

Marketing team automates data prep for faster insights

Dell uses a self-service data preparation solution to improve customer service and shorten the road from raw data to business insights.



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Scott Farley, Data Steward and Governance Admin for Global Reporting and Analytics in the Dell Global Marketing Center of Excellence

CUSTOMER PROFILE



Company	Dell
Industry	Hardware and software
Country	United States
Employees	5,000+
Website	www.dell.com

BUSINESS NEED

The Dell Global Marketing Center of Excellence needed tools that could seamlessly work on various database technologies, get marketing analysts closer to data, improve internal customer service and provide end users with rapid insights.

SOLUTION

The team implemented Toad Data Point to allow easier data access, automated querying and data transformation for a greater understanding of user metrics and expanded business insights.

BENEFITS

- Streamlined day-to-day tasks with automation and end-to-end data prep features
- Improved customer service with a future-ready internal business model
- Provided end users with rapid business insights.

SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE

- Business Intelligence and Big Data Analytics

The Dell Global Marketing Center of Excellence (COE) makes it easy for business users within Dell’s marketing groups to access standardized data and performance indicators residing on the company’s Teradata Data Lab and other data servers. The team uses advanced reporting and analytics capabilities to quickly turn data into insights that can help improve data quality, governance and performance using big data architecture.

By decentralizing analytics throughout different parts of the organization, Dell is empowering subject matter experts all over the company to make better, faster and more-informed business decisions. Using simple, cloud-enabled tools with GUI interfaces, it’s easy to perform full volume data analytics on multiple data sets and then create multifaceted views of business problems.

Scott Farley works as a data steward and governance admin for Global Reporting and Analytics in the Dell Global Marketing COE. His job is to manage the tools his team uses to analyze big data sets for Dell’s marketing group and also to support the end users who are most interested in the reports drawn from the company’s Teradata Data Lab and the Global Marketing COE’s Tableau® Server environment.

“The Teradata Data Lab is a sandbox environment for analysts — or anybody, really — to extract, explore, curate, integrate and merge large data sets,” Farley says. “Our team prepares all of this data for consumption using visualization tools that make it easy for business owners to identify trends and other insights.”

The Data Lab resides on Dell’s Teradata® Network but is partitioned from Dell’s main data warehouse. The Data Lab provides views into the warehouse and allows users to extract data or automatically refresh tabular data sourced from the warehouse or other locations without actually accessing the warehouse. The actual warehouse is strictly

governed with security safeguards and identity access management.

The Global Marketing COE oversees the data analytics process enabled with the Teradata Data Lab to ensure that data warehouse initiatives align with the Global Marketing team’s business objectives. Farley manages about 1.6 terabytes of capacity on the network. He supports Teradata Data Lab users in terms of access to data, data capacity requirements, usage adoption, space utilization and data space clean up. He also supports the end business users to troubleshoot data requests and helps track user metrics using Toad Data Point.

Tracking user metrics forms the core of his work because it’s what ultimately leads to new ideas and business insights that drive strategies across the marketing group. Before implementing Toad Data Point, Farley and his team had to put in a request with IT for specific data to be pulled from the main data warehouse. The team then had to manually build the analytics reports and prepare them for the marketing team. These reports were usually just static Excel charts and simple Tableau dashboards that still required a lot more analysis before insights could be gleaned.

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PRODUCTS & SERVICES

SOFTWARE

Toad Data Point

It was a cumbersome process, and as the amount of data on the server grew and internal demand for access to that data increased, it became clear that the Global Marketing COE needed tools that would streamline its day today tasks, boost its ability to deliver customer service to the business group and provide end users with faster access to business insights. IT responded with Teradata Labs, but that solution needed an access application to make it easy-to-use for the less technically savvy marketing users.

Toad Data Point was the obvious answer. Providing self-service data access, integration and preparation, Toad Data Point allows the Global Marketing COE to easily connect to and integrate relational and nonrelational data sources, simplify complex query development and data integration, profile data to ensure accuracy, automate routine query and reporting tasks, and validate data quickly and easily.

STREAMLINED DAY-TO-DAY TASKS

Toad Data Point provides an end-to-end data preparation solution. Farley and his teammates can easily retrieve data through Dell's Teradata Data Lab and other databases related to the global marketing team. The solution automates routine tasks to save hours each day and makes it simple to share analytics with users and improve data quality.

"Toad has really saved us time and freed up team resources," Farley says. "We have been able to reallocate precious resources to teams and users more closely tied to strategic objectives and revenue."

This productivity extends to the team's internal business customers as well. Too much time spent doing work not tied to revenue-enhancing tasks can result in productivity loss. Toad Data Point allows Farley and his team to track enduser metrics related to the company's large data stores.

"We can now spot problems with the platforms and the infrastructure because we can see when users are running jobs that are taking incredible amounts of time," Farley says. He and his team can review the capacity that a particular job uses and make suggestions to users for how to restructure their work to boost productivity.

IMPROVED CUSTOMER SERVICE

Another part of Farley's role is to work with end users to guide them on how to best use the Teradata Data Lab environment, which tools and capabilities will best meet their business needs, and how to best manage their data. Toad Data Point has helped the Global Marketing COE create a futureready internal business model that allows them to quickly respond to end user needs — from data and metrics requests to operations and performance advice.

Toad Data Point makes it easy to track metrics related to sourcing frequency, space utilization and other performance data for specific users. When an end user makes a request, Farley can run an automated query within a certain timeframe to collect all of the related data points from the Teradata Data Lab that this particular user has access to. Data might include specific times the data was accessed or how long an operation was carried out. If the user was executing a query, Farley can look at spool and skew as well because that can impact the overall performance of the Data Lab.

Once data is retrieved, Farley puts the results into a structured format so his team can build a visualization of the metrics, making it easy for the business team to review and understand the metrics.

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In addition to working with end users, the Center of Excellence management team uses the data generated with Toad Data Point to report back to the IT teams responsible for managing the global utilization of space in Teradata Data Labs.

FASTER ACCESS TO DATA

With Toad Data Point, connecting and accessing user data is much faster. There are fewer steps in the process, and connectivity performance is much more reliable than when using other technologies.

Toad offers a number of user interface features that make life easier, which in turn helps with delivering faster data insights for end users. For example, if Farley isn't an expert at writing a specific query, he can use the drag-and-drop query builder to pull data from the data destinations that he has access to. He can customize the query to pull data from specific data fields or attributes and then easily peer into the Data Labs to view the information in a table. This feature allows Farley and his team to provide information and insights to end users much more quickly.

"We can directly extract our data from the warehouse, which we couldn't do before," Farley says. "In the past, we had to ask somebody else to do that for us."

Thus, Toad Data Point helps to bridge the SQL skills gap between business analytics teams and IT. Farley especially likes the Explain Plan function because it makes query performance troubleshooting much easier. "If something isn't working, I can click on the Explain function, copy the result and share that with an expert on the IT team who might be able to help me solve the issues I'm having."

"You don't have to be a coder to do data extraction," Farley says. "A business person can become a data miner very quickly."

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