Jun:** Having worked in large companies and examined numerous large product solutions, we've even done similar things ourselves. But you'll find that many companies expend tremendous effort and mobilize substantial resources to implement knowledge management systems or hire consulting teams to create excellent knowledge management solutions. However, after system launch, they discover that no one in the company actively uses it. Eventually, even the project leader's interest wanes, and as everyone becomes busy with their own business, the system is cast aside—this is a common phenomenon when enterprises undertake knowledge management initiatives.

We don't want knowledge management tools to become a "chicken rib" for enterprises—something of little value but hard to abandon. Our core philosophy holds that knowledge management is built upon information management. First, users must trust the tool to effectively and timely share and transmit information. In fact, properly handling daily internal team information exchange lays an excellent foundation for knowledge management, constituting more than half the battle.

Specifically, a tool's value lies in accelerating information transmission and exchange among a group of knowledge workers, helping users share in the simplest way possible. On the computer side, users can conveniently read, write, and share knowledge; on the mobile side, writing, editing, and organizing behaviors are less frequent, while reading, commenting, tagging, and annotating are more common—operations frequently performed during users' fragmented time. Thus, the mobile user experience directly facilitates timely internal team information transmission.

**KMF:** After information is generated, accumulated, and transmitted, another problem troubling enterprise knowledge management is the proliferation of invalid and junk information. How should this be addressed?

**Li Jun:** Currently, judging the validity of knowledge within teams still relies on human judgment. For example, if I believe a piece of knowledge is useful for the team, I share it; if it's not useful, I actively block or clean it up. However, in the future, this could be achieved through artificial intelligence and other methods. For instance, we are currently researching cognitive science, semantic recognition, and machine learning technologies, hoping to automatically judge the usefulness and validity of information for teams based on user data. Knowledge

management tools would then gradually and automatically tag valuable information as essential or make it more searchable, allowing teams to automatically accumulate and precipitate effective knowledge while unimportant information would be automatically archived.

#### 4. Using Tools to Compensate for Human Memory Limitations

**KMF:** You mentioned introducing concepts from cognitive science into knowledge management, which interests us greatly. Could you elaborate further on your understanding of this area?

**Li Jun:** We have been following cognitive science closely. The core of knowledge management is the mutual transformation between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. In enterprises, explicit knowledge has mostly been converted into graphic materials and shared knowledge, while tacit knowledge essentially involves studying the human brain. Following the cognitive science approach, we focus on the brain's limitations and strengths—what computers can help with and what they cannot replace. Our positioning is to use tools to help people do what the human brain is not good at but computers excel at.

One human brain limitation is the active forgetting of information considered unimportant. For example, a core function of traditional corporate knowledge management systems requires submitting experience-based knowledge documents after the fact. However, these post-hoc recollections are largely distorted and biased because they require significant effort to recall. When writing these documents afterward, you focus on making them well-structured and organized, which filters out important details while padding them with unnecessary, low-value content. The cost of having a team generate these documents after the fact is extremely high: formal documents require substantial length and long writing cycles, producing only a few documents per month; additionally, post-hoc documentation tests expression and writing skills—some employees may have high practical competence but produce poorly readable writing.

**KMF:** How should we overcome and compensate for the human brain's memory limitations in work?

**Li Jun:** We aim to help you do what the human brain is not good at remembering through timely software recording. When everyone works together on a task, we hope computers can record the process with minimal cost and in the shortest time possible. This is not just about teams and departments but should start with every individual. Therefore, our product must first maintain personal note-taking characteristics.

As an individual, when you record useful information in your personal notes, it doesn't matter if you can't use it immediately, today, or within a week. However, when other colleagues in your company or team need it, that note becomes useful. Information from three days ago is generally unmemorable unless spe-

cially reinforced, but if you have a note recording it and know where to find it, the human memory problem is largely solved—at least you no longer need to expend great effort recalling it.

Additionally, timely recording helps maintain objectivity in work records. For example, in collaborative work, a written memorandum can help teams maintain an objective, evidence-based communication method at all times, avoiding buck-passing in responsibility allocation. Similarly, communication records with clients or materials found during work processes—objectively recording such information is more reliable than later reconstruction through memory, assumptions, or speculation.

