

Customer



DOLLAR SHAVE CLUB

The Challenge

How does a small e-commerce business with a good idea - and a great sense of humor - solve their data bottleneck and go up against leading retail giants to win?

The Solution

With Looker, DSC found they could pinpoint wins/losses, track customer data and email activity, so their bottleneck vanished almost overnight.

The Upshot

Using Looker to enable company-wide access data, they were able to offer customers a more intimate user experience, streamline processes and reduce costs.

Dollar Shave Club Gets an Edge with Looker

How an e-commerce upstart trimmed its data bottleneck

In early 2014, Dollar Shave Club, the company with the hilarious viral video that catapulted the ambitious startup into the spotlight, was shaking up the industry but missing key opportunities to learn from its data. Up against the established retail giants of men's grooming products, they needed all the help they could get to get a footing in the market.

The company was collecting loads of data about email promotions, the impact of changes to the Web site, volume of customer requests for help, and churn. But, using traditional BI tools, they weren't able to take advantage of that data. They struggled with the same bottleneck problem many companies encounter: Where only a few people can access the data, and everyone else has to wait to get their questions answered.



We found that we could add a lot more value to the organization if we gave Looker to everyone in our company.

Todd Lehr,
Sr. VP of Engineering,
Dollar Shave Club

All reports flow through Juan

“We have a developer named Juan and any reports we needed would flow through him,” said Todd Lehr, senior vice president of engineering at Dollar Shave Club. “If we needed insight into the way a new feature was functioning or insight into an email, it would go through Juan.”

“For reports that users might want to access on a recurring basis, Juan would spend about a week building a new report. Typically, he’d pull the data from a database and dump it into Excel. From there, a line-of-business person would do their best to interpret the data.”, Lehr said.

The Problem...?

“If we launched a new feature and Juan was busy working on something for another department, we’d have to wait a couple of days to validate that our feature was working,” he said.

Things were getting hairy, so Lehr started investigating ways to solve this bottleneck problem. He looked into products like the cloud BI offering from GoodData, but decided using those tools still required too much overhead. Todd explains, “To make certain changes, Dollar Shave Club would have had to continuously reach out to GoodData and wait for them to help.”

He also wanted a relatively easy setup to get started using a new data analytics product. “We didn’t have the resources to do complex ETL [extract, transform, load] at the time,” he said.

Most of the products he looked at required users to have an ETL solution in place, he said. Then Lehr happened to read about Looker on Hacker News and decided the product sounded like it would meet their needs.

Nicking the problem

Once Dollar Shave Club settled on Looker, it only took about two weeks to implement the product and just another two weeks to create data models.

“The cool thing about the data models is it wasn’t my team building them but one of our data analysts on the operations team,” Lehr said. “They go in and build out these data models, with zero dependence on the engineering department.”

Dollar Shave Club runs its MySQL database in Amazon Web Services and has an SSL tunnel to a Looker appliance, managed by Looker. Lehr is quick to add that he notices no latency at all while using Looker.

Today, nearly half of Dollar Shave Club's 70 workers use Looker on either a daily or weekly basis. More than 40 percent of the staff gets a daily email created from Looker reports that include updated data on various company stats.

Smooth as a baby's bottom line

Dollar Shave Club had a program where it sent samples to customers as a way to entice them to buy new products. "We found that blanket sampling is very costly," Lehr said. But the company didn't have a way to analyze data in a way that might help it better target the samples.

Once the company started using Looker, it discovered that customers who buy their Shave Butter are more likely to buy other products as well. So, using Looker-generated data, they started sending samples only to Shave Butter customers and now see a 100 percent ROI on its sampling program.

Dollar Shave Club's cyber marketing team also uses Looker to study the company's email programs. The team lead is able to use Looker to do A/B testing of email campaigns. "She's always trying to increase take rates and reduce churn," Lehr said. "Looker helps her to pinpoint this data."

Oh... and how did the head of the cyber marketing team test the success of email campaigns before she used Looker? "She didn't actually test it. We didn't have the resources," he said.

Additionally, Dollar Shave Club's customer service team uses Looker to track the volume of help tickets. If a percentage of tickets are unresolved at the end of the day, the team can get ahead of the matter by adding an extra shift or otherwise reallocate resources to make sure a greater backup doesn't occur.

Customer Service also uses Looker to track the relationship between help requests and churn. For instance, if they notice that shipping errors are leading to lost customers, they can recommend optimizing the shipping process.

Now - because Looker makes it easy - every time Lehr's team launches a new feature, they immediately set up models o they can watch in real time the performance and the impact on customers.

Advice to help sharpen your edge

Lehr speaks from experience when offering this advice for companies just starting out with an easy-to-use analytics product like Looker:

Don't be limited by your previous experience. Lehr comes from MySpace where he used a BI product from Microstrategy, which typically requires a complex implementation and can be used only by a few highly trained analysts.

With that in mind, when Dollar Shave Club started with Looker, it only gave access to certain people. For instance, the customer service people didn't get access. "We didn't feel they needed it at the time," Lehr said. But once Dollar Shave Club started seeing the value of Looker, it realized everyone should be able to use it. "We found that we'd add a lot more value back to the organization if we gave it to everyone," he said.

That said, there are different tiers of users. A team of DSC data analysts builds the reports and modeling in Looker. Then individual users can access them and drill down to find exactly what they're looking for. That two-tiered approach leaves the more complicated backend development work to the trained analysts, while giving line-of-business workers the data they need to make smart decisions.

Next steps:

Dollar Shave Club are moving all data about Web traffic into its database and moving to a bigger data warehouse, possibly using AWS Redshift. Moving forward, the company plans to keep making smarter decisions based on data and analytics everyone loves.

Ready to Love Your Analytics?

Come see a live demo and schedule your free trial. Call 888-960-2331 or go to:

looker.com/demo

About Looker

Looker is an inventive software company that's pioneering the next generation of business intelligence (BI). We believe in bringing better insights and data-driven decision-making to businesses of all sizes. The company has fast become the catalyst that is creating data-driven cultures at hundreds of industry-leading companies such as Yahoo!, Gilt, Warby Parker and Sony.

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