Case study

Service
Data & Analytics

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Let the numbers do the talking

Making use of all the information available to us in business is not a new thing. Data is available in every aspect of our operations. But it's not about having lots of data, it's about having quality data to provide meaningful insight. As Citizens Advice Scotland discovered, that's what gets us closer to our customers.

Results at a glance:

- Providing consistent data integration between multiple systems and sites
- Meeting urgent data and reporting requirements quickly and efficiently
- Providing answers at the click of a button to previously difficult questions
- Ability to identify emerging risks, areas for focus and intimate customer understanding

We all have access to more information than we have had before. Sometimes we don't realise how much we rely on data in our everyday lives. As soon as we drive somewhere unfamiliar, we reach for our phones and load google maps. We don't think about it. It's just a natural thing that we do. We get real-time instructions that will tell us everything we need to know and more - how long it will take, what time we will arrive, where alternative routes are, and where delays may occur. The amount of data that goes into providing us with the information we have all become so reliant on is quite staggering.

The COVID-19 pandemic escalated the demand for access to relevant, timely, and quality data. For Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS), this introduced a whole new raft of data and reporting requirements that needed to be met urgently. Local Authorities required information to enable informed policy decisions, get real-time data on the current state of play, and understand the social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

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Gartner recently reported that 97% of data sits unused within businesses. For CAS, that was no different. The Insight team often struggled to access the data they needed during normal operating conditions. When data management is a manual process, it takes considerable effort to produce meaningful reports that are both useful and usable. When time is of the essence, this is even harder.

We have worked closely with CAS for several years and understand their business well. At the start of the pandemic, we were already working with them on a best practice reporting solution for one area of their business, but with the demands of the pandemic hitting so quickly, we shifted gears to provide a COVID-19 data model that would provide better and more consistent integration of data. This gave a greater level of understanding of the relationship between coronavirus and other types of advice being sought.

Improving the way CAS use their data didn't stop there. We have completely replaced their existing Data Hub and are now working on integrating data from more areas of the business. The insight that is available to CAS means that they can really understand their clients. They can analyse differences in the types of advice that people are looking for across their regional base and better understand the needs of their clients overall. It is often the people at the coal face who need access to this data, so the solution is now being rolled out to individual Citizens Advice Bureaus (CABs), who, through Power BI, will have easy access to their data for the first time. This will make a massive difference in how they provide support and advice.

The great thing about increasing an organisation's access to their data is seeing important questions that previously seemed too difficult, suddenly have answers. It's not just about giving them access to data though, it's about helping them to use that insight to identify emerging risks, areas for focus and opportunities to understand their client experience more intimately.

It is particularly gratifying with an organisation like CAS, where those answers are going to help people in need. As one member of CAS fed back recently, before this might have felt like playing with numbers on a computer screen, but now there are clear impacts and benefits for real people. What more can you ask than that?