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Creating a Better Workspace for Technical Report Writing



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CEOCFO: *Ms. Stratton, what is the overall vision behind Quire? What is your focus right now?*

Ms. Stratton: That is a great question. The overall vision of Quire is that there is a better way to do fundamental work, such as technical report writing. Most technical people who get involved in this work use Microsoft Word, a very conventional and powerful publishing tool; yet, Word was not designed specifically for the work that technical people do. So at the end of the day, they spend much more time stuck in tedious tasks (like formatting and data entry), rather than critical thinking.

Quire makes technical report writing much more of a professional exercise and increases the quality of the documents being produced, while also saving significant time. My background is in environmental engineering, and I have several years of experience in environmental consulting. Because of this, Quire got its start serving the environmental field. Since then, we have spread rather organically to areas such as construction, architecture, geotechnical, energy, and even accounting.

CEOCFO: *How does someone work with Quire? What are the steps, in comparison to Microsoft, which is to just type in what you want and pretty much hope for the best?*

Ms. Stratton: Exactly! Quire brings sensible automation to the report-writing process. Our onboarding process is designed to empower our clients to succeed. Once someone goes through our onboarding process, where we work closely with them to create their first template and refine their business workflow, our clients become more strategic in how and where they spend their time in report creation. Most companies use an established Word template before they write a report. In our onboarding process, we create that same template inside of Quire. Our clients can do this themselves, but when we first begin, we build at least the first template for them. We typically build it very similar in structure to what they have in Word, with some basic optimizations. Afterwards, our technical team, which has decades of experience both in writing and with Quire, will clone that original template version and go through a very eye-opening transformation of the document. This includes highlighting areas for efficiency gains, removing areas of redundancy, implementing numerous Quire features that streamline the report writing and overall workflow process. Essentially, we're making changes and suggestions based on our client's business goals. For example, our client may say, "My number one business goal is that I want to save as much time as humanly possible to make this as profitable of a report as I can."

Therefore, with that in mind and without compromising any quality on the report itself, the Quire team will add additional optimizations and propose different data presentations which are more efficient to write.

Once this process is concluded, we'll do a side-by-side comparison for the client to allow them to see, "Here is what template A was, something like what I have in Word, and template B is Quire's proposed version for this same template but reflecting our stated business goals." We will go through them with these two templates side-by-side, and they can pick and choose which components they like the best. Most times clients take many components from option B, our more optimized version. It is like getting a fresh set of eyes looking at their product, so they really appreciate and enjoy the process. It can be very eye-opening for them.

CEO CFO: *How often might an industry standard change? If a particular industry has a way that their reports are presented, might that change every year, might it not change because people just do not bother? What are some of the subtleties, and how do you get the vocabulary and the spellings?*

Ms. Stratton: That is a good question. Most technical areas, and many of the reports that our clients write, follow ASTM, American Standards of Testing and Materials. Those standards do not change that often, and it is a big deal when they do. They go through a pretty significant approval process, and any proposed changes would be published as a draft first. We work diligently as a team to stay informed of any proposed or actual changes, so that we can inform our clients of potential or necessary updates to their work products.

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Usually, several years or even a decade may go by before a significant change is proposed by ASTM, but there is typically plenty of opportunity for people to update their templates to address these updates. On some other fronts like government agencies, such as Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, they may update some requirements on a more regular basis. We communicate directly with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to stay apprised of these changes, so that we can educate our clients. In the specific case of Fannie and Freddie, they have particular forms that they want completed for certain specialized reports. At Quire, when these changes are implemented, we very quickly make the necessary code changes to our products ensuring our clients are in compliance. That is our responsibility and promise to our client, to ensure that our product is up to date. Ultimately, it is really about being fastidious and following-up to ensure you are paying attention to any proposed or actual changes in standards.

CEO CFO: *Are you primarily in the US? Is it primarily in English, or are there some options?*

Ms. Stratton: There are definitely options. Many of our clients are international firms, so our system supports multiple languages. This means whatever language is dominant for a particular office using our product will be supported. The majority of our clients are in the US, but we have users located all over the world. Someone may be living in Israel and writing reports for a company in the United States. They may be writing in Southeast Asia for a company located in Australia. That's the beauty of cloud-based systems like Quire, people can be located anywhere and effectively collaborate with their colleagues. Remote workers enjoy using Quire because they feel supported and connected. Also, all Quire employees are located in the United States.

