



# A Comparison of Actuate BIRT & Windward

The **Windward Embedded Solution** and **Actuate BIRT** (Business Intelligence and Reporting Tools) are two popular software tools used globally for template creation and document generation. Both tools were launched in the early 2000's, and while Windward has remained focused on the intricacies of template design, Actuate BIRT has expanded into a focused Business Intelligence and Analytics ecosystem. This abundant, overlapping, and often confusing portfolio of tools covers the entirety of the document lifecycle, including template design.

When you begin to use the BIRT Designer or Studio, you can tell by the lack of polished interface, documentation, architecture and marketing materials that it originated as open source software. It was created by developers for developers focused on progressive design, and that emphasis has not changed. If you've worked with the Eclipse IDE, you'll feel at home: the BIRT Designer is simply Eclipse in Actuate "clothes," with a few extra features. Sadly, BIRT also shares the same drawback as Eclipse, which is a lack of an intuitive interface.

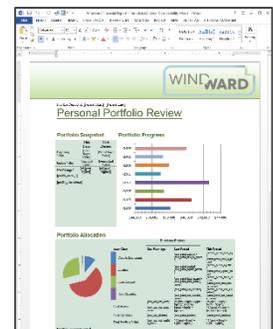
With each BIRT design operation, users encounter a steep learning curve due to numerous menus and outdated interfaces. Even the smallest formatting task can be cumbersome and time consuming. Publishing templates is much easier, as BIRT's iHub is a modern web 2.0 application that is easy and intuitive for end users. End users can reuse and share BIRT's template report library components through iHub to create ad-hoc reports and dashboards directly in a web browser with BIRT Studio.

The Windward Solution template designer (AutoTag) sits squarely in Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint or Excel) and delivers a comparatively easy design experience. All options, such as charts, images, styles, and tables, are available at the click of a button. Connection wizards, reusable library components (PODs) and drag and drop functionality simplify the template design process. Unlike BIRT, Windward uses non-proprietary file formats and easily works with Java and .NET platforms. Documents are published through the Windward Engine, a component that can be embedded into any web, mobile, or desktop application in as few as 14 lines of code.

## Example: Financial Documents

A financial institution needs to generate wealth management portfolios for its entire client base. Each portfolio consists of multiple documents, some of which are conditionally added and all of which must include client-specific data.

**With BIRT**, developers collect the report requirements from their portfolio managers and translate those into a template they build inside of BIRT and the Eclipse IDE. They save portions of the template and the template itself to be uploaded and stored in the secure BIRT iHub. The portfolio managers can then use the iHub server to run reports and use the saved portions to make limited changes to the templates. In the end, developers are responsible for most of the report design, and the portfolio managers must request and wait on non-trivial report updates.



**With Windward** the process is far more automated. The portfolio managers design the templates in Word, using Windward to manually drag and drop fields or PODs to embed predefined report segments. They can create variable filters and SQL queries (without knowing SQL) to display the current client data. The developers build the Windward Engine into a custom stand-alone or web-based in-house application that uses the data sources and templates to generate custom reports. Whenever needed, the portfolio managers use the application to generate large batches of accurate client documents in a fraction of the time.



## Product Comparison Table

FEATURE	ACTUATE BIRT	WINDWARD
<b>Data Source Connectivity</b>	SQL Databases (via JDBC or ODBC), Flat Files (XML, CSV, TSV, SSV, PSV), Big Data (MongoDB, Cassandra, Hadoop), Scripted (POJO/DAO, EJB, XML Stream)	<a href="#">SQL Based</a> , <a href="#">File Based</a> , <a href="#">Web Based</a> , and <a href="#">Big Data</a>
<b>Reporting Component Reuse</b>	BIRT Report Library Components	Windward PODs
<b>Designer Environments</b>	BIRT Designer (Pro) (Eclipse IDE) Actuate 360 (Web based BI)	Microsoft Office Suite: Word, Excel and PowerPoint
<b>Template Formats</b>	Proprietary File Formats Report Design File (.reportdesign) Template Design File (.rpttemplate)	DOCX, RTF, WordML, XLSX, PPTX, HTML
<b>Conditional Logic</b>	IF/ELSE	IF/ELSE/SWITCH/CASE
<b>Server</b>	Requires <b>Java</b> platform for API calls; <i>Java API can be referenced via .NET code but not easily</i>	<b>.NET</b> or <b>Java</b> platforms can be referenced via APIs ( <i>Office does not need to be installed</i> )
<b>Price</b>		
<b>Designer</b>	<a href="#">BIRT Designer (Pro)</a> <a href="#">BIRT Studio</a>	<b>AutoTag</b> \$995/seat <b>Developer Engine</b> \$1600/seat
<b>Server</b>	<a href="#">BIRT iHub Visualization Platform</a> Free to 50 Mb/day, above \$500/month	Engine Licensing (Core or Thread) Engine 2 core/thread – ~\$10K Test Systems – ½ of Production
<b>Cloud</b>	<a href="#">BIRT iHub onDemand</a> \$39.00/month <a href="#">BIRT Content Services</a> Custom Pricing <a href="#">BIRT Analytics</a> Custom Pricing	Coming Soon

## Summary

- **Document Lifecycle** – BIRT provides a complete line of products and services to cater to each component of the document lifecycle. Windward focuses on template design and document generation.
- **Design Responsibility** – With BIRT, the entire process is designed to keep report development in the hands of developers, and generation and analysis in the hands of end users. With Windward, developers code the Engine, but business professionals can design, generate and analyze output.
- **File Formats** – BIRT’s standalone apps require proprietary template format, and a user must install applications to view, update or run a report template. Windward uses Office file formats, for all to view.
- **Layout & CSS Support** – In BIRT, you cannot apply multiple columns or use custom CSS styles in HTML reports. Windward allows both (using CSS 2.0 for reports generated in HTML).
- **Installation** – The BIRT Designer is a massive 500 MB that requires extra system resources. Windward’s AutoTag designer is about 100 MB (mostly samples) and integrates directly into Microsoft Office.
- **Design Platform** – BIRT Studio allows users to design reports in a web browser. Windward design occurs in Office, with Web design functionality due out soon.

### Try Windward Today!

Visit [www.windward.net](http://www.windward.net) and [download a free trial](#) or [schedule a live demo](#).