Scotland Excel drives sustainable public services with better data insights

CUSTOMER
Scotland Excel

LOCATION
Paisley, Scotland

INDUSTRY
Public Sector

Scotland Excel needed to deliver improved contract performance and procurement management information to improve accuracy and lower costs.

Challenge

- Improve contract performance and lower costs through detailed information about procurement spending

- Modernize manual, time-consuming processes to capture and aggregate data and reduce errors and omissions in the data analyses

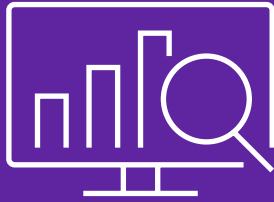- Transition the dedicated data team to focus on value-added activities

Solution

- Provided discovery and advisory services to capture business requirements and priorities and to map legacy data processes and data entities

- Delivered high-level concept to provide longer-term vision for a modern, end-to-end business intelligence (BI) platform using Microsoft Azure SQL database and Data Factory

- Designed and implemented automated data flows and data process audit functionality, transferring knowledge to Scotland Excel to manage and maintain after implementation

Results

- Created a scalable platform that aggregates and analyzes all procurement-related data with repeatable and consistent results in seconds rather than days or weeks

- Improved the visibility of contract performance, leading to better management of contracts and suppliers by establishing a foundation to support exponential growth and ensure scalability for volume of suppliers, contracts and data without adding resources

- Produced more insightful information to procurement contract managers and enabled users and member groups to access self-service Power BI reports, which are refreshed hourly

Scotland Excel drives innovative public services with better data insights

Scotland Excel provides innovative, transformative procurement services for local and national public services across Scotland, but to do that quickly and efficiently, the organization needs reliable data analytics.
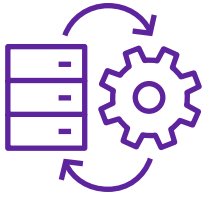
Scotland Excel's strategic procurement expertise and experience supports the development of collaborative solutions that result in better outcomes for Scotland's people and communities through early intervention and the delivery of sustainable public services.

The organization's services are underpinned by the ability to harness the full potential of digital technology and data insights using its Procurement Management Information platform. This platform has allowed Scotland Excel to take a step closer to its aspiration of becoming a data-driven enterprise that can provide more insightful information to procurement contract managers throughout Scotland.

Defining the business requirement

DXC Technology provides data analytics advisory services to Scotland Excel to help the Procurement Management Information platform capture details of the business, process and technical requirements for business intelligence. DXC's consulting support helped highlight that:

- The executive management team needed more timely and accurate analysis to support strategy development and decision making.

- Member groups and category managers needed a more detailed, item-level analysis to assess contract performance of various suppliers.

- Requirements for providing data needed to be less onerous for suppliers.

- The burden of validating and correcting data needed to be reduced for procurement professionals.

Working collaboratively with Scotland Excel's technical team, DXC delivered the engine that automates the data ingestion and transformation, providing repeatable and consistent results in seconds rather than days or weeks.

Digital data transformation

The first phase of the development of the Procurement Management Information (MI) system focused on digitizing the capture, ingestion, cleansing and management of sales data collected from suppliers on a regular basis. This process was slow, prone to variation and restricted by the tools and skills available to the in-house data team. Working collaboratively with Scotland Excel's technical team, DXC delivered the engine that automates the data ingestion and transformation, providing repeatable and consistent results in seconds rather than days or weeks.

The data transformation process is now transparent and has passed from DXC to Scotland Excel's technical team to design and implement new automated data workflows.

Working in partnership

DXC and Scotland Excel worked closely in partnership on the detailed functional requirements of the system, using knowledge gained from an in-house developed proof of concept that allowed Scotland Excel to gain a deeper understanding of what the new system needed to deliver.

Scotland Excel also needed a flexible relationship with a trusted partner who would work in an agile way, divide the development into discrete phases, and prove to the business that the investment was delivering the desired result and aligned to Scotland Excel's resource availability.

"Most organizations are still data rich but information poor and should be working with partners to innovate in the data space, while investing in specialist in-house capabilities," says Stephen Brannagan, head of Customer and Business Services at Scotland Excel.

Maximizing value and minimizing risk

Decisions on the design of the solution were influenced by the need to reduce financial risk, leverage the existing skillsets of the Scotland Excel technical team and address key business priorities. The Microsoft Azure-based solution architecture was designed to deliver desired outcomes today, but also ensure a roadmap to deliver on Scotland Excel's future vision for analytics. The Agile development approach allowed DXC to deliver value to the business early and enabled Scotland Excel to define and refine the requirements for each development sprint.

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— **Stephen Brannagan**
Head of Customer and Business Services, Scotland Excel

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"A leap of faith is needed to invest in an MI solution, as it is difficult to guarantee a direct return on investment," Brannagan says. "It was important for Scotland Excel to have agreed break points for business review on progress and benefit at each stage before agreeing on the priorities for the next phase — and before committing budget and resources."

Data-driven outcomes

Data experts can now focus on business outcomes, understanding what questions need to be answered, interpreting the data to glean insights that inform what actions should be taken, and identifying any gaps in the data that need to be addressed.

Brannagan adds, "If we have data, we should be able to tell a story, not just facts or statements. We need to provide information that the users would not have known without the data and enable them to change the outcome."

Scotland Excel is now able to provide more timely and insightful information to procurement contract managers. This allows procurement professionals at Scotland Excel and its members groups to self-serve using a suite of Power BI

reports that are refreshed hourly as the data is updated.

Economic development teams are using the insights to inform programs to boost the Scottish economy and support local businesses.

Increasing visibility and scalability

The implementation of the system is allowing Scotland Excel to rapidly scale its MI capability, without adding any more people resources. The volume of data, the number of contracts and the complexity of the task have increased significantly. In fact, one contract has over 31 million different potential product configurations, which could not have been managed by manual data management processes.

The improved MI provides contract owners with better visibility over on-off contract spend at the product-item level, allowing them to work with suppliers and buyers to ensure that the contracts are delivering value. This is having a positive impact on completeness, quality and timeliness, as contract owners are seeing a direct benefit of starting the data collection process early in the contract.

"As a trusted partner, Scotland Excel expects that DXC will keep us up to date with leading-edge technologies and advise us on how and when the MI solution should evolve with our needs," Brannagan says.

The MI platform enables Scotland Excel to prove its value to Scotland's local authorities and confidently promote its contribution to closely managing the spending of public money with external suppliers. In turn, the level of compliance and transparency will encourage greater use of centrally managed contracts. Scotland Excel can now increase the volume of contracts and suppliers for common and repetitive spend categories, reducing the burden on an individual council's procurement organizations related to the tendering process and management of suppliers.

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