



Business performance analysis made possible through the implementation of a sophisticated Cloud-based Data Platform

A recent addition to Circyl's client base is a Midlands-based recruitment specialist with a strong reputation for its work within a specific area of public sector operations. The firm utilises its industry-specific experience to help its customers find the resources they require, across a wide range of roles and specialist skills.

Delivering this support across short, medium and long term arrangements, the firm boasts an extensive portfolio and network of contacts from which to identify and place the right candidates to meet an ever-changing profile of resourcing requirements.

Pain Points

In the last five years, the client has experienced a tremendous amount of growth and success, cementing its position as an industry leader that is committed to supporting businesses with all of their recruitment needs.

However, significant growth also comes with its own challenges, as increased client demands and an internal appetite for continuous progression requires modern solutions and streamlined operational

processes to handle the additional workload.

Underpinned by a key in-house operational solution and supported by a range of third-party applications and locally managed Excel spreadsheets, the existing approach to data management and reporting provided the business with valuable set of datasets on which reports could be manually created.

However, an increase in demand for more proactive analytics and greater visibility across the various departments of the business, pushed the components of the current approach to their limitations, requiring a dedicated data and analytics platform to support the growing requirements for greater insight. Only by combining data from the range of data sources available into a single solution would the level of analysis needed be made possible.

Objectives and Approach

The main objective of the project was to establish a centralised data platform that consolidated data from the key sources around the business and allowed it to be viewed consistently, whether it was by department, customer, candidate or time period. This single

version of the truth would facilitate accurate and timely reporting, putting the right information in front of the right people at the right time to make informed decisions.

The first phase of the project was a review of the current data management and reporting approach. This strategic engagement allowed Circyl's consultants to understand the data landscape, the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach and aspirations for a new solution. With this increased understanding of the client's requirements, the Circyl team were able to propose a high-level design for a new solution in line with best practice, alongside a delivery roadmap of iterative phases.

This phased approach allows Circyl clients to implement new solutions in a quick and cost-effective manner, focusing initially on high-value or high-priority requirements and delivering immediate value to the business.

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The first phase of this project delivered an interactive dashboard for analysing the key sales metrics that drive the business, establishing the foundations of the solution architecture and a scalable data model to support a range of reporting requirements.

Building on the success of the first phase, subsequent phases enriched the platform with data from further sources, including Excel-based budget spreadsheets and the Human Resources system. Each additional data source provided a new lens or set of metrics to an evolving picture as the solution was rolled out and the business began to ask further questions of the data.

Outcomes & Principles

The new data platform has delivered a number of business benefits for the client and has established some key principles for their data strategy moving forwards.

These key principles include:

Define master data sources: The exploratory nature of the project has led the client to evaluate the true master source of each dataset and define the data quality standards that need to be met. Identifying the master source for each dataset ensures the data is maintained in a single location and can be consistently

reused in downstream applications and reports.

Remove burden on operational systems: Through the implementation of a dedicated data and analytics platform, data from operational systems is extracted into a separate location and re-structured into a format optimised for reporting. This not only makes reporting easier and quicker, but also removes unnecessary impact on end users in their daily data management activities.

Consolidate data centrally: Through the creation of a centralised data platform, information from various sources across the business can be combined to provide a true picture of overall performance. Consolidating data centrally allows key metrics to be defined consistently and provides the single version of the truth that reports and analysis should be based on.

Automate reporting processes: Manual reporting had led to a duplication of effort and inconsistency in reporting outputs. Automating the processes that produce data for reports not only removes the opportunity for error, it allows resources tied up creating reports to use the reclaimed time to provide pro-active insights to the business.

Business-friendly data model: By structuring data to support reporting requirements and using business-friendly terminology, the centralised data model enables both structured and ad hoc analysis to be performed from a single source. This approach also allows trained business users to self-serve their analysis and remove existing dependencies on IT.

Visualise data as required: A centralised data platform allows reporting and analysis to be performed using a number of tools to suit the target audience. Whether its interactive dashboards in Power BI, ad hoc analysis in Excel pivot tables, or annotated presentations in PowerPoint, each of these tools can leverage data from the centralised platform, ensuring reporting remains consistent regardless of how it's consumed.

Leverage Azure for data platform and integration: The new solution was deployed to a Cloud-based platform that leverages the power of Platform as a Service (PaaS) using Microsoft Azure. This scalable platform reduces database management costs, whilst providing access to a wide range of tools and services that make integrating on-premises and Cloud data sources easier than ever before.

With the new solution in place, users from across the business can get access to the data they need using the intuitive slicing, filtering and drill-through functionality of Power BI. Underpinned by a role-based security model linked to their Microsoft 365 login, the solution ensures that users get a personalised experience and that access to sensitive data is securely managed.

Technology utilised

During the project Circyl leveraged the following technologies:



Azure Data Factory: Data Factory is Microsoft's Cloud-based integration tool for managing the ingestion of data into Azure from a range of sources.

The tool allows configurable pipelines to be developed that automate the data refresh process, keeping report data up to date and removing the need for manual effort.



Azure SQL Database: Azure SQL Database is Microsoft's Cloud-based service that provides the database platform for the centralised data store.

With its range of service tiers that can be scaled up or down as demand dictates, Azure SQL Database provides the ideal combination of reliability and flexibility for an evolving data platform.



Power BI: Power BI is Microsoft's Cloud-based enterprise and self-service analytical solution that provides data modelling and visualisation capabilities across a range of data sources.

With its ability to facilitate both standardised and self-service reports and distribute insights securely across an organisation with tight integration with Microsoft 365, Power BI is the ideal solution for any organisation looking to empower its employees and develop a collaborative data culture.



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