



Enhancing Customer data analytics capabilities through the delivery of a Business Intelligence review and roadmap

Sector

Responsible for looking after some of the UK's most used natural water resources and a wide range of heritage buildings across England and Wales, the customer is a highly respected, UK-based charity.

They work with volunteers and communities across England and Wales to create spaces where local people want to spend time.

Pain points

Prior to engaging Circyl, the customer had a large number of disparate solutions and data sources spread across the business, which was making it difficult for them to effectively integrate data between systems and consolidate information centrally for consistent reporting.

This integration had been achieved using a legacy solution based on manual extracts and an on-premises data warehouse, which was consolidating data for reporting through SQL Server Reporting Services

(SSRS). However, this approach had become increasingly inefficient, creating a number of significant challenges that needed to be addressed.

Firstly, newer data sources have access methods such as APIs that the existing integration solution was not able to utilise – this significantly hindered the organisation's ability to capture and drive insight from their data. In addition, a nearer real-time integration and workflow was required to keep data in sync across the various systems and allow for informed and timely decision making.

The on-premises technologies also lacked the flexibility and scalability needed for a modern BI platform and to support the desired move towards analytics-based decision making underpinned by Power BI analytics and reporting.

Whilst the existing legacy system had served its purpose in the years after its implementation, its effectiveness had waned over time, especially in the current climate when a lot of businesses are transitioning to more efficient cloud-based solutions. Therefore, the existing solution was deemed not fit

for purpose, and a modern alternative was needed that would streamline data analytics throughout the business.

Objectives

As they already used Microsoft technologies, the organization were keen to upgrade their existing Cloud-based platform to Microsoft 365, moving from a largely on-premise environment to an entirely cloud-based solution. This meant Circyl needed to guide the customer in developing a solution that could meet both current and future objectives for seamlessly managing and analysing data.

To accomplish this, Circyl were tasked with conducting a strategic discovery engagement to understand the customer landscape in greater detail, identifying the key integration points and processes required to deliver a BI platform from a new centralised data hub.

This engagement allowed Circyl to review the current approach and propose a new high-level solution architecture and a suggested development roadmap for implementation through a series of iterative projects.

During this engagement, workshop sessions with key stakeholders were held to review the existing data sources, current integration solution and current BI solution.

Further investigation allowed Circyl to better understand the existing challenges and identify the best approaches to address them. Finally, a detailed strategic review document was delivered, ensuring that the scope of the project was fully understood, and that it met all the cost and time requirements.

Outcomes/values

Rather than being a one-off project, Circyl's recommendations for a new data platform outlined a suggested roadmap for implementation, with each project treated separately with its own specific analysis and design process.

Once all the project phases were completed, the customer had the tools needed to efficiently harness and process data, allowing them to uncover business-enhancing insights in real-time. Through the delivery of a sophisticated centralised hub and modernised

BI platform, users now have a solution built on a much broader data model that facilitates ongoing data analytics. On completion and deployment of the hub, Circyl are now developing a suite of BI reports, dashboards and data visualisations.

A move to the cloud has significantly streamlined existing processes, making data analytics a lot more efficient throughout the organization. This in turn, allows approved users to deliver better results in a timely fashion.

The ongoing nature of the project also means that the solution can be fine-tuned and updated over time, rather than it becoming outdated and unfit for purpose.

Technology utilised

Although the project continues to evolve, Circyl leveraged the following technologies during the engagement:



Azure SQL Database: Azure SQL Database is a fully managed platform as a service (PaaS) database engine that handles most of the database management functions, such as upgrading, patching, backups and monitoring without user involvement.



Azure Data Factory: Azure Data Factory is the platform that solves data scenarios. It is the cloud-based ETL and data integration service that allows you to create data-driven workflows for orchestrating data movement and transforming data at scale.



Logic Apps: Azure Logic Apps is a cloud-based platform for creating and running automated workflows that integrate your apps, data, services and systems.



Power BI: Power BI is a collection of software services, apps and connectors that work together to turn your unrelated sources of data into coherent, visually immersive and interactive insights.



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