Crystal vs. MS Excel Custom Reporting Standard

THE ISSUE

While many times existing Crystal Reports in Spectrum can be modified, there are times when a new report must be developed. It is important to decide on a Reporting Standard for these situations. Options include developing these new reports in Crystal Reports and running it from the Spectrum menu, or developing MS Excel Reports that can be run from any computer where the operator has the Excel file without making use of Spectrum.

THE GOOD

Nearly 100% of the time an Excel file that pulls and shows data vs. a Crystal report is much easier, faster, and more cost effective.

Additionally, report modifications are a LOT easier and faster in Excel.

If an existing Crystal report exists in Spectrum that just needs modifying vs starting from scratch, this is generally most efficient approach.

THE BAD

To run an Excel driven report you need a static IP address that has been whitelisted through Viewpoint Support. You must have this when running an Excel query from your office network.

If you run Excel queries from your home or another location, you will need a whitelisted static IP address at that location.

THE UGLY

When using Excel, if you are not at your office or home with a static IP, you will have to either remote into a computer at the office or at home or use a VPN connection to your office network. Whereas with Crystal Reports, you can just log into Spectrum to run the reports without worrying about whether your IP address has been whitelisted.

BOTTOM LINE

While it's the client's decision, we strongly recommend that Excel reports are adopted as the standard for customization, when changing a canned report is not an option. Benefits far outweigh the cost, including time spent to get set up with a whitelisted static IP.