Customer Success Story

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> — Mark Knutson, Assistant Director, IT

Windward Studios Protects and Serves South Sound 911

The Background

For law enforcement organizations, accurate record keeping isn't merely good business practice; it's a matter of life and death.

That's why when South Sound 911 (formerly Law Enforcement Support Agency, or LESA) of Pierce County, Washington, the city of Tacoma, and several surrounding communities needed to overhaul its record keeping system, it turned to Windward to help protect the more than 800,000 citizens it serves.

The Organization

South Sound 911 formed as a result of an inter-local agreement between the City of Tacoma and Pierce County in 1974 to provide cost-effective, united police and sheriff emergency communications services. A few years later, the organization consolidated its records management and technology.

South Sound 911 supports 14 law enforcement agencies, and about 165 employees work in four divisions: Communications (9-1-1), Records Management, Administration, and IT. The IT group writes most of the software for law enforcement, such as warrants, a report writer template, the records management system, and more.

The Challenge

The IT staff supports more than 1,600 users who access the flagship Records Management System from their city or rural office, in the field, or on the go via laptop in their patrol cars. Add to this the fact that South Sound 911 has the capacity to store almost 30 terabytes of information, and you can see what a challenge it is to provide smooth access to a large database for so many users.

Until recently, the IT group was using a basic third-party tool to link users to the records system, but this tool had little flexibility. For example, when the staff needed to change a report template, they contacted the third party and waited for them to make the change.

The process was inefficient, so the staff began looking around for a new reporting software solution. Staff members drew up a functionality list that included the following criteria:

- **Streamlined reports.** Because police reports can be very large and dynamic, the report designers needed to be able to omit unnecessary sections and not display empty placeholders in reports.

- **Customization.** It was crucial the new reports would match the look of the previous reports so that users wouldn't need extensive training to use and understand them.

- **Integration.** The staff couldn't afford, in terms of both time and money, to overhaul their entire system. They needed to be able to integrate the software into existing products.

About South Sound 911

A voter-approved interlocal agency, South Sound 911 supports public safety throughout Pierce County, Washington through 911 and dispatch, records and technology services, and a regional, interoperable first responder radio system.

- **Tailor-made look and feel.** Police records have specific requirements in terms of report design. Some examples include the ability to print text vertically (e.g., case numbers along the side of a report), the ability to print one section on multiple pages, and a header and footer on each page along with a "special" footer (a records processing block that is affixed to the bottom of the first page).

- **Variety of output formats.** The documents must not be editable. South Sound 911 needed PDF as well as other output format options.

- **Authentication features.** Those viewing the reports must be able to distinguish the records as official via some type of watermark.

- **Back-end flexibility.** The reporting software must work both on local machines and on a Web server.

The Solution

South Sound 911's IT staffers conducted research online to see which various reporting tools might meet their criteria. They discovered Windward, which enables any user, technical or non-technical, to design reports using AutoTag, an easy-to-use add-in for Microsoft® Word, Excel®, or PowerPoint®.

Report designers simply open up the desired program and create their own templates. After using the trial version available through Windward's Web site, South Sound 911 created several preliminary reports and realized Windward was the right solution.

"From a technical point of view, Windward was very easy and flexible to integrate," said Mark Knutson, Assistant Director, IT. "Just a few lines of code were needed."

Not only did the software meet all the necessary criteria laid out above, but "being able to use Word as an editor was a big selling point," Knutson added. "This makes it nice to give a report to techies and non-techies alike."

The Achievements

South Sound 911 has saved significant time in creating reports. No longer do they have to wait hours or even days to edit a report; a South Sound 911 employee can create or edit a report in minutes.

The organization distributes reports in two different ways: to clients outside of the network or via the internal Web server. This latter method is in use almost constantly; it generates about 1,600 reports per weekday, with roughly 700 reports on weekends.

South Sound 911's reporting needs don't stop here. The IT department plans to convert a distribution

About Windward

For businesses in document-intensive industries, Windward Studios is the document generation and reporting software company that empowers business professionals to create beautiful, professional reports. Create custom reports with Microsoft Office as your design tool and a Java or .NET engine that connects to virtually any data source. Windward has been delighting customers since 2004.

process that sends completed reports to outside individuals and groups, such as prosecutors.

"We'd like to reiterate that Windward, as an agency, has been great to work with," Knutson said. "They've been really responsive."

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