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5 ways data can **help you grow** your travel and transport business

Data is a consequence of day to day business activity in a world where our lives have become inextricably digitally connected.

To put some context to just how much information we're generating today:

90% of the world's data has been created in the last 2 years alone[1].

Exactly how much data does that equate to?

Every day we create 2.5 quintillion, or in other words, 2,500,000,000,000,000,000 bytes.

An opportunity to gain a 360^0 view of customers; to increase the profitability of each and every engagement; to become proactive rather than reactive; to learn from the past.

The trouble is, 90% of data is unstructured, including things such as tweets, photos, customer purchase history and even customer service call logs.

The key to unlocking this opportunity is being able to turn the data that flows through your business into actionable insight.

According to a 2014 study by Accenture and General Electric, 84% of the companies surveyed believe that analytics could **"shift the competitive landscape"** for their industry within the next year and 89% believe companies that fail to adopt a data analytics strategy could lose both market share and momentum.

Cloud platforms and applications such as SQL on Microsoft Azure make it possible to cope with the growing influx of data from processes such as booking, ordering and tracking, without causing infrastructure and software costs to spiral out of control.

> **i** This paper looks at 5 ways adequate data management can help businesses operating in the travel and transport industry to grow.

1 You gain information transparency

It's amazing the things you can learn when you have the full picture.

- Who are your repeat customers?
- Who hasn't bought from you in a while?
- What are the barriers to engagement and purchase?
- Are there any patterns in trade?

Data transparency and effective management forms the starting point from which to unlock intelligence and to begin structuring services and offers.

How you gain data transparency boils down to the technology you use.

No data strategy can truly work without an effective base platform upon which to support it. It's for this reason that establishing a modern flexible, scalable, and secure infrastructure is so important.

The introduction of cloud platforms such as Microsoft Azure is providing travel and transport organisations the means by which to run SQL databases on a scale that means you can get insight faster with a complete BI platform that speed up how you access, analyse, clean, and shape both internal and external data.

Total business transparency on a modern scalable and cost effective technology platform.

2   You can segment your audience and services

Targeting services and offers to different categories of customer allows you to insert greater personalisation into what you sell.

Where this makes a difference is the more the customer feels you are attuned to their needs and wants, the more likely they are to want to purchase through you.

A report from Monetate & eConsultancy looked at the realities of online personalisation and revealed that;

94% of businesses believe that personalisation is critical to current and future successes.

According to the same report, businesses that are providing personalised digital journeys are reporting an average increase in sales of 19%.

Microsoft Azure's predictive analytics services, including Machine Learning, Cortana Analytics and Stream Analytics, makes data insight easier to obtain, manage, monitor, and leverage.

It allows you to give guests and travellers relevant, timely, personalised, and contextual offers and experiences by visualising insights and allowing you to take appropriate action.

Total customer segmentation allows for the delivery of consistent yet highly personalised services.

3   You become proactive rather than reactive

When actions are no longer based on guess work, making profitable business decisions becomes more straightforward, allowing you to proactively implement process improvements that result in better customer engagement.

The beauty of having access to detailed insight means you can engage customers and prospects with greater certainty of incurring a more successful outcome.

The fact you can do this without needing to react to a change in market, business or customer conditions, is a client endearing bonus.

You become the instigator; you identify the trend; you lead the engagement.

Running data applications in a cloud environment means that software such as Azure SQL Database you are never restricted by the level or type of engagement, providing a secure and scalable way to manage the data and develop insight.

Applications that reside in SQL Server such as Microsoft Power BI, make it easier to provide every user in an organisation with the insight relevant to them, in order to make better decisions, faster around things such as crew rostering and safety planning.

Total service delivery with consistent yet highly personalised services.

4   You can lower the cost of operation

Cloud technology reduces the need to purchase and babysit hardware as you're running the software out of someone else's server.

Effectively there is no kit or maintenance cost; you even save on the charge for space and utilities to house and run the equipment!

From a software perspective you can begin to reduce license costs, which is particularly useful for Software Asset Management and maintaining compliance.

But also from a cloud perspective, platforms such as Microsoft Azure have a range of simple and transparent pricing options such as Pay-As-You-Go subscriptions, which means there are no minimum purchases or commitments and you can cancel anytime.

If you need more capacity to manage the influx of orders during peak holiday seasons, then you simply increase capacity at the touch of a button, and then reduce it back down once demand decreases.

Total hardware and software consolidation, without the risk or the cost.

5 You gain a competitive advantage

Being able to predict and visually identify customer buying signals earlier in their purchase decision making process, increases your chances of closing the sale before the competition ever catch whiff there was an opportunity in the first place.

An additional carrot for travel and transport organisations to use technologies such as SQL and Microsoft Azure to connect the customer story and to develop compelling and differentiated customer experiences, is that other organisations are investing the majority of their time in analysis (36%) and only 13% of those are using data analytics to predict outcomes[2].

But this goes way beyond single deals and initiatives; greater insight can support how entire business strategies are formed, and allow you to make smarter decisions, to improve customer service, and uncover new business opportunities from your data.

Right now, only 16% of organisations use their analytics applications to optimise processes and strategies[3].

Smarter organisations use business intelligence tools to build and shape insight from their data.

Data driven companies lead, they don't follow

Travel and Transport companies that invest in and successfully derive value from their data will have a distinct advantage over the competition — a performance gap that will continue to grow as more relevant data is generated, and the technologies that enable faster, easier data analysis evolve alongside.

With the emergence of cloud platforms and applications such as Microsoft Azure and SQL Server the ability to capture and store vast amounts of data has grown at an unprecedented rate, in step with the technical capacity to aggregate and analyse these disparate volumes of information.

One small step for man, one giant leap for the evolution of data analysis.

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