CEO CFO: *What does Quire provide that your customers are not utilizing? What can you do that really takes it to a totally new level, that people are not embracing? What are they using that might have surprised you? What tools do customers find most useful?*

Ms. Stratton: The first part of that question, the things that our clients may not be embracing to its full potential, would be our data analytics. That is partly because they were newly released earlier this year. Then, there is also the fact that customers are not accustomed to getting this level of information about how they build their reports.

Historically, businesses have relied on "gut feelings" for a variety of metrics such as: how long it takes to write a document, how many people contributed, and what portions of the report take the most time. They are relying on anecdotal information. Many of our clients are not used to having true metrics and industry benchmarking data; so, I think as we showcase that information to our clients, as we demonstrate their data and compare it to industry benchmarks we are collecting, it really opens their eyes. From there, it will either validate what they thought they knew

or help them make data-driven-decisions around structural changes to their products or their workflow. Just having that knowledge can be a game-changer for our clients.

As far as some of the things that surprise me, many of our clients compete with each other on the same projects, and then turn around and team with each other to complete those same projects! This inter-company collaboration has increased over the last few years, and we think this trend is going to continue – it's not just a blip on the radar. We are also seeing what appears to be a shift in the number of collaborators who contribute to a technical report. More people are participating in the entire report lifecycle, from creation to delivery. For example, in the past it might have been an average of three people touching a single report. Over time, it has evolved to more like 4, 5, or 6 people getting involved. I think that is partially the influence of cloud-based systems like Quire, which are geared toward collaboration, but also companies are finding ways to gain efficiencies by having more compartmentalized functions for people participating in the report writing process. Therefore, while more people may be involved, these individuals are completing specialized pieces of the puzzle.

CEOCFO: *You just rolled out the second part of the data analytics piece, QuireSight. How does that change what you had available before? How are you reaching out to all of your clients, and perhaps people that are not clients yet, to let them know what you can do?*

Ms. Stratton: What has changed is the incredible amount of information that is available to our clients via QuireSight and this data really tells a story. But we know that large data sets and lots of charts can feel overwhelming, so what we like to do with the QuireSight dashboard is to be able to think of the data more as scenarios. For example, if I am a client and I ask myself, "What is my most profitable service line, what is my most efficient template, who are my most efficient writers, how does my workflow compare to the industry?" Large data sets can be difficult to easily query for that. So, what we do is work to present the data in a simple way that answers their specific questions, rather than forcing them to sift through things.

For example, our clients will come into the QuireSight dashboard and be able to select, "My template performance." Then, they can pick an individual template and the data they see could reveal to them, "Wow, this template is actually performing more efficiently since I made changes to it last quarter and our delivery turnaround times have improved as well." Clients are getting answers to scenarios that will help them run their business more efficiently and remain competitive.

We want to expand our data offerings by doing more comparative data. For example, we want to be able to answer the question, "Are people who use the Quire mobile app (our field data collection tool) proving to be more efficient in writing their reports?" We endeavor to show correlations and relationships like that with the data, not just one data point, but how does "X" impact "Y." I think this type of comparative analysis will reveal these relationships, allowing our clients to then say, "Hey, certain use cases are getting benefits by doing it this way, maybe as a company, we should all explore doing it in that manner."

CEOCFO: *Who would you typically speak with at an organization? Is it someone that is constantly writing reports? Is it someone in the C Suite?*

Ms. Stratton: That is interesting and varies because through our sales cycle there are typically three audiences, and you mentioned two of them. There are the "boots on the ground", those who write a ton of reports in the field, using the system day after day, hour after hour. Then there is the C-Suite, which are the top-level decision makers; they are more interested in analytics and higher level information. Then you have a third audience, maybe they are the managers, determining product lines, template contents, maybe they are doing senior reviews. Those are the three different audiences interested in Quire. Companies are either top-down, where they come at us, and they are saying, "We have an initiative at our company to adopt technology; we need to perform a digital transformation." That is decided at the top, and then it trickles down to the bottom. They say, "We are adopting Quire for these reasons," and then it gets rolled out to all of their employees.

