

Customer Success Story

OutFront



- OUTFRONT leverages the power of technology, location, and creativity to connect brands with consumers outside of their homes through one of the largest and most diverse sets of billboard, transit, and mobile advertising assets in North America.
- OUTFRONT has embraced a “cloud-first” strategy that is exposing new types of data and revealing new levels of analytic insight—not only to professional analysts, but also to business users on its sales, finance, and real estate teams.
- The Manhattan-based company is on an upward path with Oracle Cloud technology, having evolved from Oracle Business Intelligence Cloud Service to Oracle Analytics, and from Oracle Database Cloud to Oracle Autonomous Data Warehouse.
- Today, Oracle Analytics and Oracle Autonomous Data Warehouse are at the heart of a rapidly evolving strategy that brings self-service decision-making capabilities to more than 800 business users.



THE BACKGROUND: A DIGITAL LEADER IN OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISING

OUTFRONT is using technology to fundamentally change the ways in which advertisers engage audiences on-the-go. The company’s digital displays, popular in cities throughout North America, allow advertisers to target people with creative messaging based on triggers such as time of day, weather, and sports scores. OUTFRONT’s out-of-home displays are commonly seen in public transit vehicles and depots, sports arenas, billboards, and many other metropolitan locations. The company can also amplify client messages across search, social, and mobile media.

THE CHALLENGE: KEEPING UP WITH DATA MANAGEMENT CHORES

As a pioneer in the use of digital technology to amplify its clients’ advertising messages, it’s no surprise that OUTFRONT is also on the cutting-edge with data and analytics. “For several years we have had a cloud-first analytics practice,” says Derek Hayden, vice president of data strategy and analytics at OUTFRONT. “However, even with a cloud-based database, we were accumulating so much data that management tasks were becoming overwhelming. We had to rethink our strategy. Oracle Autonomous Data Warehouse came along at a perfect time for us.”

THE SOLUTION: AUTONOMOUS DATA MANAGEMENT AND SELF-SERVICE ANALYTICS

Hayden and his team decided to instigate a proof-of-concept to test the self-tuning and self-management capabilities of Oracle Autonomous Database. They selected a complicated revenue forecasting query, which their database administrators had tuned heavily over a six-month period. Hayden recalls the remarkable process of watching Oracle’s machine learning technology duplicate this tuning process—all by itself. “The first time we ran the query it took about six minutes to complete. The second time we ran the query it took two seconds. It was amazing. The self-tuning literally happens right in front of your eyes.”

OUTFRONT has a diverse portfolio of advertising assets that includes more than 500,000 digital and static displays. Its clients rely on this advertising network to reach millions of commuters every day in more than 150 markets across the U.S. and Canada. To improve the efficiency of this data-rich business, OUTFRONT uses Oracle Cloud technology

- Oracle Autonomous Data Warehouse stores data and automates data management tasks
- Oracle Analytics extends decision-making capabilities to the business community

OUTFRONT also values the automatic scalability associated with the new database cloud service: When they have to run processor-intensive jobs they can “scale up” the service for an hour or two, and then scale it back down when those jobs complete. “Oracle manages everything,” Hayden continues. “We only pay for the capacity that we need, and we always have the right amount of compute and storage resources at hand.”

EASY MANAGEMENT OF A GROWING DATA SET

OUTFRONT’s sales strategy team subscribes to a third-party data service that reveals advertising spend by media—such as TV, radio, and magazine—sorted by location and brand. The service reveals valuable insights, but sales analysts were spending too much time wrangling data, which distracted them from other important tasks. Whenever new data came in, they had to download it, manipulate it in Excel, and then distribute it, which sometimes took weeks.

The analytics team decided to automate this process with Oracle Autonomous Data Warehouse. “We pulled in five years of historical data, which amounted to many terabytes,” Hayden recalls. “It only took 15 minutes to spin up a new database instance. We had all the data loaded the next day, and we had our first dashboards ready the day after that.”

