



Windward Studios

Review From A Customer



From IT Central Station, the leading review site for enterprise technology solutions.

Review by a Real User

Verified by IT Central Station



CEO at OTG

Valarie King-Bailey

WHAT IS OUR PRIMARY USE CASE?

We use Windward for generating documentation for validation projects. We do computer systems validation. Validation is a software testing methodology used by life sciences companies, and we generate hundreds and hundreds of documents.

HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?

When generating documents from information in a database, it's very important to be able to quickly generate them with established templates. That's where Windward sails, because Windward allows you to pick a document template. In a regulated industry, everything starts with a template and it is super-important that information be entered into templates exactly the way the template is laid out. Failure to do results in being noncompliant and there are fines associated with that. In a regulated industry, it's a hugely important point. If it's just you using Microsoft Word, it's probably not such a big deal. But in our industry, it's a pretty big deal to be able to do that. Windward's ability to allow users to tag documents quickly and easily, and to publish them into SharePoint or whatever your doc management system is, is huge. That's how we use it. It also helps free up developers for other tasks. Before using Windward, we had an army of people trying to make this happen. Windward has saved us both time and money because we don't have to deal with trying to get the right template to the right person, trying to get the right information into it, going from database to database. That was the major issue prior to Windward. It saves our customers tons of money. Because each customer we work with is different - there are no two life sciences companies that do things the same way - it's difficult to put the savings into a dollar figure. But let's say I'm generating a test script. In a manual paper world, if I were to open up a Word document and create a test script, it would take about 45 minutes on average. Using the Windward system it takes six to ten minutes. It has reduced document preparation time by over 60 percent. We use it to add personalization or conditional content to documents. Validation is, in fact, that personal content. Before using Windward, we did it on paper. We would go to Microsoft Word and start typing, and it would take 45 minutes per test script. If you think about how many tests scripts there are for an average project - about 400 test scripts - it's a significant reduction in time and money. If you wanted to add a dollar figure to that, multiply that time savings by \$165 an hour. It's a significant savings. If we didn't have the Windward system it would be hugely impossible for us to do what we do. We try to save our clients time and money and, using the Windward system, we're able to do that. If we didn't have Windward it would be virtually impossible because we'd have to do it all by paper.



WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?

Windward's ability to capture and manage document information that comes from databases Ease of use The fact that it is a ubiquitous product, that it interfaces with any type of solution The layout and design capabilities are fantastic; that's really the focus. The quality of the layouts and designs is second to none. Windward's ability to help us generate templates, for which we can actually tag documents, is the key feature that we use. We absolutely use the ability to design templates within the Microsoft Office Suite. We looked for a while for a solution to do what Windward does, and Windward really is the only company that does this kind of work.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

One of the things that we want is the ability to tag documents more easily. The reason it took us so long to get the system up and running is that the APIs could be improved a bit. It could be a little bit more interoperable with software, without having to do a lot of the heavy lifting that we had to get it in. Once you get it, it's fine. But it did take a little bit of time, and that's due to the fact that the APIs weren't really there and we didn't have a lot of documentation. There was a lot of going back and forth. They could improve that.

FOR HOW LONG HAVE I USED THE SOLUTION?

One to three years.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

It did take us a little bit of time to get it up and running, but since it has been up and running, Windward has been bulletproof. We haven't had any technical issues, no support calls at all. I can't say enough about the product. Sometimes, when there are third-party integrations, you have a lot of technical issues and interoperability issues, etc. There has been none of that with Windward. None. Their software is really high-quality. We have had no issues out of Windward, and that's over three-year period of time, which is remarkable. I can't even say that about Microsoft.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

It's very scalable, it almost doesn't even need to be said. It can scale from a small system of five people to a large system with, say, 5,000 people. It's very scalable.

HOW ARE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

The company is great to work with. Everybody at Windward is super-professional. Their technical team is second to none, they're top-notch. But we really haven't had to use their technical support at all. Their product is really bulletproof. We had not had to deal with any technical issues. We've only called for informational stuff. "How do you do this or that?" But in terms of bugs, none. Zero bugs.

**IF YOU PREVIOUSLY USED A DIFFERENT SOLUTION, WHICH ONE DID YOU USE AND WHY DID YOU SWITCH?**

We were not using anything prior to Windward. There's nothing on the market really quite like Windward. We looked. We looked high and low. We had been trying to find a solution like this for almost eight years. We saw some that were somewhat similar to it, but none that did what Windward does.

HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?