However, often times there is a ground-up approach, from which our system grows. It very often happens that there is a SuperUser at one company, and then they go work for another company, and they say, "Oh my gosh, you guys are using Word? That feels like I am going backwards! You need to adopt Quire." These users want to feel they are being provided

the best resources to work efficiently. Particularly when they're performing similar work. Why would someone want to work harder for the same result?

CEOCFO: *What is the potential market opportunity here?*

Ms. Stratton: I think the total available market is a billion-dollar market because of the broad applicability of our platform and the sheer volume of technical reports generated each year. Technical reports exist in so many different verticals and present unique challenges, however as long as a company is using Word to write them, the pain-points are the same. We are not trying to just replace Word, feature for feature. Quire is a better overall ecosystem for technical writing, period.

While Quire started in the environmental field, we have now expanded into 14 different industries. We have hundreds of different services lines in our system. Other areas such as legal, pharmaceuticals, education, valuations; all of these areas are very document intensive and technical in nature. We built Quire in a way it can scale and expand into those other industries, for sure! We are not myopic in the manner which our solution can be used, and we are constantly improving it to meet the needs of new market lines.

CEOCFO: *Your website section about support, email, chat, customer service offers glowing comments! Did you recognize the importance of how you communicate with your customers early on, or did you realize over time that was an important factor that should be part of Quire?*

Ms. Stratton: As the founder of Quire, and as a former technical report writer who had lived the problem I was trying to solve, I am always going to look at Quire from a "user first" perspective. That is just in me. As a CEO, I think about what a user's experience is. You have to delight your customer. They have to feel engaged and like you understand them – that you understand their pain points. A big tenet of Quire is that "a moment spent in confusion is a moment lost"; so, Quire must be an intuitive system. In an ideal scenario, they never have to use support, because they are never confused; they never have a problem.

We work really hard at making our system as bug free as possible and to have a very intuitive design. While you do not need a lot of training to start writing a report in Quire, we know users will have questions. To me, the way that you want to respond must be fast! And that is where 95% of our support flows through our live chat function, so that if users have a question, they push a button, and someone is there saying, "Hello". A human being that works at our company full-time, is saying connecting to them in seconds. We can even jump in the report with them and answer their question.

I know that people spend a good part of their day using Quire. It is not just software; it is a workspace, an ecosystem! Therefore, it is crucial to feel supported, and it is important that support is provided by someone who has a little personality and is friendly, competent, and responsive. That is really important to me, and it has a high value of consideration for me in building this business. Not just because I used to write reports, but I just think it is the right way to do business.

CEOCFO: *It is clear, you are very enthusiastic about Quire. Did you expect to enjoy what you do so much?*

Ms. Stratton: That is interesting because it is definitely the hardest thing I have ever done, and it is the career that, by far, I have learned the most both as a person and as a professional. I've learned more in one month working at Quire, than I did at any other job in total! Overall, I like challenges, am comfortable taking risks, and I'm a creative problem solver. All typical qualities of an entrepreneur! I also like building new things and knowing that those things help people; that we are serving their needs and doing it effectively. Quire checks all of those boxes for me. Before I started Quire, I felt more like I was just hitting the glass ceiling at my old job. But my gosh, if you had told me that I was going to start a software company 13 years ago I would have thought you were crazy!

While it was not a long-held aspiration, through hard work, honesty, and surrounding myself with a team of driven professionals, this is where I have ended up. It is exciting to be able to make decisions that, in your heart and your mind, you know are the right decisions, and you do not have to convince anyone by saying, "I really think we need to do this." I can just do it! It is very fulfilling to make those decisions, and then have them realized in your product and relied upon by your customers. I especially enjoy it when we then have a customer say, "This is amazing, I love it!" If you own a business, that is the quintessential sense of satisfaction! You have an idea; you see it realized; and, then the outcome is really positive from your customer. It does not get better than that...aside from being profitable, too!