The Wdesk Platform by Workiva

Innovation in User Experience for Internal Control Management
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**TALK TO US . . .**  
We look forward to hearing from you and learning what you think about GRC 20/20 research. GRC 20/20 is eager to answer inquiries from organizations looking to improve GRC related processes and utilize technology to drive GRC efficiency, effectiveness, and agility.
The Inevitability of GRC Failure

Organizations Encumbered by Silos of Complexity

Business is complex. Exponential change in regulations, globalization, distributed operations, processes, competitive velocity, business relationships, and legal matters encumbers organizations of all sizes across industries. Consider that organizations are:

- **Dynamic.** Distributed business operations and relationships are growing and changing as the organization attempts to remain competitive. Risk environments of regulatory, legal, operational, and third parties are constantly changing. Managing changes to risk, regulatory, and business environments have encumbered organizations.

- **Distributed.** Organizations have distributed operations complicated by a web of global supplier, vendor, agent, and other third party relationships. Business is an interconnected mesh of relationships and transactions that clouds business boundaries. The challenge with distributed enterprise relationships is that change is exponential. Not only is the organization dealing with constant change in its own operations, but each individual relationship is dealing with change in its own environment.

- **Disrupted.** The intersection of distributed and dynamic business brings disruption. Change combined with complexity in distributed operations/relationships means organizations are easily disrupted in the context of GRC. Organizations manage high volumes of structured and unstructured GRC data across multiple systems, processes, and relationships as they attempt to unravel the entire picture of risk and compliance. Velocity, variety, and volume of data is overwhelming – disrupting the organization and slowing it down at a time when it needs to be agile.

Like battling the multi-headed Hydra in Greek mythology, redundant, manual, and document-centric GRC approaches are ineffective. As the Hydra grows more heads of regulation, legal matters, operational risks, and complexity, scattered silos of GRC become overwhelmed and exhausted and start losing the battle. This approach increases inefficiencies and the risk that serious matters go unnoticed. Redundant and inefficient processes lead to overwhelming complexity that slows the business, when the business environment requires greater agility.

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The Wdesk Platform by Workiva

Innovation in User Experience for Internal Control Management
Spreadsheets, Documents, and Emails, OH MY!

Relying on spreadsheets, documents, and emails to assess, audit, manage, and monitor internal controls leads to GRC failures. These tools make for ineffective, inefficient, and unagile GRC processes to document and manage controls. They also have some serious integrity issues that violate core principles of GRC. While spreadsheets, documents, and emails are very useful tools they – by themselves – do not meet par.

Regulators and auditors are picking up on this issue, causing organizations that have manual, document-centric approaches to internal control management to rethink their approach. The reasons documents, spreadsheets, and emails fail for GRC are as follows:

- **No audit trail.** Without additional tools and significant configuration, documents, spreadsheets and emails alone do not have inherent audit trails. An organization cannot go back and state that it knows with a specific level of certainty that answers to an assessment were gathered from a specific individual on a specific date at a particular time and represent the actual, unaltered, and authenticated answer to that control assessment, analysis, attestation, or audit.

- **Easy to manipulate.** Because there is no audit trail or history of changes within documents and spreadsheets, it is a simple task for anybody to go back and manipulate responses to paint a rosier picture to get themself, someone else, or the organization out of hot water. Someone can easily manipulate documents and cover their trail when there is no audit trail and authentication happening that tracks changes, what those changes were, who made them, and when they were created.

- **Slipping through the cracks.** There is no structure of required workflow and task management. Most often people fire off emails asking for assessments to be done in spreadsheets and documents, audit findings to be responded to, control attestations to be made . . . and no one gets it done. It ends up in the trash, junk folder, filed away, and never responded to until someone is screaming.

