

DRIVING CUSTOMER LOYALTY WITH DATA WAREHOUSE OPTIMIZED FOR ANALYTICS AND REAL-TIME INSIGHTS

IMPACT

- Helping restaurants and retailers prevent customer churn with predictive and prescriptive analytics
- Delivering aggregated insights to help customers measure their own success
- Supporting 175,000 smg360 users with 400,000 web and mobile sessions daily
- Reducing the total cost of ownership by 2.5X

Service Management Group (SMG) offers an easy-to-use experience management (XM) platform that helps brands get smarter about their customers. The XM platform, smg360, helps customers drive changes that boost customer loyalty and improve business outcomes. SMG partners with nearly 500 brands across the restaurant, retail, and healthcare industries.

A growing customer footprint

SMG's business runs on delivering data-driven reports and insightful dashboards that are unmatched by the competition. Organizations can customize reports, dissect data and create role-based reports in real-time. As SMG advanced its platform, the scale, variety, and type of data and workloads exposed its data infrastructure limitations. SMG has seen exponential growth in the volume of data it analyzes and expects that growth to continue for the foreseeable future.

In a world where consumers frequently jump from one device to the next, it became essential for smg360 to be a truly omnichannel platform, with the ability to capture data from devices, websites, apps, and more, and requiring a platform that could handle a growing variety of data sources and types.

"When you start adding transaction data and other data sources, that data footprint explodes, which exponentially increases your costs," said SMG VP of Architecture Chris Atkinson.

Beyond the legacy data warehouse and into the cloud

The cost of scaling SMG's legacy data warehouse was prohibitive and as such, the business wanted to leverage public cloud services to support future growth and product development. Therefore, it needed a cloud-agnostic platform that could easily and cost-effectively collect and process 10X more data and grow beyond it, if required.

Furthermore, SMG knew the future of its business services lay in insights uncovered via advanced data science and AI algorithms, requiring a platform that could seamlessly enable the use of those tools. Taking all of this into account, SMG migrated from its legacy vendor to the Cloudera Data Warehouse (CDW). With the flexibility to scale on demand and pay on consumption, SMG was able to keep expenditures low and reduce the total cost of ownership (TCO) by 2.5X.

"Running in the cloud gives us the flexibility to scale up as needed. So during the normal course of business it is a smaller environment with fewer nodes. Then, if and when we need to, we can scale the environment dynamically," said SMG Data Architect Kyle Travis.

A committed partner

Any critical and large-scale system transition requires substantial time, effort, and numerous iterations. As this is a critical business system for SMG, caution needed to be taken to ensure that there was no disruption to the business during the transition. The close partnership and openness on both sides regarding the requirements and Cloudera's ability to address them, played a critical role in the success of this transition plan. This included a close partnership with Oalva, SMG's Hadoop technology service provider and a proud partner and reseller of Cloudera solutions. Oalva brought years of big data, data warehouse and Hadoop expertise to the table. They advised SMG on best practices based on their experience with many Hadoop implementations across a variety of disciplines.

2.5X

Reduction in TCO

“From the beginning, we understood that our use case was not an internal data project, it was a project in direct service to our customers, fueling the dashboards they rely on. Cloudera Data Warehouse is critical to keeping our business running.”

Chris Atkinson, VP of Architecture, SMG

Working together, they were able to complete this transition with minimal customer impact.

Another key ingredient of the successful transition was Cloudera’s unique Premier Support offering. With predictive and proactive support, the team was able to surface and solve potential issues before they occurred.

“The key piece in all of this has been every time we ask for help, Cloudera has been committed and unwavering in their support,” added Atkinson.

Predicting and preventing customer churn with data science

In its legacy environment, SMG data scientists had to extract data before they could run machine learning (ML) algorithms. With Cloudera Data Warehouse, SMG is able to unleash a host of data science functions, most notably prescriptive analytics, as the data ingested can be simultaneously used for ad-hoc analytics as well as AI/ML workloads. Now that the data is available in an easily consumable form, SMG can unlock its value with data science, and new use cases are regularly being identified and developed.

One use case currently in flight is customer churn prevention. SMG can now evaluate behavioral data, transaction data, and survey data, to predict how likely a customer is to churn. With a sharper understanding of the customer journey, SMG can quantify the impact of losing a customer and provide recommended actions for retention and to improve loyalty. These predictive insights provide valuable benefits to SMG’s customers and allow them to take action before they lose customers and revenue.

A new platform with new features

This enhanced smg360 reporting platform, which supports 175,000 users with 400,000 web and mobile sessions daily, enables SMG’s customers to see all of their brand metrics on a single dashboard. The platform provides real-time ad-hoc analytics on customer experience feedback and equip customers with democratized analytics and actionable insights.

“Our new environment allows us to provide some multi-source analytics that we weren’t able to provide before, so that is a tangible customer experience realization,” said Atkinson.

With fast, multi-source analytics, smg360 is helping brands better understand and serve customers through new applications and visualizations. One new feature is tracking history for case management and guest recovery.

“Imagine you go to a restaurant and you have a bad experience. We have alerting and case mechanisms to notify the brand that someone needs to reach out and contact you to resolve that as soon as possible and ensure you have a good recovery experience,” said Atkinson.

SMG uses natural language processing to interpret and categorize open-ended feedback, store and structure it, and turn it into aggregated insights. With those insights readily available across a variety of categories, such as the speed of service or quality of merchandise, SMG surfaces industry trends and benchmarks so its clients can see how they stack up to the competition.

Building a future-forward platform

SMG’s platform needs to be flexible and powerful enough to cater to the most advanced programs and user needs. Some smg360 power users may need to run 30-60 concurrent queries at any given time.

About Cloudera

At Cloudera, we believe that data can make what is impossible today, possible tomorrow. We empower people to transform complex data into clear and actionable insights. Cloudera delivers an enterprise data cloud for any data, anywhere, from the Edge to AI. Powered by the relentless innovation of the open source community, Cloudera advances digital transformation for the world's largest enterprises.
Learn more at cloudera.com

"We are in a position where the only way for us to support that type of skill is to separate storage from compute and scale-out with a cloud-based solution. We wouldn't be able to buy and support enough on-prem infrastructure to support that many ad hoc users," said Travis.

Looking to the future, SMG is building out its platform to continue to capitalize on the latest technological advancements.

"We are excited about the possibilities with Cloudera's Data Platform (CDP). Having the capability to expand our environments up and down depending upon the workload at any given point of the day will be essential for us in the future," said Marty Williams, SMG Chief Information Officer.