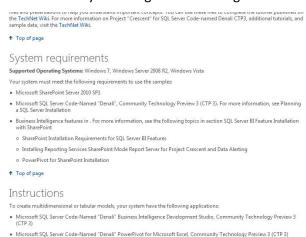Windward Autotag Vs. Microsoft Crescent

There comes a time when most professionals find that basic templates they find for business reports are more for amateurs or for those who really have very basic reporting needs. Instead of banging their heads against the computer they go out in search of something else, a better BI model would be great, wouldn't it? That's where two great companies can shine: Windward and Microsoft. Their products are excellent and can accomplish nearly everything imaginable for your reports. With both companies, you can take existing data and weld it into amazing reports.

 Windward Autotag and Microsoft Crescent each are very similar in many ways. However, there are some differences- which make it difficult to decide which one is the better bet. So let's take a look at each and compare them.

When it comes to downloading there is a big difference in system requirements. This is probably the biggest difference, and possibly the deal breaker for most people on which they want to use. Microsoft is very much up front with the fact that you need to have multiple components (SharePoint 2010, "Danali" 2010, PowerPivot for SharePoint Installation, etc…) already installed in order to run Crescent. Crescent could easily be thought of as a bridge to connect the various components into a usable feature to compete with other BI products which have been out for years. Unfortunately, as many know, having so many things to have downloaded in order to run might mean a few calls to IT to make sure everything is installed and working together correctly. This also means it can be more time consuming.

AutoTag gets you up and running quickly. Once downloaded you are ready to learn the software. In most cases, there is no need for IT to help. In case you even think you may have troubles downloading, they have a tutorial video for that and other tutorials to help you get the most out of your Windward projects.
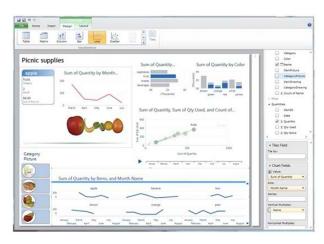
Using and downloading either one varies in amount of time to learn. If you already are familiar with the components for Crescent it will be an easy transition to using it. It is ideal for professionals and
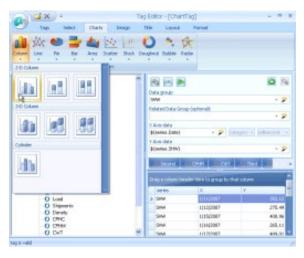
programmers who would normally use those programs to extrapolate usable data. AutoTag, on the other hand, since it is a single download and used in programs which most people are familiar with, is suitable for users of all ability levels and it comes with a small learning curve.

After everything downloads, one glance over at the Microsoft Crescent Get Started file and you might drool over all of the possibilities to create flashy multi-dimensional data reports that you just can't do with a regular Office program like Word or Excel. That drool will quickly dry up when you look at everything AutoTag can do.   With both you'll be making ad-hoc reports that reflect the best analysis of your data. AutoTag is made as an add-in within Word, Excel and PowerPoint so the user already feels at ease. Crescent is not. It is designed so you have to export it to a program like PowerPoint.

One of the neat features of Crescent is how many facets of data you can look at and create a segment of the report for. Pulling data that's saved on an SQL, you can see on the right side of the illustration is a menu of the data you can use. You can create a report to track and explore different facets of that information to truly take a multi-dimensional look at your data. Using a click and paste motion you can pick your data then apply filters and highlighting. Filters help to weed out the information you want to exclude from analysis and highlighting helps to compare the data to show how it is relevant. Using each set of data, you can pull which information you want to target in your analysis.

AutoTag right from the start feels familiar. As an add-in, it works within the programs you already use. With a tag editor, chart wizard and data bin, creating reports becomes an intuitive, and time-saving, BI tool. Using the chart wizard you can create any layout design you can imagine and add text narrative. So not only does your data get analyzed, but when you share it, it can tell a story. This method gives you the ability to either create a whole report in one program or something you can share without having to verbally explain how you extrapolated the data and what your organization should do with it.

One of the differences between the two is the ability to save bits of information to use in another report. With Crescent there is a redundancy in recreating a set of info to put into another data report. AutoTag allows the user to create PODs of information, or bits of analyzed data, into a mini file that can be used later in another report.

Aside from where you use the programs, they both do the same thing- analyze your relevant data. You can make your ad-hoc report look great, professional and pull your info from your databases (AutoTag will require AutoQuery for some of this). Once you've learned how to use either program, you can do what you need. How you lay out the data is different. There are pre-existing parameters for Crescent to adhere to. You can do tons with your data, but not much with layout unless you are familiar with programming, which can be time-consuming. The reports that can be performed will still look great and very professional. Whereas AutoTag is used within Word, Excel and PowerPoint so layout templates are numerous and you can more intuitively, and creatively, layout what you need and where without worry that the layout guides will invisibly confine you. WindWard also lets you not only be in the driver's seat with great layout options, but you also have control by adding text and narration where you need it. Windward also makes life easier by allowing you to create PODs of information that you can save and seamlessly transfer from one report to the next. Crescent has a slightly nicer look for each data model.

In the end, when trying to decide which program you would like to use boils down to your comfort level for either program. If you already have the necessary components to run Crescent, are you comfortable with being slightly limited on abilities to create transferable PODs of information and adding text narration?

Or would you rather multiple downloads and having to learn each component separate from what you already use?

 If you do not have the existing components, would you rather an easy to download program with a small learning curve and streamlined intuitiveness with familiar programs (Word, Excel and PowerPoint)? To many people, the obvious choice is to go with the one which works with what you already have.

	Microsoft "Crescent"	Windward AutoTag
Download Requirements	SQL Server Code-Named "Denali" SilverLight SharePoint PowerPivot, etc…	1 Download- AutoQuery
How/Where to Use	Crescent is a thin web client that launches right in the browser from a tabular model in SharePoint Server 2010.	AutoQuery adds an icon into the ribbon for Word, Excel and PowerPoint so you can intuitively work right in those programs. Works with XML, SQL, Excel spreadsheets and virtually any other data source to avoid formatting and exporting data
Layout	Confined to stacking and sliding boxes next to one another. Cannot add text or narration.	Can creatively represent data in any layout by designing your own template in Word, Excel or PowerPoint. Can also add text and narration.
How to Share	You need to export the presentation to PowerPoint or share with your organization through SharePoint	With AutoQuery you can share using Word, Excel or PowerPoint
Level of Expertise Needed	Must have knowledge of, or willing to learn, all the necessary	Have moderate amounts of knowledge in Word, Excel and/or

	components of "Crescent". For some people this might mean there is a large learning curve and it is more time consuming. Others with pre-existing familiarity will have a very little to no learning curve. Might need IT help executing a few ideas for layout or formatting.	PowerPoint. Will have a slight learning curve to learn the new program
On-going Reports	Can add to a saved report.	Can save templates for creating future reports with similar layout and information. Within the context of the information can save "pods" of information which can be transferred from report to report