Comparison between OneNote and Bookstack, Confluence, Docmost and Nextcloud

I asked:

> I need a good comparison between Dokuwiki, Confluence, Docmost, Bookstack and Nextcloud (and a nextcloud app maybe)
> We do have Dokuwiki at the moment in our organisation. The new team i am joining, uses a One Note notebook with hundreds of "books", and then multiple chapter or cards, and hundreds of pages. some of them really long.
> They want to move away from OneNote. I can think of that they might be wanting collaborative working, which Docmost and Nextcloud Notes support.
> The biggest issue I see is, that a lot of people do some fancy formatting which would need to stop when they switch. But effectively it comes down to: text, lists and images (mostly screenshots) and maybe a table
> Also, the app should have LDAP available (list if paid or freely included) as this is a key requirement.
> Do a throughlouy research on that topic and present me a well documented thing.
> If you ask me, my personal favorite as a long long time dokuwiki user, would be bookstack, as i myself switch from dokuwiki to bookstack last year. But this is just a side-note.
> Do you need anymore information?
> Output should be easily printable or exportable so i can present to my new team lead at the end of the week.
>
> 1. Hosting has to be ON-PREM. We have VMWare and K8s available.
> 2. Attachments would be nice (i do know that bookstack supports this, as you can add attachments to pages)
> 3. mobile is not a requirement. we do not have mobile clients
> 4. no. it is only used for documentation. if it has a export function that would be nice.

This was the answer:

Understood. I will conduct a thorough comparison of Dokuwiki, Confluence, Docmost, Bookstack, and Nextcloud (including relevant apps), specifically for on-premise

deployment within a VMware/Kubernetes environment.

The report will evaluate each tool's suitability for replacing OneNote in a documentation-heavy team, focusing on:

- Ease of use for long-form documentation (text, images, tables, lists)
- Collaborative editing features
- LDAP integration (noting whether it's free or paid)
- Attachment support
- Export capabilities
- Any significant formatting limitations or user adjustment challenges

I'll compile the findings into a clear, structured, and printable report for presentation to your team lead. I'll notify you once the research is complete.

Result:

As the result is really long, I attached it as a pdf to this page. Please open that to see, what ChatGPT has written.

For easy reading, as it is quite a long file, I have just added the Comparisson Results here:

Comparison Summary

To wrap up, here is a high-level summary of each tool's key strengths and weaknesses in this context:

DokuWiki:

Strengths:

- Very lightweight, easy on-prem deployment, no database needed, numerous plugins, and free LDAP/ACL support. It's battle-tested and **reliable** for

documentation.

Weaknesses:

- UI is dated and not as intuitive for non-technical users (markup editing by default).
- No real-time editing or modern collaboration features.
- Formatting flexibility is limited compared to WYSIWYG editors.
- Migration from OneNote would be manual and formatting might need cleanup.

Good for teams that value simplicity and control over flashy interface.

Confluence (Data Center):

Strengths:

- Rich feature set – excellent editor, powerful macros, best-in-class collaborative editing, attachments handling, and strong enterprise integration (LDAP, etc.).
- It's very **user-friendly** and familiar in feel to Office tools, which helps OneNote users transition.
- Also has the largest ecosystem (plugins for anything from diagrams to workflows).

Weaknesses:

Cost – requires a paid license that can be expensive for on-prem.

- Also resource-intensive to host. Some complexity in administration (upgrades, DB maintenance).
- Another soft consideration: Atlassian's push to cloud means long-term on-prem support is guaranteed only through 2029, but that's still a while.

- Migration from OneNote still not automatic, but Confluence's Word import can ease part of it.

For an organization willing to invest, Confluence provides a robust OneNote replacement with added benefits of structure and integration.

Docmost:

Strengths:

- Modern and feature-rich (almost a drop-in alternative to Confluence/Notion in open source form).
- It offers **real-time collaboration**, a slick UI, built-in diagramming, and Markdown support.
- It's also specifically designed for knowledge bases, with Spaces, page history, comments, etc..
- On-prem deployment via Docker is relatively straightforward.