- **No consistency.** It is hard to make control assessments, surveys, attestations, and other GRC related information consistent. If a new assessment is needed, the organization opens up a document or spreadsheet to create a new assessment from scratch and fails to see the big picture when there is another assessment asking the same people half of the same questions as the new assessment. Further, different documents and spreadsheets are formatted in different ways and each requires its own learning curve.

- **Compilation nightmares.** As a result of the hundreds to thousands of spreadsheets being used for internal control management, organizations are struggling with compiling reports. One financial services organization interviewed by GRC 20/20 reported that 80% of their internal control management resources (full-time equivalent – FTEs) were nothing more than document reconcilers spending time cutting, pasting, and manipulating data for GRC reports. There is a significant amount of time needed to integrate and compile information from a mountain of documents, spreadsheets, and emails.
Compilation errors. At the end of the day, all this work compiling and integrating hundreds to thousands of documents, spreadsheets, and emails for GRC is inevitable failure. Odds are there is something wrong. That much manual reporting is bound to have serious errors—not malicious, but inadvertent.

The bottom line: Documents, spreadsheets, and emails by themselves fail in GRC, particularly internal control management. Organizations need to address the limitations in manual document, spreadsheet, and email approaches by implementing GRC management solutions that provide for audit trails, consistency, and integrated reporting. Organizations need GRC solutions for internal control management that actively engage and are useable at all levels of the organization, in addition to supporting the needs of audit, risk, and compliance professionals. Solutions that bring efficiency (both human and financial capital efficiency), effectiveness (accurate and auditable reporting), and agility (timely and relevant information when it is needed) are necessary.

The Wdesk Platform by Workiva

Innovation in User Experience for Internal Control Management

The Wdesk platform by Workiva is a GRC solution that GRC 20/20 has researched, evaluated, and reviewed with organizations that are using it in dynamic business environments. GRC 20/20 has evaluated and verified the innovation found in Wdesk and sees this as a compelling offering for internal control management. With an intuitive and engaging user experience, Wdesk makes organizations more efficient, effective, and agile. In this context, GRC 20/20 has recognized Wdesk with a 2015 GRC Innovation Award for the best user experience in Internal Control Management in 2015.

What Wdesk Innovation is About

Wdesk is a 100% cloud-based productivity platform used by organizations to collect, organize, link, report, and analyze business data with control and accountability. It is an intuitive and easy-to-use productivity suite that provides an innovative alternative to enterprise GRC platforms that are often costly to implement, maintain, and adapt.

Wdesk provides an integrated, user-friendly platform that replaces the process of manually pulling data from shared drives, documents, and spreadsheets with a linked, trackable, and controlled solution. It is simple to use and leverages the experience employees have with standard office productivity applications such as word processors and spreadsheets while overcoming their limitations. Through a robust document authoring and collaboration tool, Wdesk provides an innovative approach to managing control documentation, audits, and work papers. Internal audit teams can request evidence and track responses in Wdesk with a centralized, real-time view of all tasks. Once the evidence is provided, it is automatically attached to the testing document. Teams attach supporting evidence, such as PDFs or spreadsheet files, directly to testing
documents and link that information together, thereby making Wdesk a repository for internal control information.

Wdesk supports the viewing and annotation of GRC documentation, which makes it easier to locate and validate supporting evidence for related internal controls. In addition, users can export testing documents and work papers so that supporting evidence can be sent as a single file to external audit teams.

GRC 20/20 finds that teams using Wdesk can collaborate on the same document at the same time with a full audit trail of changes. Permissions and control edits for users and contributors can be set down to the individual cell in a document, which is crucial for security and control. When source material is changed in Wdesk, all linked points are automatically updated. That means information is always current, no matter where or when it is used. Access to this more reliable data saves time and reduces risk.

The risk control matrix, process narratives, and dashboards are all linked within Wdesk. Changes to linked information—such as control language—are automatically updated across related documents. Users can control who has access to that information on a granular level. All stakeholders have instant visibility into the status of their reports, and Wdesk stamps every change in the reporting process documentation, including testing for auditability. Wdesk automates risk, process and control reviews, and certification; and task notifications are sent directly to control and process owners as reviews are scheduled.