Today, OUTFRONT uses Oracle Data Integrator to refresh this data on a daily basis, a process which runs in the background and only takes about half an hour. Oracle’s machine learning technology continually tunes database queries for optimal performance and automates routine management chores. “Oracle takes care of all the patching and administration,” Hayden adds. “This allows us to work on data modeling and data sourcing.”

MIGRATION UTILITIES TO SPEED UP INNOVATION

With Oracle Autonomous Data Warehouse running on autopilot, Hayden and his team turned their attention to creating new business intelligence applications with Oracle Analytics. They began by migrating a number of existing dashboards from Oracle Business Intelligence Cloud Service to Oracle Analytics, using an included import/export utility. “We got everything up and running very quickly,” Hayden notes. “It was very low-stress and just about everything worked right away.”

Some data visualizations were automatically embedded into these classic dashboards as part of the migration process. The analytics team added more, especially for geographic mapping. According to Hayden, digital maps are particularly important to OUTFRONT’s real estate team, which evaluates the health of lease portfolios for inventory all over the country. It’s easier to make sense of this data when it is presented on a map rather than in a report or a list.

AN EVOLVING SET OF CLOUD-BASED ANALYTIC ASSETS

Oracle Analytics makes powerful visual displays accessible to 800 employees at every level of OUTFRONT’s widespread organization. For example, sales reporting dashboards kept the sales organization apprised of current and historical sales trends. Finance dashboards allow the finance team to view KPIs such as gross margin, revenue, expenses, pricing, and year-over-year performance. Real estate dashboards allow account reps to analyze locations in detail to ensure advertising assets are secured and profitable.

According to Hayden, there hasn’t been much of a learning curve to take advantage of the new analytic environment. Drag-and-drop capabilities make it easy to visualize data, change layouts, and present new insights. “It’s more about encouraging people to think differently, such as how they can visualize their data using word clouds and maps and other techniques,” he says. “So long as you have a good data model and your users understand the data, creating analytics is a drag-and-drop, point-and-click process.”

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Derek Hayden
Vice President of Data Strategy and Analytics, OUTFRONT

“Using Oracle Cloud means easier administration, lower capital investments, fewer DBA chores, and the opportunity to make quick wins with relatively small investments.”

Derek Hayden
Vice President of Data Strategy and Analytics, OUTFRONT

“Oracle Analytics has great digital mapping capabilities, available right out of the box, which made it easy to embed data visualization objects in our classic dashboards.”

Derek Hayden
Vice President of Data Strategy and Analytics, OUTFRONT

Today, OUTFRONT's analytic environment combines data from a variety of sources—including software-as-a-service applications from Oracle and other vendors, on-premises systems, and personal files—and can display the data on computers and mobile devices. Each type of user sees a unique slice of the data, yet all views are generated from the same core database. Account executives can consolidate data into unified displays rather than having to run multiple reports.

BETTER PRICING WITH UNIVERSAL CREDITS

Previously, OUTFRONT used a subscription model for its cloud services. Now they use Oracle Universal Credits, which gives them a more flexible way to purchase and use Oracle Cloud Services. "Universal credits are very economical and open doors to all sorts of new tools," Hayden says. "One SKU gives us access to Oracle Autonomous Data Warehouse, Oracle Analytics, Oracle Data Integrator, and other software, which we can consume on a subscription basis. We can add other cloud services in the future, from big data preparation to data discovery to event management."

OUTFRONT just started using Oracle Spatial Studio to view spatial data, and they have successfully used Oracle Application Express for new development. "As Oracle's strategy involves, we are seeing greater synergy among its cloud products," Hayden concludes. "And since the Oracle licensing model allows us to try new software very easily, and turn services on and off, we have lots of flexibility. When we have questions, Oracle's cloud customer success team has been very helpful. Oracle is a big advocate for us."



"Oracle has been a great partner. They are committed to continuously improving their products and rolling out new features."

Derek Hayden
Vice President of Data Strategy and Analytics, OUTFRONT

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