Weaknesses:

- It's a newer project – still **early stage**, which might mean occasional bugs or missing minor features.
- The biggest consideration is that some enterprise features (especially **LDAP auth**) require a paid license.
- If AD integration is a must and the budget is zero, that's a problem.
- Also, being new, its community and documentation depth is smaller than others.
- Migration from OneNote would be similar to Confluence (no direct import, but can leverage the Markdown/HTML import).

If the team wants a Notion-like experience on-prem and can handle the enterprise feature cost (or doesn't mind local user accounts), Docmost is an attractive option.

BookStack:

Strengths:

- **Ease of use** – very intuitive for users of all skill levels.
- The book/chapter/page structure is great for a documentation-heavy team to organize content logically.
- The WYSIWYG editor and Markdown option cover both bases, and built-in diagram integration is a plus. It's open-source and free, including all features (LDAP, etc.).
- Tags can enhance pages and search significantly.
- On-prem is simple (LAMP stack or Docker). It's relatively lightweight yet capable.
- Export options are excellent for a FOSS tool. A page, a chapter or a whole book can be exported as a PDF, Markdown, HTML or ZIP including images and TOC with clickable links.

Weaknesses:

- Lacks real-time concurrent editing (one editor at a time), which could be a downside if the team frequently co-edits notes.
- Also, the rigid "Shelves & Books" structure might feel constrained if the team prefers a more ad-hoc organization (though one can also not use Shelves if not needed).
- It doesn't have an official mobile app, though that's not required.

Overall, BookStack's **simplicity and user-friendliness** are its selling points, making it likely the least friction for OneNote users aside from the missing freeform canvas

aspect.

Nextcloud (Collabora/Tasks/Kanban/Notes):

Strengths:

- Fully on-prem and **integrated platform** – if the team could benefit from other Nextcloud features (file sharing, etc.), this is a big plus.
- Collabora/Notes provides real-time co-editing in a Markdown environment, satisfying collaborative note-taking.
- The 'rich-text' editing is similar to Docmost or Notion which is nicely implemented.
- It's open-source and includes AD integration for free.
- Also, since notes are stored as files, it's easy to access or back them up, and even edit via other editors if needed.

Weaknesses:

- The feature set for note-taking is **basic** – no advanced formatting beyond what Markdown offers.
- Users might miss text highlighting, varied fonts, or more visual editing options.
- The UI, while clean, is not as polished or purpose-built for documentation as others (it's essentially a simple list of pages).
- There's also no built-in robust export, and navigation is limited to filtering and search, lacking cross-linking ease (though you can link pages manually).
- Another potential weakness is if you're not using Nextcloud for anything else, you'd be running a comparatively heavy system just for notes – a lot of admin overhead if you only need a wiki.
- Migration from OneNote would likely be manual as well, copying into markdown.

Nextcloud suits an environment where you want a *lightweight wiki* tightly integrated with files and possibly where users already use Nextcloud.

Migration Concerns Recap:

Regardless of tool, expect to invest time in restructuring and copying content from OneNote. OneNote's freeform notes must be linearized, and some formatting (like handwritten sections or arbitrary positioning) won't carry over. Encourage users to embrace the new structure (use headings, use multiple pages instead of one huge canvas, etc.).

There might be an adjustment period where users try to do something "the OneNote way" and it doesn't work – e.g., dragging an image next to text and it doesn't stay side by side. Training and documentation on "how to do X in the new tool" will alleviate this.

On the flip side, they will soon find many advantages: for instance, no more wondering who has the latest version of a note, better search (especially in Confluence, Docmost or Bookstack, where search is quite powerful and maybe even OCRs or indexes attachments in enterprise versions), and the ability for multiple people to contribute easily rather than a single user's OneNote notebook.