

DATA ANALYTICS

CUSTOMER STORY

Mercer's clients given data analytics capability

Qlik Replicate enables live transfer of client database



CUSTOMER STORY

“Qlik Replicate gave us flexibility we never had before. We now easily meet our client’s data access requests in real time.”

David Stratton, Senior Business Analyst, Mercer

Dramatic shift in client data demand

Mercer partners with Australia’s leading superannuation funds and employers to deliver superannuation products and services for their members and their workforce. In Australia, the company is an important player in this highly regulated sector. In addition to being a super fund themselves, Mercer delivers a wide range of services for superannuation trustee clients including administration, regulatory, consulting, customer, financial advice, investment, and governance services. Five years ago, Mercer undertook a digital transformation program for its business.

The transformation was prompted by Mercer’s understanding that today’s organizations were increasingly challenged to tackle some key 21st century issues. Delivering on complex service-level agreements (SLAs), speed of delivery and speed of responsiveness were critical measurements. While simplicity and user-friendly interactions were paramount, attention to cost must not be overlooked.

The catalyst for the company’s digital vision came in late 2018 on receiving its first ever request from a client for live delivery of their database. Fund clients requesting real-time data to conduct their own analytics, was a brand-new requirement. The growing availability of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) was enabling organizations to better target their sales and marketing campaigns. It also was adding a strong dimension to their capacity to improve their customer’s experience.

Solution Overview

Customer Name

Mercer Australia

Industry

Financial Services

Geography

Australia

Function

IT

Business Value Driver

Reimagined Processes, Digital transformation

Challenges

- First ever client demand for live database transfer
- Had to identify and deploy new technology solution
- Need to satisfy variety of complex client SLAs

Solution

Qlik Replicate enables real-time transfer of client data on request.

Results

- Super fund clients receiving data transfer on request
- A proven tool in data replication upon which Mercer can rely
- Achieving fast, reliable, and secure data transfer for entire Mercer organization

Data tsunami driving digital transformation

The appeal of the AI and ML phenomenon was fast becoming a reality as every industry was facing the drive for digital transformation and expecting more “smarts” from the increasing tsunami of data they were creating.

David Stratton, Mercer’s Senior Business Analyst recalls: “Our super funds clients wanted to replicate the data we held for them to an external SQL server so that they could stream that data from their premises to another provider that would handle the analytics task.

“At that time, we didn’t have the technology in-house to deliver that. We were dealing with around 130 tables, and those would have been required to change, delete, or update scripts. You can imagine the volume of code needed to handle 400 scripts live. That was what the original premise was going to be.”

Stratton spent considerable time in December 2018 exploring the marketplace and testing various solutions. “When I tested Qlik Replicate, which was in the process of being acquired by Qlik, I found it did what I wanted it to do. I can still remember vividly the first time we connected the Qlik Replicate solution. Several of us were obviously apprehensive about pushing a button and possibly bringing down our production system. So, we just copied one small table and it disappeared in a matter of seconds from source to target.” Stratton repeated the process several times and he and his colleagues were delighted by the sight of “tables just zipping across from one place to another.”

“Replicate was up and running and delivering value and meeting the real-time data SLAs within just 8 weeks of proof of concept. The cost savings we achieved at Mercer versus what we would have needed to spend writing manual code to extract, and the data alone, delivered an ROI in the solution within 9 months. Without Qlik Replication’s automation, the solution would probably have taken 12 months to deliver, and real-time data pipeline delivery to clients would probably have remained a challenge,” Stratton said.

Although Mercer handled the installation in-house, the company received help from Australian software solutions and services provider, Integrated Business Technologies (IBT). Stratton says: “IBT gave a lot of advice regarding troubleshooting and continue to provide ongoing support. They made sure that we were able to go forward and deliver what we wanted.”

The solution’s internal deployment expanded rapidly, and by the start of 2020, Mercer had federated eight databases onto one server to handle reporting across all its databases at the same time.

Delivering new wave of flexibility

He adds: “Qlik Replicate gave us flexibility we never had before. It allows us to move data between the sites in a live way. We are using Qlik Replicate to move data between three different locations, Sydney, Melbourne, and Wollongong. We’re delivering CRM via Melbourne, but the databases are in Wollongong.”

Mercer is copying all its data onto a reporting server on which it hosts the Mercer Enterprise Data Lake (EDL). “Instead of a 1-2 day lag in data availability for reporting, we now have real-time reporting. This is a critical business benefit; our customers can use live reports at any time of the day to make sure we’re delivering in line with the SLA expectations.”

Stratton emphasises: “We have a lot of flexibility now with our EDL, plus speed and the capability to react very quickly. If we need to move data from one place to another, we just use Qlik Replicate to quickly move it across, instead of writing various code solutions that would have taken unnecessary time,” says Stratton.

Today the Qlik Replicate technology has become a wider Mercer solution. It has been expanded from the Wollongong office to both Sydney and Melbourne, where the live copy of the database gives various departments an opportunity to conduct their own internal analytics.

“We had a conversation up-front with our client base and explained why and how we were delivering the data. With seven terabytes of data on tap, we are, in a way, the engine room of our client’s business. Our clients are across our digital transformation and very happy with what we are achieving with Qlik Replicate,” commented Stratton.

The superannuation sector has undergone many changes in the past five years and experts believe that this phenomenon is not going to change in the foreseeable future. Looking ahead, Stratton says: “The operating costs of funds will only increase, and many of the smaller funds won’t want to be carrying the cost of huge databases and the technology tools to handle the expected volumes of business. This is where Mercer can add value. Our clients can see how well we are meeting the SLAs with Qlik Replicate which moves their data easily, securely and efficiently with minimal operational impact. Our team loves the fact that it is intuitive, and it just works.”

The keys to success



8 weeks

POC in meeting
real-time SLAs



0

breaches of
client SLAs

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David Stratton, Senior Business Analyst, Mercer



About Qlik

Qlik's vision is a data-literate world, where everyone can use data and analytics to improve decision-making and solve their most challenging problems. Qlik provides an end-to-end, real-time data integration and analytics cloud platform to close the gaps between data, insights and action. By transforming data into active intelligence, businesses can drive better decisions, improve revenue and profitability, and optimize customer relationships. Qlik does business in more than 100 countries and serves over 50,000 customers around the world.

qlik.com



About IBT

Integrated Business Technologies (IBT), founded in 1997, is an Australian Elite Qlik Data Integration and Management (QDI) Partner and Tier 1 ERP solutions provider. Since 2014, IBT has built Australia's most experienced QDI (formerly Attunity) practice with the largest team and customer base nation-wide. The QDI platform enables IBT customers to be analytics ready in a flash – facilitating, in just a few clicks, automation of real-time data pipelines to data warehouses, data lakes or streaming platforms.

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