

Save the Children UK Increases Data Accuracy and Reduces Costs with TIBCO Data Virtualization



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team formed by enabling
IT and business users to
collaborate

Challenge

Providing the right information to decision-makers, donors, fundraisers, and other stakeholders is critical for an organization's ever-evolving, life-altering mission. But for Save the Children UK, a myriad of internal and external data sources and the need to respond rapidly to world events, made it hard to integrate data and develop insights. With an increase in data, it was becoming increasingly unmanageable to continue with traditional ETL processes.



Implementing the TIBCO Data Virtualization platform has focused attention on the value data has to the organization. The TIBCO Data Virtualization platform enables us to turn disparate data from multiple sources into useful and actionable information for making organizational decisions in a timelier manner.

—Vice President, Data Integration Services

In the UK and around the world, Save the Children gives children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn, and protection from harm. It operates with the mission to do whatever it takes every day and in times of crisis to transform children's lives and the future we all share.

The nonprofit faced many of the same issues other dynamic organizations encounter: multiple versions of data, no shared metadata specification, no real-time information, a lack of data governance, lack of agility in responding to business needs, and an inability to extract value from new, ever evolving unstructured data sources.

Moreover, 91 percent of its funds are spent on charitable activities, leaving just nine percent for all other costs, including IT. Any technology investment had to be prudent and effective. Lower cost of delivery and business agility were foremost in justifying the use of the TIBCO Data Virtualization platform.

Transformation

Knowing it had to find a better way, the Save the Children team designed a new data, analytics, and insight architecture to assist in achieving its mission and to overcome technical and delivery challenges. The team selected TIBCO Data Virtualization software to instantiate and operationalize several initiatives built around principles that govern management and data delivery throughout the organization. Among them, establishing a single version of the truth, tracked KPIs, definitions for all data, secured data entities, business intelligence, and data analytics as a standard activity rather than a development project.

Benefits

With a new, logical approach to data modeling, including standardized entities and attributes supported by TIBCO solutions, Save the Children UK centralized the view of its data, using a common business model (CBM). Doing so created a single source of truth for applications, analysis, and reporting, which ensured all users worked with correct data and removed discrepancies—enabling user-analysts to spend more time on value-add activity. The platform also allowed governance over the architecture, providing business alignment on data definitions.

The organization's Adobe Campaign Manager system manages email communications to supporters. Of high importance, the team needed to reengineer myriad data feeds to this system to improve agility and remove extra steps. Regardless of the original data source, using TIBCO Data Virtualization software, the team provided a single, consistent data service to the email system, allowing faster business rule changes and delivery of new data. In addition, the new solution made it very easy to expand data services to include grant information and supporter attributes. Likewise, the system has made it easy to provide data interfaces to other digital systems, such as Adobe Marketing Cloud and online donation forms.

“The collaborative way of working has been transformational,” said Graham Tucker, head of data and development. “Previously, the business would provide detailed requirements (sometimes using business analyst resources), and then IT would develop and test. This process has been streamlined. We all now work as one team and can accommodate change as the work progresses. For example, data discovery can identify changes in requirements, and we can now very quickly see the results.”

Additionally, the team also proved the success of the agile delivery process across business and IT by taking advantage of TIBCO Data Virtualization iterative coding capabilities. This level of agility couldn't be achieved using a traditional waterfall delivery model and is now the standard model for software development at Save the Children. The result is that fewer interim staging environments are needed, reducing storage costs and ETL processing workloads.

Looking to the future, Save the Children is currently replacing a legacy physical data warehouse with the virtualized data model to save costs and provide more consistent reporting. The platform will also be used to integrate data from digital and social channels in both batch and real time to ensure information presented to supporters is both relevant and accurate.

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