



Client

A FTSE 250 retailer with over 2,700 outlets of different types throughout the UK together with an own-brand manufacturing and distribution division.

Opportunity

The client had grown substantially and anticipated continuing this positive trajectory. As its traditional areas of operation were experiencing long-term structural and demographic decline, attention was focussed on its newer retail operations driving overall growth and profits. The volume of transactions that flowed through the company was also growing and both the monetary impact of decisions and the pace at which they needed to be taken were increasing. In order to cope with these challenges there was a pressing need for accurate, timely and easy-to-use information. The organisation also wanted to become closer to its customer by using EPOS and other data to better understand how they interact with the company and its brands with the objective of maximising revenue and sustaining customer loyalty.

Problems

The organisation had been very acquisitive and, as a result, had three entirely separate information architectures, three sets of management reports and three reporting teams. It was impossible to run Analytics on the high volume of EPOS data generated by their outlets. Also there was a large (~150 FTE) centralised Finance Service Centre, focussed on producing weekly P&Ls, whose operations were mostly manual and Excel-based and thus both inefficient and subject to errors.

Objectives

There were three main objectives. First consolidate the information landscape. Second support a more customer-centric approach leveraging data to do this. Third drive greater efficiency and accuracy in the Finance Function, reducing costs and improving service.

Duration

This engagement covered business as usual activities as well as strategy development and execution. Four months spent analysing the situation and developing a way forward, a further seven months on executing elements of this and running other in-flight projects.

Approach

1. Reviewed the information architecture and the different suites of management reports; what they did and how they were used. Documented data flows, with particular focus on the Finance Service Centre and EPOS transactions.

2. Assessed the need for each of regular reporting, analysis, data feeds and customer analytics.
3. Developed a future data architecture consolidating and standardising existing facilities, allowing for full EPOS and loyalty card data to be stored and accessed and for external data sources (social media, meteorology etc.) to be integrated.
4. Developed an overall Data Strategy combining short, medium and long-term actions.
5. Led the execution of the initial parts of this.

Deliverables

1. An assessment of strengths and weaknesses of existing Information facilities, including “picking a winner” amongst these as a holding position.
2. A future data architecture, including the adoption of an Analytics Platform to deal with EPOS data volumes and better support the Marketing team.
3. A plan for the initial consolidation of information estates and teams as a precursor to adopting the future data architecture.
4. A roadmap for the integration of social media and other external data sources into the Analytics Platform to support the customer journey and drive targeted customer offerings aimed at retention.
5. Full cost-benefit analysis (including before and after P&Ls) covering the impact of the various strands of the above work, which was then collated to form an overall Data Strategy.
6. Detailed project plan for the consolidation element.

Outcomes

1. The overall Data Strategy was adopted by the main stakeholder, the CFO, but put on hold when he left the organisation. Six months later, it was taken up by his successor and implemented in entirety.
2. The consolidation element was taken forward immediately. This resulted in the formation of a single information team, standardising on a single information architecture and introducing a standard set of management reports, all without causing disruption to weekly P&L production.

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