LYNCHPIN

Discovering new directions:
How we helped our latest travel client navigate the sudden market shift of 2020 and uncover new opportunities using data transformation, cloud-based automation, and BI.

Executive summary

• We designed, built, and handed over a cloud-based environment in Amazon Web Services (AWS) to automate the transformation of the client's data at an extremely low ongoing cost.

• We eliminated the need for time-consuming manual reporting processes by introducing Power BI dashboards that collated and showcased insights from across the business, helping to assess value and opportunities.

• We worked cross-functionally with the client's team to inspire a stronger data culture, fostering trust, advocacy, and engagement with analytics across the business.

Introduction

Following steady and sustained growth over the past 4 decades, our new client found themselves hitting something of a block in the road last year. As a B2C travel business, they were one of the many verticals hit hard by the precariousness of the pandemic.
Facing the introduction of new regulations, restrictions, and a consequent shake-up to the seasonal behavioural trends they typically rely on year-after-year, this roadblock brought on the necessity to understand the changing market and the ability to tap into the opportunities there.

The challenge

Sifting through the client's pre-existing data, our expertise allowed us to quickly spot an opportunity to capitalise on some existing data. A common circumstance - the client had an awareness that the organisation was data-rich - their limitations however was: a lack of process, valuable skills being thinly stretched internally, and investment being tight given the economic backdrop.

Upon inspection, it was clear that the client's systems produced text strings that intertwined behavioural information with characters and numbers that – for analytics purposes – muddied its value and introduced layers of noise that needed to be isolated. This 'noisiness' of the raw data made full-fledged investment into analytics seem like an arduous task for the client's team. As a result, valuable insights were simply slipping through their fingers day-by-day.

How we did it

Recognising the need for a solution that brings together key areas of the business, from marketing to digital to sales and commerce, we worked with the client's Head of

Digital, Head of Commercial, had branch and operational team engagement (with a 75% digital focus) to scope out a 3-week project that undertook: a full sweep, clean, and structuring of the client's data; the build of a custom Power BI dashboard; Data Engineering and Data Strategy-based support for the implementation of that work; plus, using our years of experience serving long-standing clients in the same industry, a range of dependable recommendations to improve their reporting processes, analytics set-up, and tracking to name just a few.

As 2020 began to draw in and streams of whitepapers, reports, and blogs addressing how to navigate in a new, radically changed market, our client had now found themselves sooner-equipped with the most relevant source of information of all: clean, structured, first-party data captured directly from their business's digital touchpoints.

By choosing to enable predictive analytics with our team early on in the year, the client was afforded the opportunity of a data-led, pre-emptive strategy that considered their customer's changing behaviours, their organisation specifically, and the new trends in travel that were emerging close to the business.
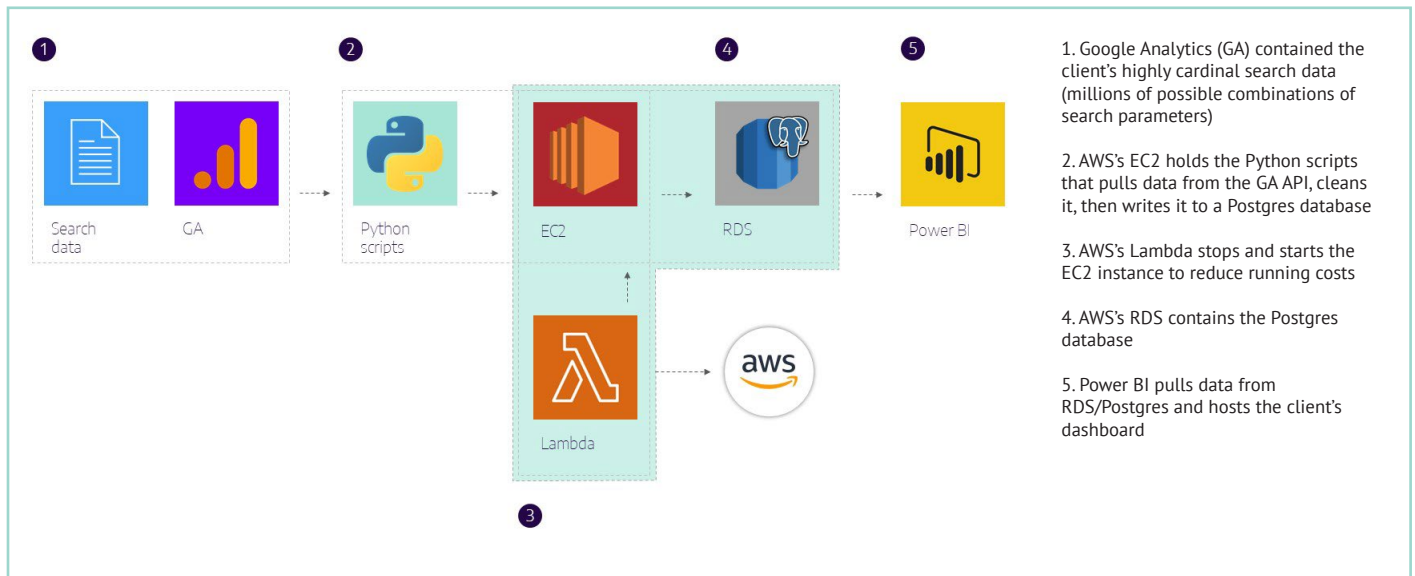
Our approach