In short, from individuals to teams to the entire company, gradually forming records of useful and effective information naturally accumulates knowledge and value for the company. Therefore, we also recommend that every enterprise member develop good recording habits. We characterize this knowledge management approach as “bottom-up” rather than top-down enforcement.

## 5. Leveraging Intrinsic Motivation to Truly Improve Work Efficiency

**KMF:** I strongly agree with your “bottom-up” approach to implementing knowledge management. Enterprises now rely more on employees’ intrinsic drive rather than hierarchical coercion from superiors, especially for the growing number of post-80s and post-90s employees.

**Li Jun:** Exactly. Traditional management always emphasized extrinsic motivation—managing teams through “carrots and sticks” using bonuses, performance metrics, fines, and termination. However, you gradually realize these methods are ineffective for knowledge workers. Particularly for creative work, coercive management models stifle people’s enthusiasm and creativity, confining them to rigid processes, which actually represents the greatest loss for the company. Especially for micro-enterprises, retaining talent is already difficult; imposing management systems and further constraining people makes them feel that working in such an enterprise or team is meaningless. Therefore, many current management methods emphasize flattening and flexibility, letting individuals take responsibility for themselves without restricting work styles, as long as they get the job done.

**KMF:** For knowledge workers, how can leveraging their “intrinsic motivation” improve work efficiency?

**Li Jun:** The core issue we study is human intrinsic motivation: how to make individuals take responsibility for themselves and enable teams to form an egalitarian, mutually supportive state during work, jointly achieving excellent results. I believe the design philosophy of knowledge management tools should motivate employees to authentically and spontaneously share their experiences. Companies have no right to forcibly require employees to write knowledge on

company-mandated platforms, much less “plunder” employees’ personal knowledge records. Instead, companies should encourage employees to develop the habit of taking notes for themselves. This makes employees realize they are truly working for themselves, allowing them to rest with peace of mind after focusing on efficient work. Only in this way can employees enter the “flow” state more quickly in their work (editor’s note: “flow” is a psychological term referring to a mental state of complete immersion in an activity, often accompanied by high excitement and fulfillment, enabling focused concentration), making them more joyful, more engaged, and more effective at creating value.

Currently, many Chinese management software products remain stuck in traditional thinking based on distrust and supervision of employees—an approach unsuitable for new organizational forms and employees. Although we could create similar solutions and sell them to bosses at good prices, especially sales management software that can track employee locations, such products sell well but prove completely ineffective for knowledge workers, producing counterproductive results. We are clear-minded about this. Therefore, for employees’ fragmented time, we cannot require them to handle official business on their phones but should allow them to rest without product interruptions. For instance, our product details include a do-not-disturb mode that can be activated during evening hours without active reminders.

We hope more company managers share this philosophy. While we could also sell similar solutions, we prefer to use tools and software to promote changes in enterprise management models.

## 6. Bottom-Up, Mind-Adapted Knowledge Management

**KMF:** When knowledge workers’ efficiency and enthusiasm are mobilized and everyone has accumulated personal records, how can personal knowledge be elevated to team knowledge in this “bottom-up” process, transforming individual efficiency into team efficiency?

**Li Jun:** This primarily involves an issue of “trust.” We believe that in any team where members have met face-to-face, knowledge is more easily shared. In large companies, if people haven’t met or worked together, sharing effectiveness may not be good and can generate much noise. If what I write isn’t very comprehensive, I wouldn’t share it in a circle lacking trust.

Effective knowledge sharing scenarios often occur within the same department, team, or project group, where information—even fragmented drafts—can be shared confidently and timely. Often, after long-term accumulation, such information can be slightly organized to form classic knowledge and experience.

Therefore, we also recommend that enterprises try a new knowledge management approach: instead of building a company-level, all-encompassing knowledge management system or mandating everyone to use it, start by dispersing to various organizational teams and letting them manage themselves. At the

company level, simply provide a basic service platform and fundamental IT requirements.

