

customer success story: by Margot Drees

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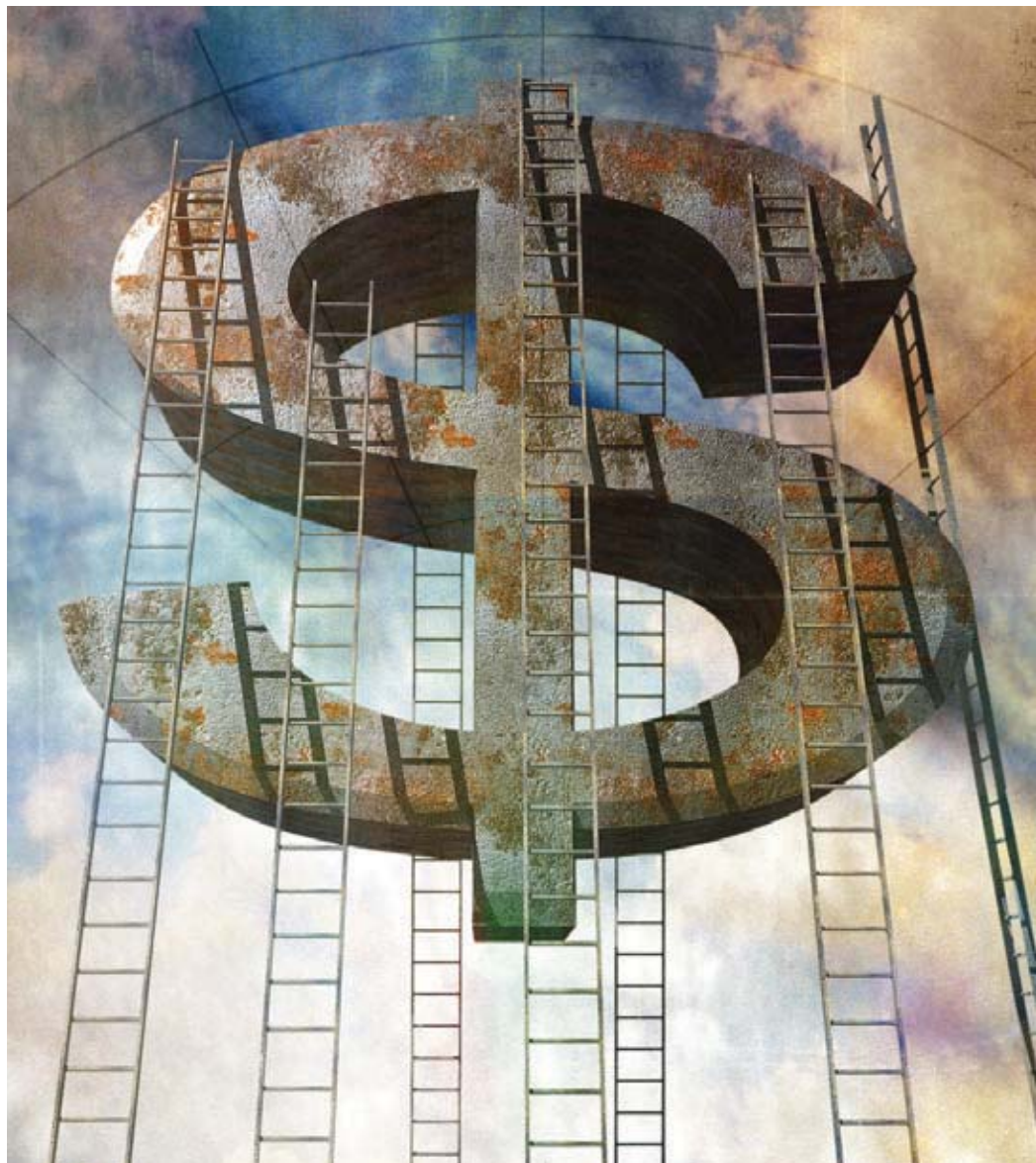
Backbone Digital Systems Builds Business with Windward

Company Background

Backbone Digital Systems develops collaboration and management products for the building and construction industry. The Danish company, founded in 1997, offers two main products: Docia and CoreFM. Docia enables all parties involved in building construction, including owners, architects and contractors, to work together via the Internet. CoreFM is a highly visual, Web-based program that offers users a comprehensive range of tools for managing multiple buildings and takes full advantage of architectural drawings.

The Challenge

CoreFM contains a repository of information, including building plans, construction materials, maintenance instructions, a contact database, supplier data, and more. Users of the CoreFM program could access this data and connect it to relevant architectural drawings. But because CoreFM did not have a native reporting engine and could not separate report data from a report layout, Backbone had to generate reports on a case by case basis -- a time-consuming process. Plus, Backbone wanted to be able to offer customized report layouts to individual customers.



The Solution

Backbone began evaluating various Java-based reporting systems to solve its reporting dilemma. The company looked at a couple of high-priced packages but soon realized their cost far outweighed their benefits. Then Backbone discovered Windward Reports.

Windward Reports' primary benefit is that it is both quick and simple to design report templates. The report templates' layout, font and formatting are designed with Microsoft Word. Windward's AutoTag plug-in allows the user to add database tags in either SQL or XPath to the report template. The Windward Reports wizard allows the user to create a wide variety of reports simply by choosing what data to include and when to run the report.

Windward Reports' ease-of-use is backed by a powerful reporting engine. Because it's Java-based (there is also a .NET version), it is simple to integrate Windward Reports into any software product, and the report output can be in PDF, RTF, HTML, WordML, SpreadsheetML, XLS, or text format.

Michael Bjerregaard Pedersen, who was responsible for implementing Windward Reports at Backbone, looked at the samples provided on the Windward Reports Web site and pasted vital parts into CoreFM's report classes. Then, he implemented XML-export capabilities in all data classes, such as real property, building, floor, and room. Once the export capabilities were established, he created an RTF template for each report.

"Implementing Windward Reports was very straightforward," Pedersen says. "The added benefit of being able to create individually designed templates for each report for each customer is the best argument for separating layout and data, and it saves us a lot of time, both short term and long term."

One Backbone programmer does the implementation and creates the first

template for each report. A designer then takes the RTF-template and enhances the report layout for individual customers. CoreFM users now can call up a report at any instant or schedule reports to run on their own timetables, whether it be hourly, daily, weekly or otherwise. And CoreFM has the ability to quickly generate reports that are returned directly to the user onscreen, stored in an archive for later retrieval, or mailed to the end user.

Plus, another advantage to Windward Reports is that it is capable of allowing the user to dynamically insert images into a report. Because CoreFM is an extremely visual product, Pedersen took that key feature into account when evaluating various report generators.

The Results

Thanks to Windward Reports, Backbone was able to significantly cut down on time spent creating reports.

"Compared to systems where both layout and data must be coded, as we did before, the process of creating a new report is at least 5 times faster," Pedersen says.

Plus, because Backbone designers can reuse the XML export in all reports, creating a new report is simply a matter of figuring out what structure the report should have, exporting the necessary data, and then drafting a template that can quickly load the XML-data information into the document.

"I would recommend Windward Reports to other companies," Pedersen adds. "Not just because it is a nice product, but also because the Windward Reports technical support team listens to customers' needs and responds very fast."

About Windward Studios:

Windward Studios has been in business since 1995. Based in Boulder, Colorado, the company was formed to develop innovative software products



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for both enterprise and individual customers. Windward Reports is the only comprehensive report generator to use Microsoft Word as a layout tool, thus cutting the learning curve to virtually nil while saving time and money for both technical and non-technical users alike.