







Compass Group Case Study

Compass Group accelerates reporting and analytics with Northdoor and IBM

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Compass Group UK & Ireland

-  Accelerated business reporting and analytics; ensured non-disruptive migration and go-live
-  Enabled business users to gain higher-quality insight faster than before
-  Deployed two new IBM PureData System for Analytics (Netezza) appliances
-  Ensured compliance with the IBM InfoSphere DataStage ETL and IBM Cognos design criteria

About Compass Group

Headquartered in London, UK, major financial advisor Compass Group is the leading provider of contract catering and support services in the UK and Ireland, employing 60,000 people across 10,000 locations in these countries. Serving three million customers daily, the company provides a wide range of services across food, retail and facilities management support.

Seeking fresh new insights

With a vision of being a world-class provider of contract foodservice and support services, renowned for great people, great service, and great results, Compass Group UK & Ireland is constantly striving to grow and improve its business. The company is not only winning major new contracts but also expanding the range of services it offers, aiming to get closer to customers on every level.

To maximise efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure the highest levels of quality and freshness in its catering services, Compass Group aims to be as local as possible to a continually growing and changing set of customers.

For example, the company is proud to state that all local food products are sourced within 50 miles of where they are served. This ability to act locally depends on a finely tuned set of processes around logistics, warehousing and planning, all driven by business intelligence (BI).

Tom Gregory, Enterprise Systems Manager at Compass Group UK & Ireland, takes up the story: “Efficiency in logistics is a key element in Compass Group’s success. We need to understand where and how we will be delivering our services in the coming days, weeks, months and years, and use that understanding both in our day-to-day activities and in our longer-term planning for the location of new distribution centres and offices.”

With data volumes constantly rising as the company grew, and with corresponding increases in the internal appetite for reporting and analytics, the existing BI systems at Compass Group UK & Ireland were showing the strain. “Fast access to accurate information is critical in helping us serve our customers rapidly, effectively and efficiently,” says Tom Gregory. “To ensure that we could maintain this capability, we needed to update our BI systems.”

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Systems Manager,
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On time, on budget

The BI and decision-support environment at Compass Group, deployed more than five years previously, was based on two Netezza data warehouse appliances (“Mustang” architecture, models 10100SL and 5200DC) with IBM Cognos BI software. The company wanted to sustain and extend its existing capabilities, so that it could manage ongoing growth in data volumes and satisfy demand for faster insight from business users.

“The Netezza appliances had worked extremely well for us, and we wanted to adopt the latest versions so that we could handle the projected growth in our requirements,” says Tom Gregory. “To minimise cost and disruption, we looked for an implementation partner that could provide an end-to-end service for deploying and configuring two new appliances. Northdoor offered expertise with the Netezza technology, strong migration skills and project management, a close relationship with IBM, and extensive accreditations and client references.”

As an IBM Platinum Business Partner, Northdoor was able to propose competitive pricing and a clear migration plan for adopting two new IBM PureData System for Analytics appliances, powered by Netezza technology (“Striper” architecture, models N2002-002).

“Northdoor’s response to our RFP was comprehensive and gave us confidence that the deployment would run smoothly,” says Tom Gregory. “That certainly proved to be the case: during the migration, the Northdoor consultants demonstrated that they have excellent project management skills and clearly know the Netezza technology very well. Working with Northdoor, we achieved an on-time, on-budget deployment with no disruption to our business-as-usual processes.”

Northdoor’s migration plan including detailed testing and milestones at every major stage, backed by the company’s AIM methodology and with the use of their own migration tool PRICE (PureData Referential Integrity Checker for Enterprise). The two new PureData System for Analytics appliances fitted exactly into the existing architecture. As before, sales and logistics data from Compass Group’s SAP ERP solution is fed into the appliances for reporting and analysis.

Solution components

- IBM PureData System for Analytics
- IBM InfoSphere DataStage ETL
- Northdoor PRICE Migration toolset
- Northdoor implementation and support services

Faster insight drives business growth

By simplifying and optimising the performance of data services for analytic applications, the appliances enable Compass Group to run complex algorithms in minutes instead of hours, reducing the time to insight.

“We are delighted with the performance of the new PureData appliances, which have met or even exceeded all of our expectations,” says Tom Gregory. “The improved Netezza compression algorithms enabled us to further reduce the size of the data we migrated – we currently have an average compression ratio of 47 percent. This keeps space free on the appliances, lengthening their expected useful lifetime and maximising the value of our investment.”

With the new appliances in place, Compass Group UK & Ireland can perform key reporting and analysis tasks faster than before, despite significant increases in volumes of sales and logistics data. As the company continues its expansion and extends the number of services it offers, the ability to accelerate insight into its business will help it maximise efficiency and move faster than its competitors.

“The more decision-makers use the analytics tools we provide, the more value they see in them, so there is a constant increase in both the number and the complexity of reports and analyses that we need to run,” says Tom Gregory. “With the new PureData appliances deployed by Northdoor, we can keep supporting the business with excellent performance even as everything becomes more demanding and time-sensitive. As the first stage in a six-stage plan to optimise our BI and reporting, also on IBM Cognos, the solution is helping us to plan faster and better. Although we have not measured this formally, we are confident that the new appliances have already paid for themselves in terms of the improved speed and quality of insight they deliver.”