Through the innovative Wdesk platform, Workiva has addressed challenges through an intuitive and productive user experience, and has provided users with flexibility in configuring the platform.

Other capabilities of the Wdesk platform include:

- **Task management.** Reviews, approvals, and requests for documentation or information—any sort of task—is integrated directly into the organization’s working environment. View and filter tasks using a status board built to keep track of processes.

- **Audit trail and evidence management.** Manage, mark up, and aggregate supporting documents used to substantiate reports. Package up audit-ready output for review.

- **Data collection.** Automatically gather, aggregate, and manage data from across the enterprise. Use and reuse data across multiple documents, keeping the data connected with live-linking. Monitor and administrate the process with dashboards to hit deadlines.

- **Flowcharts.** Better understanding of organization processes through the creation of dynamic flowcharts that are linked to the data that drives them. Identify likely sources of problems in financial statements and controls, and fix problems before they happen.
- **Visualizations.** Represent GRC data to discover new insights and patterns. Charting is built into Wdesk across document types. Natively link data to visuals to create dynamic views into information that updates when changed.

- **Dashboards.** Dashboards and dynamic visual reports offer stakeholders instant views into information and provide methods to dive deeper for further analysis. Wdesk allows business users to create and modify dashboards based on live-linked data for easy consumption of the latest information.

- **Cell level audit trail.** Accountability is critical to GRC—Wdesk allows the organization to know who modified a report, but also when, why, and what changes were made to the granular details.

- **Out-of-the-box templates.** Wdesk provides an array of GRC templates driven by real-world use. Modifiable templates get new users up to speed fast and help to inform more experienced users of best practices, tips, and tricks. Prebuilt forms allow users to map to the new 2013 COSO Framework at the principle and point of focus levels. Quickly and easily determine your level of coverage across each principle, and identify what controls may have issues.

- **Mobility.** Accessibility comes in all shapes and sizes. Users can access the Wdesk platform regardless of chosen device.

**How is Wdesk Innovation Different?**

Many leading GRC platforms have been architected for on-premise delivery, heavy and structured architectures and data models, and a focus on a small group of core GRC practitioners. Many of these systems have failed to provide a user experience that can be embraced by business process owners, and lack the flexibility to be easily adapted to organizational specific and evolving use cases.

Workiva has received several patents in context of data-linking and data models, which enables Wdesk to link and manifest data in a number of forms, including how it is displayed in mobile formats. The data model is completely dynamic, versus a static, structured database, borrowing from graph database models and tracking linked data relationships to indicated data trends versus queries.

The benefits of elements in Wdesk span the entire organization—linking data to documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and charts. Users can store enterprise-wide linked data in an accountable environment. Wdesk provides a number of workflow automation enhancements in every solution offered, simply built into how the templates are structured. Users can specify permissions at a project, document, document section, or even on a cellular data level—allowing for increased control. Users can view each location in which an element is used or referenced, the contributions to each element, and who the contributor was.
Benefits of Wdesk

GRC 20/20 finds the Wdesk platform is flexible, yet controlled, and implementation is measured in days, not months. Wdesk is easy enough to integrate into existing processes and intricate enough to handle the specific needs of GRC reporting, including built-in audit trail tracking, version control, and digital sign-offs. Wdesk can easily be layered in and sit alongside a traditional GRC platform, or in many cases, used instead of traditional GRC platforms.

The Wdesk approach covers the spectrum from complex data collecting and authoring to automation and analysis in an environment that is easy to use and implement. Linked data allows changes in Wdesk to merge with current content instantly, providing end results faster and with more accuracy. Wdesk can continuously adjust and be used for new use cases as the organization grows and plans to reach future goals. Customers can create these new use cases themselves—no specialized IT team or consultants are required. Specific benefits include:

- **Productivity.** Wdesk provides a solution that enables GRC professionals to effectively get their work done. The solution provides a more effective approach to managing audit, risk, and control in a system that engages both business process owners and assurance professionals.

