IsCool Grows Revenues Four-Fold in Five Years with Tableau Software

is cool
ENTERTAINMENT

FOUNDED: 2001
HEADQUARTERS: PARIS, FRANCE

23%
INCREASE IN PLAYER ENGAGEMENT

44%
ANNUAL INCREASE IN REVENUES

$10,000
COST SAVINGS IN HARDWARE

By understanding more about gamers' preferences, behaviour, and needs, IsCool, a leading European social gaming provider, is increasing the size and number of its global gaming communities at a remarkably low cost of ownership.

Terabytes of big gaming data harnessed for agile and effective real-time decision making. And visual analytics delivered in minutes, compared to weeks sometimes using the previous business intelligence (BI) solution. These are just some of the highlights of IsCool's use of the Tableau Software real-time visualization analytics solution.

A leader in the online European gaming market

IsCool Entertainment is a European leader in social gaming, bringing together 2.8 million users on Facebook and other media with interactive games like IsCool, Stars Connect, and Temple Of Mahjong. A catalyst for the company's success is a laser-like focus on BI: a rigorous approach to analysing customer profiles, user adoption, and gaming use.

Three years ago, when IsCool had 400,000 users and revenues of $3 million, the Paris-based company relied on a basic approach to data integration and BI for decision-making: open source integration tools and commercial BI visualization software. Today however, with 18 million user-generated actions occurring every day and revenues four times higher than in 2009, the focus is on agile big data analytics.

"Gaming data is growing exponentially and it's moving in real-time," explains Gaëlle Periat, digital analyst at IsCool. "We collect data from application logs, Facebook insights, and analytics tags. It is imperative that this data is in the hands of the business decision makers immediately, so they can make timely offers to gamers, make decisions about game development, and steer advertising programs for maximum impact."

IsCool also needed a flexible approach to the way data was visualized and presented. Game designers, for instance, wanted visual, easy to understand graphics so they could tie new features onto existing popular ones. Programmers were more comfortable looking at reports from the technical log files. Senior IsCool business executives meanwhile wanted at-a-glance view of revenue forecasts, pipeline, and advertising spend.

QlikView reports outdated the moment they're ready

Until recently, IsCool replied on a QlikView tool. According to Gaëlle Periat, the closed nature of the technology meant a data analyst was always on stand-by to help with the data integration. "Every time a director asked

for a report, we needed to do some scripting which inevitably delayed the findings," she says.

In response, IsCool has standardized on a Tableau real-time visualization analytics solution. IsCool can report immediately on the number of users for its games (traffic), which features are most commonly used, how long people play for, which downloads are most popular, and more.

Twenty-three percent increase in player engagement

Harnessing big data, the team can also examine the correlation between the size of a gaming community and their level of engagement. Once a community is identified, the team can engage that community more effectively, nurture it, and grow it to critical mass.

Specific games come under the reporting microscope too. Tableau helps answer questions like, does a game have too many features? Which features are used by which users? And how to optimize feature access. Moreover, IsCool can now quickly and confidently establish different classes of users with different engagement profile and the use of features. Understanding more about how users interact with an IsCool game has led to an increase in engagement for certain targeted user classes.

Simultaneously, authorized IsCool executives receive a daily report on crucial sales intelligence, including the previous day's revenues by item category, the number of concurrent users during the day, and the number of active players. "While it took up to one week to prepare the reports in QlikView,

we can now build and share new ideas in a few minutes with Tableau."

Productive with Tableau in minutes

Gaëlle Periat was smitten from the start. "When I first joined IsCool, the team said 'this is Tableau, it is going to be your best friend'. At the time, I didn't believe them. Within minutes though, I was productive; developing new real-time reports and revealing results about the gaming experience we had never been able to reach before."

By transforming IsCool into an agile, data-driven gaming organization, Tableau has helped IsCool grow revenues four-fold in five years. "Tableau has enabled IsCool to take control of big data and has made decision making faster, easier, and more effective. I doubt IsCool could have grown from $3 million revenues in 2009 to $13.2 million today without the interactive visualization of data that Tableau provides," says Gaëlle Periat.

Another crucial component in this success has been the innovative Actian Vectorwise analytic database. Replacing an open source platform, Vectorwise provides IsCool with lightning-fast and cost-effective database and BI performance. Vectorwise enables Gaëlle Periat and her colleagues to analyze more data than ever before—and at a fraction of the cost of traditional data processing. She comments, "Using Vectorwise, IsCool is able to process and exploit vast amounts of big data on much smaller machines. This has enabled the company to save more than $10,000 annually in hardware costs alone. For a small, dynamic company like IsCool, this is a significant saving.