

# Laying the foundations for high-quality Business Intelligence reporting at DAS



To give its decision-makers greater insights, leading legal expenses insurance company DAS wanted to enhance its Business Intelligence capability. It brought in digital transformation specialist Civica to lay the technology groundwork and help build a best-of-breed team of BI experts.

Information is at the heart of every business: it's a crucial asset that can deliver valuable insights into customers, products, markets and more. This in turn enables companies to make better decisions, which can ultimately lead to improved services, happier customers and increased profits.

Business Intelligence (BI) is the art of turning raw data into these insights, and is something every organisation can benefit from.

## Better Business Intelligence

DAS, the UK's leading legal expenses insurance company, felt it could operate more effectively by improving this area of its business. The high-level goals for the improved BI capability were

## Benefits

- ▶ Drawing up technology recommendations, based on the specific needs of DAS
- ▶ Modelling and building a proof of concept Data Warehouse, using the recommended technology
- ▶ Setting up the Extract, Transform, Load (ETL) tools.

to bring together data from different areas of the business to create a single view of the truth in a carefully structured Data Warehouse. This would enable sophisticated and in-depth reporting to help all levels and departments across DAS, for example with product development.

And to be able to rely on the accuracy of the information, the project also needed to implement various Data Quality improvements. These would ensure the new reports, which the warehouse would enable, could be relied upon fully. To achieve this, DAS required a partner that could lay the foundations for its improved BI capability and help it build and upskill an in-house team that would then develop these foundations and deliver real value to all levels of the business.



Providing a range of skilled Business Intelligence staff



Loading real data into the warehouse



Recruiting and upskilling an in-house team

"Civica was an impressive and knowledgeable partner that enabled us to kick-start our BI capability. What was particularly impressive was the way they came in to work with us at the very beginning of our journey and helped us take great strides, following best practice."

Joey Withers, Technical Data Warehouse Manager, DAS

## Technology appraisal

Before selecting a delivery partner, DAS appointed Civica, an IT services company with a proven track record in Business Intelligence, to carry out a technology assessment. Its goal was to understand what tools and technologies were most appropriate for DAS, based on the company's requirements and existing setup. This covered the full spectrum of Business Intelligence technology, including Data Integration, Data Quality, the Data Warehouse, database server and reporting tools.

Following a thorough assessment, Civica proposed Microsoft SQL Server at the core, with SQL Server Integration Services (SSIS) and IBM Cognos for the reports. DAS accepted these recommendations, using them to go to tender to select an appropriate partner to deliver the foundations of its enhanced BI capability, in line with BI best practice.

## Full BI project delivery team

Civica successfully bid for the contract and quickly worked with DAS to put together a project delivery team, made up of specialist Civica BI developers, an experienced Civica BI architect and a skilled Civica business analyst to oversee the project and manage relations with DAS stakeholders. Alongside the Civica staff was a team of DAS developers, and the firm's Management Information team.

## Achieving buy-in

All successful projects require buy-in from the organisation, and the role of the business analyst in achieving this is crucial. Civica's business analyst worked closely with stakeholders across DAS, from the board of directors through to the operational staff, ensuring they understood the aims of the project and benefits it would deliver, and that the project team was aware of the business requirements.

## Proof of concept

In parallel with the important stakeholder engagement work, the team designed and built a proof of concept Data Warehouse, which was to form the foundation of future BI work and showcase the possibilities to stakeholders across DAS. With just three months to deliver, the team rapidly rolled out a Kimball-modelled Data Warehouse and set up the accompanying Extract, Transform, Load (ETL) tools, using Civica's ETL framework, tailored for the client's needs. Civica also used its established testing frameworks to speed up delivery while maintaining high levels of quality. Civica then successfully loaded a set of real DAS data into the warehouse to verify that everything was working as it should. This completed a solid set of BI foundations for DAS to build upon.

*"Civica's staff were all a huge help and very patient: some of our developers had never used the tools before, but by working alongside Civica, they've picked things up really quickly. This meant I didn't need to send them on external training courses, which has definitely saved us money."*

**Joey Withers**, Technical Data Warehouse Manager, DAS

## Creating and upskilling a team

To be able to take the next steps, however, would require DAS to have a skilled inhouse team. Its desire for self-sufficiency was one of the key reasons it had sought a trusted BI partner, rather than simply hiring individual contractors.

Part of Civica's role, therefore, was to train and upskill DAS developers while the combined team built the Data Warehouse. Civica ran a number of its BI training courses for DAS staff, to complement the experience and best practice they learned by developing the Data Warehouse alongside Civica's team.

Moreover, while a senior Civica BI architect initially led the technical side of the project, it was always the goal of DAS to bring on an in-house technical lead. To help it get the right person, Civica played an important part in the recruitment process, running interviews and technical capability tests, before overseeing a comprehensive handover and knowledge transfer to the successful applicant.

Joey Withers, DAS Technical Data Warehouse Manager, was impressed by Civica's approach to knowledge transfer and upskilling. She explains: "We've got three junior developers in the team, and they needed someone to mentor them. Civica's staff were all a huge help and very patient: some of our developers had never used the tools before, but by working alongside Civica, they've picked things up really quickly. This meant I didn't need to send them on external training courses, which has definitely saved us money."