In summary, true knowledge organization is actually a self-organizing process. As long as internal information communication flows smoothly, its efficiency and intrinsic value will naturally improve. This is what we call the “bottom-up” approach: starting with individuals in teams, organizing their own information through better habits, then using tools and services for timely communication and sharing within the team. Documents continuously accumulate within the team, so when the company needs good experiences and solutions, it doesn’t need to start from scratch but can extract and slightly process them from already accumulated, authentic work records to create high-value cases. We believe this model represents a truly effective process that can promote team efficiency improvement.

**KMF:** This “bottom-up” knowledge management model in enterprises indeed provides us with a new perspective and working approach.

**Li Jun:** We are actually using a different approach to solve old problems troubling enterprises, rather than using new technologies like mobile internet and cloud computing to reimplement old solutions.

**KMF:** Indeed, utilizing new technology isn’t about “wearing new shoes to walk the old road.” While improving the “technique,” there must also be innovation in the “principle.”

**Li Jun:** This innovative era offers many new opportunities worth trying, many things previously impossible that are now feasible, including combining cognitive science principles with new technologies to create completely innovative products. This challenges some traditional concepts. For example, the traditional consensus holds that knowledge saved within one’s company constitutes trade secrets, and our best-selling product has long been the local private WizBox rather than the public cloud. This is actually a conceptual issue. Especially for many small and medium-sized companies and micro-enterprises, aside from customer information, companies don’t have much absolutely unique “you-don’t-have-it” confidential information and knowledge experience.

The same applies to individuals. Many people’s previous habit was to download everything from the internet, store it locally, and feel satisfied, thinking they had mastered it. In reality, this sense of knowledge acquisition is an illusion. Like many people who buy books, place them on shelves, and believe they’ve mastered the knowledge—when in fact everything has yet to begin, only to discover they’ve merely purchased a pile of books. Our users have grown similarly, initially downloading numerous articles from the internet and feeling mentally enriched, but when they actually need to apply knowledge, they realize “I still don’t know how to do anything.” This is human nature, related to our autonomous mind.

**KMF:** You describe this vividly. Many graduate students in our universities

also download piles of literature from databases and then feel content, storing them on computers and believing they've mastered the material. This is sometimes indeed human instinct.

**Li Jun:** Now information is easily accessible, and knowledge resources are no longer scarce—there's no need to possess them. On the contrary, possessing too much content without helping work and creation may become noise, offering no benefit. What we truly need to do is help individuals effectively transfer and utilize external knowledge, using knowledge more rather than merely acquiring or saving it.

During our daily reading, when we sense something valuable, we excerpt it, accumulating fragments regularly. When you truly need to output and share, you can draw inspiration from daily accumulation. The same recommended approach applies to enterprise knowledge managers. Actually, whether you call it knowledge management isn't important—as long as you help enterprise employees establish correct learning and working methods, value will naturally accrue to the enterprise.

Our own company has experienced similar growth stages. Now, essentially all important internal information can be recorded and shared, with all necessary records, experiences, and summaries in place. Consequently, the personnel turnover issues that plague traditional companies don't significantly impact our product development work—this represents good habits our company has developed bit by bit.

**KMF:** WizNote provides new knowledge management approaches for numerous micro-enterprises and can itself serve as a model for knowledge management in such companies. Thank you very much for sharing today!

### Postscript: “Lightweight and Elegant Knowledge Management”

“Lightweight and elegant knowledge management”—these are the words that immediately came to mind after the interview. They encapsulate the knowledge management philosophy represented by WizNote and its team. WizNote itself is an innovative product from a micro-enterprise that simultaneously serves micro-enterprises and individuals. Unlike traditional enterprises' “large and comprehensive” knowledge management systems, Li Jun and his Wiz team, with their geek mindset, product thinking, and internet thinking, have created a “lightweight and elegant” knowledge management product. More importantly, we believe the new knowledge management philosophy behind the tool—starting from individual knowledge workers, fully respecting and conforming to human cognition, using tools as supplements and extensions of the brain, and accumulating knowledge for individuals, teams, and enterprises bottom-up, bit by bit, level by level—will surely bring new insights. Sometimes, less is more, and the greatest truths are the simplest.

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.*