

[Talking Technology](#)

[Windward Software hitting all the right buttons](#)

By Steve Burns, Capital News contributor

This week we go inside Windward Software (www.wws5.com) for an interview with president and chief executive officer Dennis Jacobsen.



There are lots of new developments at Windward that will help propel the company to new heights in the very near future.

This includes the expansion of the company to include a new office in the Acorn Plaza in Westbank and the purchase of Retail Professional Software Corporation (www.rpcorp.com).

Windward is an integrated business management software program that was created by Jacobsen over 19 year ago. Using a series of software switches, Windward's product named "Windward System Five" adapts to the way a business runs.

The system provides a unique business management solution for vertical markets such as: automotive parts and service, RV dealerships, marine and power sports, small engines, furniture stores, lighting stores, retail stores, wholesale/warehouse businesses, pool and spa businesses, clothing stores, rental stores and more!

The key to Windward's success has been its focus on helping their customers run their businesses rather than on reporting on it after the fact.

"We are not an accounting program, although our product includes top notch accounting, tracking, reporting and audit trails," he says.

"We have always looked at how the business runs first and then built the solution around the processes.

"In contrast, our competitors let the accounting system drive everything, which is not how we think business owners want to manage their businesses."

The purchase of Retail Professional Software Corporation is expected to be completed shortly and is an excellent fit for Windward.

"Retail Professional Software Corporation has developed an excellent retail solution for the garden centre market," Jacobsen continues.

"We are committed to the Retail Professional brand and will continue developing and supporting the software.

“With the purchase of this company, the integration of their product and staff located in Westbank, we will have significantly enhanced our team of experts.”

There are a couple of other key advantages to Windward’s expansion, Jacobsen points out.

“With the Garden Centre market being seasonal, the purchase allows us to have the Garden Centre staff learn other vertical markets.

“Also, we have had some difficulty in attracting employees to Penticton.

“With an office located in Westbank, we will now be able to tap into the high technology employee market in Kelowna.”

Windward’s plans to officially move into the Westbank office space in Acorn Plaza on Sept. 1, 2003, and have eight employees operating from this new location. This will include some existing Windward employees that currently travel from Kelowna to Penticton every day. Jacobsen will integrate the offices using voice over IP technology, which will include one integrated reception for both locations.

I enjoyed my conversation with Jacobsen as he articulated his vision for his company.

“My goal is to grow our company to over 200 people as soon as possible. With a growth rate of over 30 per cent a year for the last few years, we are on track to meet our goals.”

From my perspective, here are some key differentiators that make Windward stand out in the competitive business management software marketplace:

1. An integrated business management solution.

Having evaluated dozens of business management solutions, I was impressed with Windward’s product.

The software program does help an entrepreneur run their business rather than report on it after the fact.

By integrating all of a company’s business processes together in one seamless business management system, Windward provides customers with an invaluable management tool.

For instance, Windward System Five has a customer relationship module, which allows the business to track customer contacts, buying patterns, preferences, profitability and more.

Micro marketing and promotions can be customized to target customer segments by sorting key customer information.

2. Expertise in multiple vertical markets.

Windward's competition focus on only one vertical market.

The company's experience in multiple vertical markets allows it to better adapt its software to the specific needs of how a customer does business.

After talking to Jacobsen, he was off to Calgary for some final presentations for a potential major deal with an automotive chain.

If Windward wins this deal, they will be one of the most highly recognized business management software programs in North America.

3. Multiple retail solutions.

For retail customers, Windward provides a scaled down version of its complete system, named Speedy Pos (www.speedypos.com), which is targeted to the smaller retailer. This allows Windward to directly compete with Quickbooks' Point of Sale product.

4. High quality, custom work.

If a business requires additional help to better fit how the software with how their business runs, Windward has six developers on staff to help develop high quality custom solutions.

Most other programs either cost a fortune to change or do not provide any custom solutions.

5. Technical support by the minute.

Windward is unique in the business management software industry as it does not require its customers to purchase lengthy support contracts. Rather, they charge customers for technical support by the minute.

This can save a customer thousands in support charges as their software support needs often decrease over time. Windward's competitors charge the same fixed monthly support fee regardless of usage.

Jacobsen's enthusiasm for Windward, its acquisition of Retail Professional Software Corporation, and his future plans are contagious. I wonder how many entrepreneurs realize that a world class business management software company exists in the Okanagan?

My guess is that, like many other technology companies in the Okanagan, Windward is a well kept secret.

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