



New business insights platform supports business growth for financial services specialist

Committed to supporting the growth plans of regional SMEs, Circyl's latest client is a debt fund specialist whose capital supports transactional activity for UK businesses, delivering £3-10m EBITDA across a wide range of industry sectors. To date, they have raised over £600m worth of investment funds on behalf of their business partners.

Their work is underpinned by several key principles, including:

- Building a well-diversified portfolio to deliver strong and stable returns for investors
- Backing sectors and businesses that meet their return expectations, whilst being scalable and sustainable
- Helping borrowers apply best practice within their operations through good governance and socially responsible behaviour
- Continually adding value to the regions and societies that their businesses operate in

Pain points

The organisation had experienced a tremendous amount of growth and success in recent years, but this created its own challenges as increased internal and client expectations meant that detailed and flexible insights were required to improve forecasting and decision making.

These expectations made it difficult for the existing systems and processes to complete complex data analysis. The existing solution had been fit for purpose originally, but

was now being stretched beyond its capabilities which was creating a range of operational challenges. These include:

- Ever expanding stand-alone silos of data that were used for reporting
- Static pre-built reports from business systems that were difficult to combine
- Labour intensive data entry processes
- A lack of available real-time data
- Lack of flexibility in report creation

Rather than implementing a solution that would only address the immediate challenges, the business required a more flexible alternative that would adapt as the business continued to grow, allowing future data sources and reporting requirements to be adopted and managed efficiently.

Objectives and approach

Following a strategic review of their existing processes for collecting and managing information, the business was keen to implement a consolidated cloud-based data and reporting solution that would pull together key information without placing extra burden or workload on operational staff or the leadership team.

To achieve this, Circyl proposed an iterative phased approach to solution delivery that aligned with the overarching drive to demonstrate enhanced business insights and reporting. During the first stage of the project, Circyl assisted in the

implementation of a Microsoft-based centralised data platform using the existing data sources to create a tabular data model which allowed for data validation and analysis in Excel and PowerBI. This demonstrated that with a trusted platform in place, data consistency could be achieved throughout the organisation, providing access to timely and accurate information.

Upon completion of the first phase, the next objective was to develop more complex information management reporting so that the appropriate data could be shared efficiently across the entire organisation. The existing data model was extended with new measures, with KPIs and core reports built into both Power BI and Report Builder. Meanwhile, the appropriate security model was also introduced allowing reports to be distributed to authorised staff.

The final phase extended the solution to enhance automation of data validation and reporting, ensuring it could be developed by the customer as business requirements changed over time.

Outcomes and principles

The business now has access to an easy-to-use solution, responsible for driving better informed decision making using trusted data sources. Through the creation of a centralised reporting data store, information from various sources is combined to provide a consistent and validated reporting location.

The new cloud-based platform provides flexible and secure access, featuring:

- A centralised data warehouse combining data from multiple sources
- Automated processes to load data and standardisation of data templates
- Automated receipt and validation of borrower submissions
- Dashboards to provide interactive insights
- Standard layouts for structured outputs
- Ability to browse data in Excel, create ad-hoc reports and export to PowerPoint
- Enhanced reports and dashboards in Power BI for investors and fund managers

With this solution in place, users now have much more flexibility when consuming analysis. Since going into production, data submissions have become automated, saving the client approximately ten days' worth of time per month. Report creation has also been automated and standardised, saving the business a further 8-10 days in repetitive tasks, whilst reports are now available over a week earlier allowing for proactive decision making.



Technology utilised

During the project Circyl leveraged the following technologies:



Microsoft Azure: Azure is a cloud computing platform and an online portal that allows users to access and manage cloud services and resources provided by Microsoft.



Excel: Microsoft Excel is a powerful data visualisation and analysis software, which uses spreadsheets to store, organise and track data sets with formulas and functions.



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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