The Services and Support Companies Behind the Industry

Total Brand Licensing sat down (virtually of course) with some of the biggest names in licensing support software to find out about the unique attributes of each business.
Using some incredible technology, the companies provide invaluable support and here, they each outline what services they provide and how crucial their offerings are to the licensing industry...

Each of the companies on the following pages was asked a set of questions from which readers can, hopefully, see how the various companies and services differ and determine which of the offerings might suit their business needs best.

WestEnd Software Inc

Can you give us some background to your business – when you began, what led you into this sector etc. as well as an idea of staff and offices that you have?

WestEnd™ Software, a Los Angeles, CA, based software firm, is a leading provider of licensing, royalty, product design and media software solutions. Our goal is to improve our clients' business processes by focusing on the entire enterprise and becoming a key component of IT Application ecosystems. In addition to our LA headquarters, WestEnd has offices across the US and Europe and a proven two-decade track record of successful software deliveries. We are partnered with some of the largest licensing companies in the world and help them more effectively oversee licensing programs in order to grow their businesses. Our clients choose WestEnd and our solutions for our functional breadth, rapid feature development and unparalleled customer support.

In 2016, WestEnd launched a new end-to-end licensing software suite called "WestEnd Workspace™". The goal with Workspace was to develop a single solution framework on the latest web-based technology platforms to serve all licensing firms equally, regardless of size and position in the ecosystem, including Licensors, Licensees and Agencies. Workspace provides unrivaled features and functionality within a modular Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) offering. By focusing on a hosted SaaS model, clients enjoy rapid deployment, high performance, top security, lower costs and faster Return on Investment (ROI).

WestEnd Software is committed to the goal of being the leading software firm in the licensing and entertainment industries by building true "partnership" relationships with our clients that will continuously deliver new benefits for years to come.

Can you give us some information about the services that you offer in terms of contract management, product approvals, contract approvals and royalty reports?

As a true full featured end-to-end licensing software solution, the WestEnd Workspace platform seamlessly offers all the functionalities integrated into one application that are key to supporting licensing programs, including contract management, royalty reporting, accounting administration, product approval workflows and style guide management. In addition, there are numerous enhanced features within the Workspace suite, including dynamic contract lifecycle workflows, royalty validation and reporting tools, participation and commission tracking modules and a full accounting subledger for invoice and payment administration.

With regards to the key services Westend offers its clients, we provide turnkey system deployments, expert solution consulting, project management and training, complete data migration and rapid custom feature development. Moreover, WestEnd offers industry leading security and data protection, in conjunction with unmatched systems integration capabilities to fully integrate Workspace with our clients' IT systems, including with other 3rd party accounting, product, single-sign-on and leading business intelligence tools.

What other services does your system offer eg audit tracking, data management, brand protection etc.?

WestEnd continuously improves and updates the capabilities of the Workspace suite to meet both our clients' requirements and the future needs of the industry. By going beyond core functionality, we have been able to help our clients increase ROI by delivering features that reduce overhead and increase speed to market. Some examples include:

- For Licensors, we have developed advanced amortization, accounting and GL posting tools to enable full integration with corporate accounting systems, as well as mapping to finance rules and revenue recognition policies.

- For Licensees, we have delivered a complete product design and development workflow tool to assist manufacturers with their entire product launch efforts, from concept stage all the way through to factory output.

- For Agencies, some of the advanced functionality we've delivered includes auto-renew-

al workflows for licensee agreements, which includes automatic invoicing of renewal fees and an integrated e-signature tool. Renewal deals can now be done rapidly and completely digitally via a collaborative workflow with Licensors and Licensees.

There are countless other enhanced features included within Workspace, including tools for factory verification, SKU catalog administration, user notifications/alerts, as well as advanced reporting and business intelligence tools.

Are there other areas that your system covers?

