



Simplyhealth

WhereScape automation speeds up data-driven decision making for optimum business health

Industry: Healthcare

Location: Andover, UK

Employees: More than 400

Solutions: WhereScape® RED, WhereScape® 3D, Oracle

Highlights:

- Enabled BI team to reduce headcount from ten to four, yet efficiency increased
- Refresh times reduced from eight hours to one
- Solution developed by one person in four weeks. This is compared to an entire team taking 18 months previously
- Average change now takes just minutes, compared to four to seven hours previously

“I would recommend WhereScape to anyone. For the first time, the business has documentation on our data warehouse and I have a lean, agile IT team working at maximum efficiency to serve our ever-developing business requirements!”

– Carl Richards

Business Intelligence Development Manager, Simplyhealth.



The Challenge: Increase team productivity

With over three million customers and 145 years' experience, Simplyhealth supports people with their everyday health through cash plans, dental payment and pet health plans. Its roots are in the hospital funds set up in the Victorian era to help working people save for their medical care. With no shareholders, it exists solely to serving its customers and supporting charitable causes.

Carl Richards is Business Intelligence Development Manager at Simplyhealth. He looks after a small team of Business Intelligence (BI) developers whose role is to develop data marts that provides Simplyhealth's business users with data 'self service.' Using Tableau as a data visualization tool and Microsoft SQL Server Reporting services for paginated style reports, self-service users can access specific information such as claims history, benefit entitlements and information on making a new claim.

However, Carl was looking to redeploy six out of the ten members of his team to work on more strategic projects elsewhere in the business, while still producing and even extending Simplyhealth's BI estate. He needed a new technology solution that would help him achieve such efficiencies from streamlining, without any risk of a lesser service.



In need of a new technology solution.

One of the challenges Carl had was the inherent inefficiency with the previous technology system. Using a number of PL/SQL procedures that were used to extract, transform and load data from existing operational systems – a mixture of SQL Server and Oracle on an Oracle database – was proving hugely time consuming, not to mention complex. The depth of complexity was such that only the developer

involved could support and maintain these projects, making it difficult for Carl to have other team members step in and pick up where one had left off.

In addition, Simplyhealth wanted to explore the option of reporting over specified periods of time to draw comparisons between current and historical time periods. Using the previous system, the process simply truncated the database and repopulated itself every time Carl's team refreshed, which at the time was once per week. Making comparisons with previous time periods – an important element of business reporting – was not possible.



Exploring options of reporting.

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The Solution: Data warehouse automation

Carl embarked upon an extensive vendor evaluation process, looking at all major players in the BI field. With most vendors focusing on the transformation element, only WhereScape could automate from data source to data warehouse, and this sealed Simplyhealth's decision. Explained Carl: "Another reason for feeling so comfortable with the WhereScape solution was the fact that it is a code generator and we were therefore able to read and understand the code that was being created, decreasing reliance on any one individual and instead meaning the whole team could support any single process developed."

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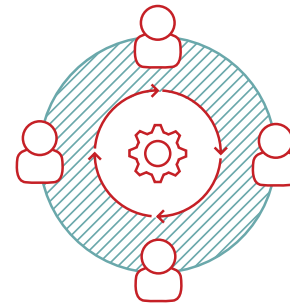
Simplyhealth chose WhereScape 3D to test designs and show prototypes to business users using real data before the data warehouse was built, saving the time and money that could have been lost from miscommunication or misunderstanding. WhereScape 3D also enabled Simplyhealth's developers to give a definitive answer on how long a build will take, which is almost impossible with hand coding. They then used WhereScape RED to automate the build, management and operation of data marts based on the approved designs. All of this meant shorter, iterative steps with closer communication between IT and the business.



Benefits

Since implementing the WhereScape data warehouse automation solution, Simplyhealth has been successful in running an efficient BI team with a reduced headcount of four. So successful, in fact, that rather than experiencing any setbacks, the service has reported fewer issues than ever before and can now process its refreshes on a daily basis, with refresh times reduced from eight hours to only one.

"We couldn't be happier," reported Carl. "The results in efficiency alone have been worth the investment several times over! Refresh times are now happening 87.5% faster, the solution only took one developer four weeks to set up, as opposed to an entire team taking 18 months previously and an average change now only taking minutes, as opposed to anything from four to seven hours previously!"



A more efficient workforce.

"My reduced team of four is able to maintain and support all projects as all the code is developed within the WhereScape solution, leaving other team members free to work on other projects elsewhere in the business,"

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Future

As a business built on data, Simplyhealth has always required access to as much data as possible, and is now looking at other areas that could benefit from the efficiencies of the WhereScape solution. Many of these were previously impossible due to the limitations of the system and, in addition, the lack of time available on Carl's team to look at other projects that could benefit from data-driven insight. Now, using WhereScape, the firm has been able to move the business forward by delivering them the data they want.

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About WhereScape

WhereScape helps IT organizations of all sizes leverage automation to design, develop, deploy, and operate data infrastructure faster. More than 700 customers worldwide rely on WhereScape automation to eliminate hand-coding and other repetitive, time intensive aspects of data infrastructure projects to deliver data warehouses, vaults, lakes and marts in days or weeks rather than in months or years. WhereScape has global operations in the USA, UK, Singapore and New Zealand.