

Big data / data warehousing

# DataScouts taps into strategic market information in the Combell cloud

Ghent-based start-up DataScouts helps companies build and implement their marketing strategy and business development. Publicly available information is brought together using dozens of sources, which helps provide better visibility and decision-making. “Companies find it difficult to make such information exploitable by themselves, which is why we help them overcome the difficulties they encounter in carrying out this task”, says DataScouts CEO Ingrid Willems.



In many sectors, the competitive landscape is changing ever faster. Market conditions are often volatile. For both young and established organisations,

small and large, it is now of vital importance to be able to react quickly. Clear, accurate and up-to-date information is the foundation for every good

decision we make. Who are my customers? How does a market segment change? Are there new players out there that might threaten my existing business?

“Many companies find it challenging to make market information exploitable for their marketing and business development. In-house, they have a wealth of information buried in silos, such as CRM or invoicing systems. And outside, they closely follow the most obvious competitors, but often remain unaware of new players and recent evolutions”, says Ingrid Willems.

“Business development and marketing often clash with the internal focus of ICT. By working manually, organisations are exposed to potential bottlenecks in their marketing strategy. Companies know who their main competitors are, but the landscape is changing



rapidly. Today, we already monitor more than 250,000 competitors for our customers. We collect information through dozens of data sources, including financial and legal information, patent databases, news sites, product reviews, forums and social media.”

## “What we do is a combination of data engineering and machine learning.”

Jan Vansteenlandt, ICT-specialist, DataScouts

### Ready-to-use information thanks to Artificial Intelligence

Even an outstanding market report only provides a snapshot. “What we offer is much more concrete than a simple report. We offer a constant flow of information.” This is a combination of publicly accessible information, purchased information and company-owned information. “We bring together numerous data sources, including the public Internet, distribution partners and the company's own databases. All of them are essential elements that make it possible to generate new scores, developments and possibly even new market segmentations on a monthly basis.”

“What we do is a combination of data engineering and machine learning”, explains Jan Vansteelandt, ICT specialist at DataScouts. “The challenge is primarily to bring information together in a meaningful way. We need both quantity and quality. Unstructured data are often very interesting, but they contain a lot of ‘noise’, i.e. unusable data that makes it more difficult to interpret the information correctly.”

“Collecting massive amounts of data is quite easy. Structuring the data, however, is usually the first obstacle. If our customers – from young, growing companies to pioneering behemoths such as EY, ING or Roche – have their own data scientists, you really do not want to leverage their expertise to collect data. Instead, you can take advantage of their knowledge to make business-oriented analyses and to continuously improve them. We work with large learning sets to train and automate the processing as much as possible. This enables the customer to work with meaningful information.”

## “Infrastructuur is niet onze ‘core business’. De expertise van Combella is voor ons een godsgeschenk.”

Ingrid Willems, CEO, DataScouts

### A scalable environment to meet all needs

“Infrastructure is not our core business. Combella's expertise is therefore a godsend for us”, continues Ingrid Willems. “We need a secure, cloud-based, multi-tenant environment that we can quickly scale up or down. Peak load can indeed be very high, especially when we start a new project for a new customer. Because we then create links with new data sources and have our algorithms process a massive amount of new information for the first time. At the same time, we are also a start-up that is not yet in a position to





bear substantial fixed costs. In other words, we need a partner that can let us grow and that can grow with us.”

## “Virtualisation is the key to quickly add resources.”

“When we get a new customer, existing customers should not experience any negative impact. Temporary scaling is then inevitable”, confirms Jan Vansteelandt. “Previously, we managed our own hosting servers and were thus responsible for everything. But there comes a time when you realise that this solution has its limits.”

“Virtualisation is the key to quickly add resources. We permanently have several machines reserved for us, combined with an excellent SLA. Combell also has permanent extra cold-standby resources, which we can manage ourselves via the administration menu when traffic peaks, in order to load a new ecosystem.”

## A personal approach tailored to SMEs

“Many start-ups, especially those operating near Ghent, know about Combell. We got in touch with several hosting providers, including Combell, to receive business proposals”, recalls Ingrid Willems. “And surprisingly enough, they immediately adopted a very personal approach in the run-up to their proposal. They showed a lot of technical skills and a perfect understanding of our business needs. When analysing our current situation, they immediately pointed out a number of weaknesses. As soon as we made the transition, the impact was immediately positive.”

“The transfer of our own infrastructure to Combell was a very exciting experience”, concludes Jan Vansteelandt. “Combell's responsiveness was particularly noteworthy. Communication was informal. Configurations, options and details were all handled very swiftly. There was a clear project follow-up. As a result, the migration itself went very smoothly.”

## Contact Combell



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