While WestEnd's product efforts are squarely centered on the Licensing industry, we have also developed a number of adjacent applications to support additional business activities. These efforts are based on the flexibility of our Workspace application framework and the rapid development capabilities within our development program to add in new fully integrated tools. Examples of new applications we have delivered include:
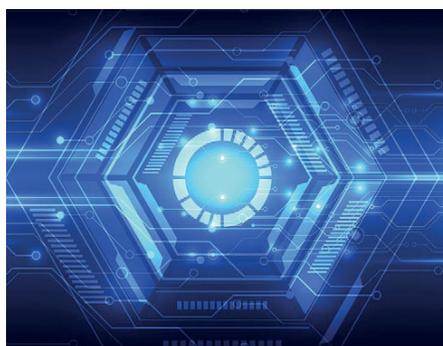
- Media Sales and Distribution module for the management of TV/Movie libraries, media sales contracts, license fee and royalty accounting and sales/availability reporting for digital and international media distribution programs.

- Sponsorship module for the administration of sponsorship programs, including sponsorship inventories, contracts and deliverables as well as invoicing and payments.

- MRP/DRP module for licensees and manufacturers to provide end-to-end management of their manufacturing and distribution supply chains and inventories, including retail sales order and factory work order processing.

How do you deal with counterfeit in terms of security systems?

WestEnd Software fully supports our clients' efforts in combatting counterfeit products on a global level and we work closely with all supply chain partners to increase visibility in real-time and through enhanced audit support. Furthermore, our Workspace suite can be fully integrated with the leading security tag vendors and security monitoring programs to facilitate complete product, distribution and point-of-sale data analysis.

What good, or bad, impact has the coronavirus pandemic had on your business?

The current Covid-19 pandemic has created a global sense of uncertainty for both consumers and businesses, which has increased the importance of making fully informed decisions for all strategic IT investments. WestEnd works closely with all of our clients and prospects to find solutions and pricing that meets their needs, which has become even more important in 2020. We also continually communicate with our existing clients to ensure they are getting the full benefit and ROI out of their Workspace deployment.

Technology changes continuously. How do your systems guarantee to keep up to date with the latest available technology?

WestEnd is always monitoring new technology developments and upgrading our offerings with the goal of continuously upgrading capabilities in the areas of user interface, user experience and system hosting / data management. Workspace is a web-based application that can be utilized from any connected device through standard browsers, which makes accessibility near universal. We have also developed certified mobile apps to encourage more application usage when users are travelling or away from the office. These mobile phone and tablet apps allow users to access all application capabilities and data wherever they are, including the ability to review, markup and approve product workflow submissions.

Additionally, the Workspace framework offers advanced API and webservice libraries to facilitate full data exchange within the corporate IT ecosystem. This enables product data, accounting transactions and sales reports to be distributed across an enterprise in real time.

WestEnd's clients get full visibility into their program performance, instant updates on go-to-market schedules and identification of possible roadblocks or bottlenecks. This is the exact data our clients' management teams need to make business critical decisions on a recurring basis.

What are the unique selling points of your system that you believe make it stand out from others in the market?

WestEnd Software and our Workspace suite of solutions is market proven and we offer an unmatched combination of feature-rich product, client support services and a compelling roadmap of future products that resonates across the market.

Additionally, Workspace is the only solution on the market that combines end-to-end licensing support with additional integrated applications, including Media, Sponsorship and Manufacturing.

However, as with any software vendor, ultimately it is our clients and the references they are willing to provide that make us standout from the competition. We have Licensors, Licensees and Agency clients that will (and do) testify to our ability to deliver compelling solutions that improve their businesses and have become key pieces of both their licensing program and corporate IT strategies.

How do you see your system and business developing over the next few years?

In the last 5 years, WestEnd Software has positioned Workspace as the most feature rich and capable licensing, entertainment and sponsorship software solution on the market: it is the only truly end-to-end system that can support Licensors, Licensees and Agencies with tailored features and services. Our goal for the coming years is to continue to:

- Support our existing clients as their businesses evolve.
- Add new compelling features and modules that the market needs.
- Grow our enterprise-class services and integration capabilities for all modules.
- Scale Workspace to become a full ERP offering.
- Partner with new clients that are looking for both the best software and partner to support their businesses.