

Technical Case Study

Empowering Stowe Family Law with smarter insights, lower costs and scalable Power BI reporting



Client Profile

Client: Stowe Family Law

Industry: Legal Services

Challenge: Replace Tableau with Power BI before renewal in April 2025, while improving data architecture and reporting efficiency

The Challenge: Expensive Licences and Inconsistent Data Architecture

Stowe Family Law, the UK's largest specialist family law firm, has undergone rapid growth, expanding its operations and increasing its reliance on data-driven decision-making. However, the firm's reliance on Tableau for analytics and reporting had become increasingly cost-prohibitive and difficult for employees to adopt, limiting its effectiveness. With the Tableau renewal approaching in April 2025, Stowe sought to migrate to Power BI - a more cost-effective and widely adopted platform for data visualisation - before the renewal deadline.

While Stowe already had a data warehouse in place, the solution lacked the consistency and structure intended by its original design. Key issues included:

Unstructured Report Catalogue

Lack of documentation and logical structure to reports caused challenges in consistently identifying and utilising the correct reports.

Inconsistent Data Across Teams

Different departments used varying versions of key metrics, leading to misalignment, conflicting reports, discrepancies in boardroom discussions and operational meetings.

Limited Self-Service Analytics

Non-technical users found it difficult to access meaningful insights without heavy reliance on the Business Intelligence (BI) team.

Skills Gap in Power BI Best Practices

The internal BI team had strong expertise in SQL but had not experienced designing optimal data models for analytics, limiting their ability to maximise Power BI's potential.

As Stowe searched for a solution to modernise their reporting and analytics, they explored several potential partners, including independent Power BI developers. While these candidates demonstrated technical proficiency, none provided the strategic guidance that Stowe required.

Circyl was introduced to Stowe through Circyl's sister company Quiss Technology. Unlike other providers, the Circyl team took a consultative, problem-solving approach and were able to pinpoint inefficiencies in Stowe's data model that the internal team had identified within 15 minutes of the first session.

This level of insight and engagement gave Stowe the confidence that Circyl was a strategic partner capable of guiding them through their transformation.

The Solution: Medallion Architecture, Power BI, and Optimised Reporting

Circyl adopted a structured and collaborative approach, working closely with Stowe's BI team and business stakeholders to design and implement a robust, scalable solution. The team's ability to translate complex data concepts into clear, actionable steps impressed not only the BI team but also senior legal stakeholders.

In-Depth Discovery and Analysis

To gain a comprehensive understanding of Stowe's existing reporting environment, Circyl:

- Interviewed key technical resources from Stowe's BI team to assess the current data warehouse design and reporting landscape
- Engaged with business stakeholders to evaluate existing reports on fee earner performance, identifying both positive aspects and pain points
- Mapped out opportunities to optimise data flow and reporting accuracy by refining the medallion architecture

Instead of simply agreeing to implement Power BI, Circyl challenged Stowe's assumptions, critically evaluating their data model, reporting needs, and analytics strategy, pinpointing key structural issues in the firm's data model that could be resolved through a best-practice architectural approach.

Medallion Architecture Implementation

Circyl redesigned Stowe's data warehouse to align with a true medallion architecture, ensuring clear levels of demarcation across data stages:

- **Bronze Layer:** Raw data extraction from Proclaim PMS (Practice Management System) and HiBob HR
- **Silver Layer:** Data cleansing, transformation, and validation
- **Gold Layer:** Dimensional star schema model optimised for analytics

While the Stowe team concentrated on developing the bronze and silver layers, Circyl's experience in dimensional modelling created a gold layer optimised for Power BI.

This structure improved data consistency, quality, and performance, making it easier for Stowe to both maintain data and include new data sources in the future.

Dimensional Data Model and Semantic Layer

Circyl developed a dedicated semantic layer to support Stowe's analytics needs:

- **Optimised for Power BI:** Clean, well-structured models with efficient relationships and time intelligence calculations for easy comparison of performance over time
- **Row-Level Security (RLS):** Implemented RLS to restrict access to sensitive data based on user roles, ensuring fee earners, partners, and management only viewed relevant data
- **Centralised Semantic Model:** Simplified report creation by enabling a consistent and reusable data model across multiple Power BI reports

Power BI Reporting Suite

Circyl developed an initial suite of Power BI reports focused on fee earner performance, providing actionable insights across the firm:

- **Firm-Wide Insights:** Reports for managing partners to track overall firm performance
- **Department-Level Dashboards:** Group-level views for team leaders to monitor fee earners' productivity and performance
- **Individual Fee Earner Reports:** Personalised dashboards giving every Stowe employee a clear view of their own performance metrics

These reports enabled faster decision-making and greater visibility at every level of the organisation, driving accountability and transparency.

The simplicity of the semantic layer allowed the Stowe team to take on responsibility for creating the remaining reports. This self-service approach will also allow business users to create their own reports moving forward, removing the dependency on the BI team for simple requests.

Transparent Project Delivery with Azure DevOps

The project was managed and delivered using Azure DevOps, ensuring full transparency and control throughout the delivery lifecycle:

- **Real-Time Progress Tracking:** Stakeholders had visibility into progress from kick-off to deployment
- **Agile Iterations:** Continuous feedback loops ensured the solution aligned with Stowe's business needs
- **Efficient UAT and Deployment:** Smooth User Acceptance Testing (UAT) and deployment phases, ensuring the solution was stable and effective

Impressed by its effectiveness, Stowe decided to adopt DevOps for their own internal project management, transforming how their BI team handles workloads and priorities. What started as a tool for this engagement has now become a core part of their own day to day operations.

This structure improved data consistency, quality, and performance, making it easier for Stowe to both maintain data and include new data sources in the future.

The Result: On-Time, On-Budget, and Future-Ready

The project was delivered on time and within budget, empowering Stowe to complete the remaining reports before the April 2025 Tableau renewal. Key outcomes included:

- **Cost Savings:** By replacing Tableau with Power BI, Stowe significantly reduced licensing costs without sacrificing functionality
- **Enhanced Data Consistency:** The medallion architecture provided clear data demarcation, improving data quality and trustworthiness
- **Optimised Reporting:** The dimensional data model and RLS ensured accurate, secure, and scalable reporting
- **Empowered Internal Team:** Stowe's BI team gained the foundation and skills needed to build and maintain future Power BI reports independently
- **Actionable Insights:** Fee earners and managers gained access to performance data, driving improved accountability and actionable business decisions

Our Viewpoint

Andy McLean, Data and Analytics Director at Circyl, said of the engagement:

“Partnering with Stowe Family Law on this project was a fantastic experience. Their team’s clear vision and collaborative approach enabled us to deliver a solution that not only met the technical objectives but also empowered the Stowe BI team to take the platform on further in the future.”

“It was incredibly rewarding to see how the improved architecture and Power BI reporting will drive smarter, data-led decisions across the firm. We look forward to continuing to support Stowe on their digital transformation journey.”

Client Voice

Jack Weir, BI Manager at Stowe Family Law, shared his thoughts on working with Circyl:

“Circyl didn’t just execute our vision—they challenged it, refined it, and made it better. Within 15 minutes they had identified key weaknesses in our data model that could be improved rapidly. That was a big moment.”

“We went from fragmented, inconsistent reporting to a streamlined, structured data model in a matter of weeks. The impact has been transformative.”

“Power BI is a game-changer for us, but it was Circyl’s expertise in data modelling that unlocked its true potential. Their ability to immediately pinpoint our biggest data challenges showed us we had the right partner from day one.”