We had originally estimated about six weeks to get it up and running but it took about three months. We have a unique application for it, so it did take a little bit more time. But it was well worth it, given the cost savings. The initial setup was complex. I have a development team here on shore and they were working with the Windward team. We were trying to understand, because there was sparse documentation around the project product, what the best way was to merge the two applications together. That took a little bit of an "Act of Congress." There was a lot of back and forth. A lot of their team fixing stuff, my team fixing stuff. We finally got it going together. In fairness to Windward, it was not developed to work with Validation Master, our system. But a lot of companies have APIs that are well-documented and it's pretty easy for someone who has development knowledge to pick up the application and do what they need to do with it. That's where this would have been a lot easier, if we had that information. But we had to rely heavily on the Windward people to get us up and running. Their being the good company that they are, and the good sports that they are, and the good technologists that they are, they were very patient with us. They ended up getting us up and running, and we've been up and running since that time, three years ago. It was a classic third-party integration into an enterprise technology system. We had a roadmap, we had very specific features that we wanted to implement. We shared that with Windward. We originally tried to be independent of Windward, do it on our own, and that's where we ran into trouble. We found we couldn't do it without their help because some of their APIs just weren't documented. From our side, we only had one developer working on it, so it didn't require an army of people. After it was deployed and configured one person has maintained it. We've had little to no real maintenance to update the system and make it work with ours. As we've updated our solution, they've rolled their solution in and made sure that they have kept up with it. We haven't had any challenges from that perspective.

WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE WITH PRICING, SETUP COST, AND LICENSING?

If I have to say anything - and I almost hesitate to say anything because Windward has been such a good partner for us and such a good company - I'm starting to hear clients squeal about the price of their software. The cost of the software has gone up. If you look at Microsoft or Oracle or SAP, everybody raises the prices on their software, including us. That's the only thing that I'm hearing customers squeal about, the price of the software, vis-à-vis the functionality. There are a lot of software applications out there with far greater functionality that are actually cheaper than Windward.

WHICH OTHER SOLUTIONS DID I EVALUATE?

We didn't have any other solutions on our shortlist. We couldn't find a solution that did what we needed to do. We needed a solution to enable us to tag a document template and, from our database, populate that document template and not alter the formatting and not mess it up. Sometimes, if a system is being populated from a database, a table is off and it's all goofy. We had a number of companies that could do document generation, but when we got the document back it was all messed up and we would have had to fix it. We publish to Windward and it's correct 100 percent of the time. We never have to monkey around with the document after it's gone through Windward.



WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?

Documents are my life, that's how I make my living. If you're looking for a document solution that is of high quality, that does what it's supposed to do 100 percent of the time, with a company that is a quality company, Windward is the company that you're looking for. There are a lot of others out there that attempt to do what Windward has perfected. I love the company and I can't say enough good things about them. They're good guys, a very well-run company with a quality software application which is suitable for our use. Has it made a difference in terms of us and our clients, our ability to market and sell our software and do what we do? Absolutely. It has made a significant impact. The plan is to increase its usage. We're working on projects now where we're selling it to clients every day. To the extent that we are pushing and selling our product, every time we do a product demonstration, every time we show our product, Windward shows. On a scale on one to ten, one being the worst and ten being the best, Windward is a 12. They're off the scale. I come from the software industry. I've worked for three software companies in my life, so I'm not a fan-girl of software. I'm more critical of software than the average person. When I tell you this is a good software application, take it to the bank. This is a great software application. Here's the way I judge a software application: Does it do what it's supposed to do? Is it consistent? And are there a lot of issues with it? With Windward, does it do what it's supposed to do? Absolutely. Does it do it consistently and repeatedly? Yes it does. Are there a lot of problems with Windward which require a call to support every five minutes for something, or are my clients blowing my phone up because Windward broke down? Never. That's how I judge software. Take Microsoft Office for example. I got an update from Microsoft. You know how it goes. It says your computer needs to be updated, please stand by. It updated my system, but now Outlook freezes. I called Microsoft and they said, "Oh, I know what that is. We have to do this that and the other." That's classic junky software, where software doesn't do what it's supposed to do 100 percent of the time. Every other release I have some drama with Microsoft, never with Windward. When you look at Windward as a vendor, what I would like the world to know about them is that they're a great company to work with. Everybody from the CEO, down to folks in finance, to their technical support people, are A-number-one, top-notch professionals. They are extremely supportive of their product. They stand by their product and their product is excellent. That's what everybody needs to know. This is a great solution. If you work with documents, you need to be working with Windward.

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