- **Time to value and continued value.** With Wdesk, implementations are typically three weeks or less. In addition, with a model of continual code release, there are no forced, heavy, or expensive upgrades or migrations required.

- **Document-centric.** Wdesk provides an innovative approach to document narrative, authoring, and enterprise collaboration around a single document or a library of documents with full version history and control. This addresses the issue when each person has a different version, and often no one knows which document or spreadsheet is the most current.

- **Maintaining data integrity across platforms and documents.** Many companies struggle with data consistency across versions and document types. A value that is changed in a financial model or spreadsheet field is not automatically updated in narratives, tables, diagrams, charts, and presentations. Wdesk allows users to easily configure and enforce data integrity across documents and processes.

- **Review process.** Despite updates to word processing features, traditional reviews are still a major problem. The track changes feature is only effective until unauthorized users accept or reject changes. Further, when a single report is sent as an email attachment to all reviewers, the comments and changes are returned individually—more than doubling the amount of manual work required. Audit trails exist but are only maintained in individually saved documents and disappear when they are consolidated. Wdesk keeps all edits in the same document.
- **Security of data and information.** Workiva customers’ data is secure, and the Wdesk platform has achieved SSAE 16 Type II compliance it runs on top of a high-performance, massively scalable infrastructure that ensures flexibility and speed.

- **A fresh approach to GRC.** Wdesk is an easy-to-adopt alternative that replaces office productivity tools, SharePoint, or legacy GRC platforms. With purpose-built GRC functionality delivered on the cloud, Wdesk offers an intuitive and simple user experience that will engage the front line, executive management, and the board—enabling a more effective approach to GRC.

### Considerations in Context of Wdesk

Every solution has its strengths and weaknesses, and may not be the ideal fit for all organizations in all situations. While GRC 20/20 has identified many positive attributes of the Wdesk platform by Workiva to enable GRC programs in internal control management, readers should not see this as a complete and unquestionable endorsement of Wdesk.

Overall, clients have shown a high degree of satisfaction with their use and implementation of Wdesk for internal control management and other GRC related use cases. Clients have a lot of positive feedback about the solution and find it to be an easy-to-use and adaptable solution for their GRC strategy and processes, particularly in the context of internal control management. GRC 20/20 routinely finds that clients are highly satisfied with Wdesk. In the past 12 months, Workiva has added 250+ customers using Wdesk for internal controls, audit, and SOX use cases. Wdesk has emerged as a strong alternative to traditional GRC platforms.
About GRC 20/20 Research, LLC

GRC 20/20 Research, LLC (GRC 20/20) provides clarity of insight into governance, risk management, and compliance (GRC) solutions and strategies through objective market research, benchmarking, training, and analysis. We provide objective insight into GRC market dynamics; technology trends; competitive landscape; market sizing; expenditure priorities; and mergers and acquisitions. GRC 20/20 advises the entire ecosystem of GRC solution buyers, professional service firms, and solution providers. Our research clarity is delivered through analysts with real-world expertise, independence, creativity, and objectivity that understand GRC challenges and how to solve them practically and not just theoretically. Our clients include Fortune 1000 companies, major professional service firms, and the breadth of GRC solution providers.

Research Methodology

GRC 20/20 research reports are written by experienced analysts with experience selecting and implementing GRC solutions. GRC 20/20 evaluates all GRC solution providers using consistent and objective criteria, regardless of whether or not they are a GRC 20/20 client. The findings and analysis in GRC 20/20 research reports reflect analyst experience, opinions, research into market trends, participants, expenditure patterns, and best practices. Research facts and representations are verified with client references to validate accuracy. GRC solution providers are given the opportunity to correct factual errors, but cannot influence GRC 20/20 opinion.