



Analytics8

Case Study

Goodstart Early Learning

Goodstart learns from Analytics8

Goodstart Early Learning was formed as a unique not-for-profit social enterprise to operate more than 650 former ABC Learning centres Australia-wide. Critical to its success was finding the right expertise to deliver a fit-for-purpose integrated business intelligence (BI) system solution to govern the organisation's complex information requirements.

Great aspirations

From a standing start, Goodstart Early Learning BI project manager Nick Robinson has travelled the journey of business intelligence maturity to arrive at a data warehousing (DW) solution he describes, favourably, as, "almost unheard of, really.

"We had fairly lofty goals and we've been able to achieve, in essence, an infinitely scalable data warehouse, and managing it just doesn't get harder as it gets bigger.

"We really couldn't have done it with any of the other approaches we'd been listening to, not in a way that was sustainable and scalable.

"In conversations [with solutions vendors], people were promising us a 40-day-turnaround data warehouse, but with any other approach ... at the end of it, we'd have had a set of data rather than a solution."

Getting to this point, Robinson explains hasn't come without learning pain, but he says, "I think if we hadn't had the Analytics8 framework, we probably would have got to a worse outcome, sooner."

"For me," he says, "the [Analytics8] ETL Framework has become centre-stage in delivering that design."

Restarting at scale

Winding back, Robinson explains, "In establishing Goodstart, the company had

"We had fairly lofty goals and we've been able to achieve, an infinitely scalable data warehouse."

been through the transition from a large publicly listed organisation, ABC Learning Centres, through administration, and effectively started operating a start-up organisation with scale.

"When I started at ABC, the organisation was very siloed, and didn't have much in the way of organisation-wide data governance or data management.

In rebuilding, "Our mandate to build a data warehouse was driven as due diligence in the acquisition of the company, and around data quality and governance."

It appeared to be a steep climb.

"At the time, there was very little organisational cross-silo analysis and although two people might start with the same source of information, it was always very difficult to ensure their reports' numbers were comparable when they ended up in front of the executive committee or the board.

"More broadly, we couldn't even contemplate balanced reporting in integrating customer satisfaction or the measurement of incidents, and it was difficult to build insights to understand how these moved in relation to attendances or the provision of labour and salaries.

"That meant it was very difficult for stakeholders to make timely decisions."

Seeing a bigger picture

Early in the project, however, Goodstart made slow progress, and Robinson says, "I wasn't aware enough of the requirements from an internal project management perspective, and what [Analytics8 lead consultant] Roelant Vos brought was the expertise to implement an ETL framework.

"We had guys who could build ETL packages, but ... we'd tried to build individual packages as self-standing

Client profile

Early learning provider ABC Learning Centres went into voluntary liquidation in 2008 and was bought by GoodStart Childcare in December 2009. Its owners are The Benevolent Society, Mission Australia, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Social Ventures Australia. Its focus is on the importance of a child's first five years and its vision is for Australia's children to have the best possible start in life.

The challenge

With an extensive network of child-care facilities and no single reliable source of data, Goodstart needed to implement a system that would allow it to monitor its business's health and provide effective BI reporting facilities to its managers around Australia.

Benefits

Goodstart Early Learning now has:

- The ability to profile to the hour attendance of children at its centres
- Accurate reporting on finances
- Highly functioning data warehouse and reporting processes
- Steadily increasing BI maturity

Technologies

- Microsoft SQL Server
- Microsoft SSIS
- Oracle BI





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elements without understanding how they fitted into the bigger picture – and we didn't have a bigger picture.

“When Roelant became heavily involved, it really was a quick turnaround, and a very comforting one.”

An answer for every question

Robinson says imposing Analytics8's ETL Framework on the Goodstart warehouse design has delivered significant benefits.

“We had data modelling in place, but were struggling because even though we had the framework on paper, we didn't understand it, but once we had a handle on it, we were suddenly able to see how it made sense.

“We have a reasonable amount of scale, and we operate with enterprise-level financial systems in Oracle, Peoplesoft and so on, so we've really tested the framework in the real world.

“It is a logical way of managing everything and it deals with issues that every data warehouse and ETL faces.

“Suddenly, we could understand the relationship between all the different bits, adding in new data sources, changing attributes.”

It's all in the handbook

“You've suddenly got a manual for all the components of the warehouse, and we've realised that this dealt with all the issues we'd had in other areas.

“Once you apply the framework as it was intended, all those issues went away.

“In some ways, it idiot-proofs data warehouse management, as we're not the ones making design decisions, because how to develop a best-practice solution is contained in the framework.

“I've yet to find a situation really, particularly with the staging and integration layer, even presentation, where you can't find something that

covers what you are trying to do.

“So now, at the end of our process we can fairly comfortably say that there are very few things that happen in a data warehouse that we haven't seen.”

Growth without cost

For Goodstart, Robinson says, “The absolute benefit is being able to have a data warehouse of scale

“We have the ability to actually build a data warehouse where you can continuously add new subject areas ... without the grind of having to maintain the database as it gets bigger.

“We are not losing our ability to manage it or maintain it, nor oversight of the whole framework as we continue to add, so we truly get to build a real enterprise data warehouse; it's frictionless evolution.”

Observe the change

As for unexpected benefits, Robinson says, “Probably the most surprising was the visibility we got over our own internal data generation.

“It started to give us a picture not only of the analytics in reporting, but understanding what our information was, how often it was changing. I don't think that was factored in.

“One of only two major things I would love to have known when we started is that the true value of the data warehouse for me is actually in the modelling.

“I would have focused on that more in the early stages, and I would have made use more of someone's expertise in delivery.

“It's a classic mistake and learning that everyone should make and doesn't ... we didn't let go of the reins enough to benefit in the early stages from external guidance.”

“What we have now is a program implementation of business intelligence where we can own it and govern it effectively, in perpetuity.”

About Analytics8

Analytics8 is a Business Intelligence (BI) and Data Warehouse (DW) enablement and optimisation consulting firm with over 85 consultants in Australia and the United States. Analytics8 provides consulting services covering the end-to-end BI life cycle, from strategy to design, development, implementation, support, and training.

Though we are experts with many tools and technologies, we never lose sight of the business reasons for implementing technology.

Let us show you how to make the most of your data.

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