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Spil Games Enables 500% ROI, Cuts Week from Reporting Timeline

Spil Games, which publishes and distributes mobile games to more than 100 million monthly users, was playing a game closer to home. It was called, "How do we get answers from all of our data?" The goal was to build dashboards based on multiple data sources quickly and easily, in order to drive data-driven decisions on a daily basis.

Tableau enables everyone in the company—from analytics, marketing and advertising to content management and publishing—to visualize their data, gain insight, and get answers to their data questions. Spil Games is always looking to improve the user gaming experience. As users move through the portal, they use Tableau to report on where they bounce and why. Subsequent tuning to gaming widgets or changes to the navigation reduce this friction and enhance the gaming.

"The great thing about Tableau is that there are no barriers anymore. The team can focus more on defining the right questions."

-Derek Willemsen
Manager of Reporting & Analytics, Spil Games

Spil Games
Hilversum, Netherlands
www.spilgames.com

Delivered a 500% ROI from search advertising spend

Cut reporting time down from 1 week to 15 minutes

Enabled insight into gaming portals in just minutes for a better gaming experience

A "goldmine of data"—out of reach

Release the hidden diamonds. Guide the monkey through the jungle. Search for the good guys in the forest.

These are just some of the escapades enjoyed by players of the Spil Games portfolio of mobile games. However, those adventures also mirror how difficult it was for the company to get answers to its data before Tableau was introduced.

Spil Games, headquartered in the Netherlands, publishes and distributes games to more than 100 million monthly users. And games like Troll Face Quest, My Dolphin Show and Uphill Rush are drawing in ever-more audiences, especially from mobile gaming applications.

For Derek Willemsen, Manager of Reporting and Analytics at Spil Games, this success creates massive volumes of data. And the problem was what to do with it.

"We had a goldmine of data, but we weren't using it," he explains. "When I joined the company, we were relying on various different platforms to analyse and report on our data, including Google Analytics and spreadsheets. As a result, we had a multitude of different dashboards which complicated and delayed decision-making. Our goal was to build dashboards based on multiple data sources quickly and easily. That would help drive data-driven decisions on a daily basis."

It was time to invest more in business intelligence (BI). The data they wanted to learn more about included everything from game loading times and search engine advertising optimization, to user demographics. At the time, Spil Games already had a BI tool in place for dashboards, but when you consider it took 44 clicks simply to update one dashboard, it was clear things needed to change.

The first step was to deploy an HP Vertica enterprise data warehouse (EDW) as a data source for reporting. The main reporting table in this 35 terabytes EDW, which contains aggregated data on multiple levels, currently has currently approximately 900 million rows. The single largest table contains up to 25 billion rows of raw clickstream data. More than 100 data sources are integrated with the EDW.

Tableau drives data-driven decisions every day

The final piece in the jigsaw was to make data analysis faster, easier and self-service—which is where Tableau comes in.

"We did some market research, tested a few tools and chose Tableau as our partner," says Willemsen. "It was by far and away the right choice. Tableau enables everyone in the company to visualize the data, gain insight and get answers to their data questions."

Players lure trolls into misadventures in Troll Face Quest.

Spil Games started small, with a Tableau Server license and 10 Desktop licenses. This has quickly grown to 25 Desktop licenses, equivalent to about one-fifth of the company's staff.

All business-facing departments (analytics, marketing, advertising, content management, partner management, public relations and publishing), and the Spil Games leadership team use Tableau to understand their data. Some engineering departments, including payments and portal management, also rely on Tableau. There is a managed self-service BI stack, where power users can answer their own questions and make their own dashboards with Tableau Desktop, using predefined datasets. These are then shared with everyone in the organization by publishing them to Tableau Server.

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The HP EDW collects data from all directions: an Event Tracker which tracks user activity on the website, the production system for user account information and payments, external sources such as advertising partners and Google Analytics.

Using Tableau, the team is able to visualize and query this data almost any way they choose. The team uses data extracts—compressed snapshots of the data loaded into Tableau's Data Engine—to enable rapid performance and offline data analysis. There are currently approximately 150 Tableau Workbooks, with more than 400 views available.

Users love the interaction

Currently, three members of the team create and edit reports on a daily basis and manage new data sources. Some 22 teammates use Tableau Desktop on a regular basis to gain insights and custom reports based on published data sources.

"This is self-service BI at its best. We give them the data sets, they drag and drop, and the answers are there. The users love the interaction and the rate at which they can get answers," Willemsen adds.

Tableau now powers informed, accurate and agile decision-making across the company. One of the main use cases is to improve the user gaming experience. As users move through the portal, Tableau is used to report on where they bounce and why. Subsequent tuning to gaming widgets or changes to the navigation reduce this friction and enhance the gaming.

Tableau also visualizes reports on the users themselves, including the demographics of the users of each game, who is currently active among the registered users and game load times. Marketing teams use this analysis to optimize the content portfolio and increase the customers' lifetime value.

Among many other use cases, Tableau is also used to increase the return on investment from search engine advertising and optimize search engine keywords. Analysis of the return on investment from individual campaigns is now being used to determine where campaigninvestment is required—and where it might be trimmed.

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Transformative technology for this leader in mobile gaming

"The great thing about Tableau is that there are no barriers anymore surrounding our data. The team at Spil Games can focus more on defining the right questions, and coming up with new opportunities to improve our business. The software is transformative."

He continues, "It's difficult to single out the value of Tableau from the overall BI strategy," says Willemsen. "What we can see is that together they have had a dramatic impact on our search engine advertising model. By identifying non-performing marketing campaigns, the company has achieved a 500 percent return on investment from its search engine advertising spend."

Answers are reached much more quickly now too. "We can produce a report in 15 minutes now, whereas before it would take a week," he adds. "Most of the time is normally spent fine-tuning the reports, such as formatting, actions and tooltips. In the unlikely event a problem occurs in one of the personalized local market gaming portals, we will also know about it within 15 minutes. That insight supports a high performance, more rewarding gaming environment."

Tableau is also proving to be immensely popular with the users. "They all love Tableau. We haven't had to do much training in the tool itself; more time is spent on educating the team on how to use the data sets and define the analytical questions. As we move forward, the emphasis will be on continuing to train our Tableau Desktop users and improving the data analytics."

Where would Willemsen be without Tableau? "I probably would quit my job!" he says with a smile.

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