Case Study

Aperity’s Flexible Data Manager Platform Supports Seamless Google Cloud Migration for Beam Suntory

The Situation

Beam Suntory’s Commercial IT team is tasked with maintaining the company’s global commercial system architecture and data flow while serving as in-house consultants to support stakeholders’ analysis needs and internal projects. With a portfolio of products sold around the world including the iconic Jim Beam and Maker’s Mark bourbon brands, Suntory whisky Kakubin and Courvoisier cognac, as well as many other renowned brands, the team is well-versed in the challenges of data harmonization and transformations to support the reporting needs of key business stakeholders.

The team had historically been on the forefront of bucking the trend of using a black box third-party vendor for data collection. By partnering with Aperity, they were able to overcome the complexity of consuming and cleaning data from thousands of data sources in disparate formats. They recognized that the pure act of getting the data – its disjointed nature, the difficulty and lengthy process to obtain it, the manual ad hoc file loads – was not a good use of the team's time and resources. By using the Aperity Integrator platform, they were able to consistently deliver high quality and timely data from their supply chain partners.

They also wanted to take the level of access to the next level. The team is consistently looking for ways to improve tracking of data lineage and quality in support of Beam Suntory’s global “Seed to Sip” tracking – focusing on quality at every step of the process from the first mile to last mile, from grain to consumer. The desire to satisfy the needs of their internal customers was to expand the information about data lineage, data governance and data quality.

“...their collaboration every step of the way to help us determine the best way to design our new custom platform. Aperity’s key differentiator was the flexibility applied to cloud migration. The end result has transformed the way we deliver information throughout the organization, giving us greater transparency to brand performance and tremendous gains in efficiency.”

Nathan Polak
Commercial Data Solutions Engineer,
Beam Suntory

The Solution

The Commercial IT team turned to Aperity, a long-term partner who they considered an extended part of their internal business intelligence team, as a sounding board to brainstorm a new approach. They had worked with Aperity in the past to solve multiple data problems including automated data collections via the Aperity Data Integrator and role-based business analytics leveraging the Aperity Data Analyzer.

The Beam Suntory team already had explored keeping their data on-premise vs. migrating to cloud providers and had committed to Google Cloud Platform (GCP) and its suite of cloud computing services. They had invested in GCP already and considered it a strong platform for their data analytics workloads, so this selection was the logical choice.
With Aperity’s help, Beam Suntory migrated the Aperity-managed business intelligence servers to GCP for their North American operations including the U.S. and Mexico. By moving away from a traditional black box solution and allowing more direct query access within their database, they were able to significantly increase speed and responsiveness. Co-locating the data also brought cost benefits along with efficiency and effectiveness.

In addition, in the U.S. and Mexico, the Beam Suntory team implemented another infrastructure project, migrating their database from on-premise Netezza to GCP based Greenplum, an open-source data platform for analytics, machine learning and AI. Not just a system implementation but truly a multi-faceted platform implementation, they then leveraged the flexibility of Aperity’s model to interface with an existing front-end Business Intelligence platform, a leading CRM tool, and a new planning tool.

The Aperity Data Manager was implemented and provided a simple, easy, business-friendly method to track data lineage and quality while equipping commercial teams with actionable performance insights. Furthermore, the resulting platform was easy to scale when they were ready to expand and accommodated their increase in data requests. They were also able to templatize their approach to cloud migration for other regions beyond North America.

The Result

The successful GCP migration and Aperity Data Manager changed the way Beam Suntory’s Commercial IT team interacted with data, providing greater data accuracy, full data transparency and increased speed to insights. The Beam Suntory team was able to evolve its role from resolving tactical data issues to solving strategic business initiatives.

Today with less time spent on going back in to resolve data file issues, the team is able not just to support IT needs but provide in-house IT enhancements with deeper analysis and more value-added work. This includes more time understanding what problems key business stakeholders are trying to solve and then developing and implementing new solutions.

Recent examples include the development and implementation of a co-located data lake that allows the blending of multiple sources to create a dashboard of comprehensive U.S. depletion data, and the new ability to focus on daily invoice level data to provide insights into what distributors are actually selling in the marketplace. New for Beam Suntory and the industry, the focus on consumer sell-through data allows their sales team to understand consumer patterns and to create deeper connections with markets. By better understanding market perception and reception, what was working and what was not, as well as where and how the end consumer is purchasing and enjoying a "sip" of their brands, they are able to deliver improved data quality and actionable insights for the entire “Seed to Sip” continuum.