After an evaluation of BI tools, we focused on Power BI due to the client's familiarity with the tool - We never leave clients with solutions they aren't equipped to begin using immediately or would struggle with in any way.
However, while easy to use, Power BI can be tricky to implement; There may be gateway issues, IT teams may have to get involved to grant permissions, and overall, set-up can be advanced due to the complex nature of Microsoft environments within large organisations. This is where our cross-functional engagement allowed our Engineering team to be on-hand to support the client's team, getting things up and running quickly, securely, and to a very tight deadline.

People are central to our process. We understand that part of investing in a bespoke product is the guarantee that you are brought along for the journey, your thoughts are encouraged, and compromises can be made if needed. So, throughout the design, build and implementation of our solutions, an iterative approach is undertaken to ensure that we are striving for better and that all stakeholders are happy.

So, naturally, following our first stakeholder review session, we had requests for additional metrics, additional views, etc. - As put by the client's Head of Digital, imaginations had been sparked throughout the team. We often find that our inclusive approach brings about trust and advocacy, fostering a higher level of engagement from client teams.

The technical solution

1. Google Analytics (GA) contained the client's highly cardinal search data (millions of possible combinations of search parameters)

2. AWS's EC2 holds the Python scripts that pulls data from the GA API, cleans it, then writes it to a Postgres database

3. AWS's Lambda stops and starts the EC2 instance to reduce running costs

4. AWS's RDS contains the Postgres database

5. Power BI pulls data from RDS/Postgres and hosts the client's dashboard

Key insights

Historically, the client's market relied heavily on seasonal norms and some textbook behaviour from a few key customer segments. However, as their new feed of analytics now was proving, in the wake of the 2020, the rules had been turned on its head. Older customers were suddenly seizing the day with big trips abroad, young people were tentatively searching for short getaways much further out into the future and the most popular destinations being searched for was anticipating as much as responding to changes in travel restrictions.

These trends – through the client's improved BI pipeline, new SQL databases, and from the removal of manual reporting processes – were now demonstrable and ready for the team to capitalise on each day.

Data points that specified: location, customer type, destination sought, route, search demand, etc., were coming together across the client's digital touchpoints to build a picture of a paradigm shift in consumer behaviour. These new insights were also helping to prove the performance and value of investment-starved channels and facilitate the analysis of complex customer journeys.

As noted by the client's Head of Digital "[the project] highlighted the potential to get more out of our data and has given us a case for more investment in analytics" "[our work with Lynchpin] unlocked our ability to demonstrate where the trends are and action them. It will also help us to better plan and optimise our campaigns moving forward".

Setting up for the future

Cut forward to 2021, the client is in the early stages of their analytics maturity journey. Their new stream of insights shattered preconceptions or any speculations that the team had about how they were going to tackle the turbulent year gone by and allowed them to take full control with planning and decision-making.

Keen to continue fostering a stronger data culture, the opportunities are truly endless with clean, structured data. This immediately enables a range of low-effort but high-impact opportunities like cross-selling, up-selling and responsive targeting.

And building on that deep-dive opportunities such as customer look-a-like modelling, automation, and data consolidation to enable trending, benchmarking, and forecasting; In a little over 12 months, the client's team has used analytics to totally transform their thinking in a new direction that is now in line with leading organisations all around the world.

Contact us

To discuss any of your data and analytics challenges, please reach out to a member of our team via:

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