

Productivity Renovation— Using Tableau, HomeRepair Works 6 Times More Efficiently with Fewer Staff



EMPLOYEES: 35
HEADQUARTERS:
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

COMPLETING JOBS

6x
FASTER

20%
FEWER STAFF

BOOKING INSPECTIONS

1.5
DAYS FASTER

TABLEAU PARTNER:

performance analytics 

HomeRepair's market was becoming increasingly competitive.

HomeRepair needed to understand its performance metrics—fast—to retain and build its market position. Using Tableau, HomeRepair not only gained insight, but also drove significant improvements with its interactive data dashboards.

Perform or Perish

HomeRepair spent the past decade repairing residential property damage claims on behalf of one of Australia's largest general insurers. Other repair services companies aggressively sought to take market share from HomeRepair.

HomeRepair's primary client, the insurance company, would select its preferred repair service providers by looking at key performance areas including timeliness and cost.

"It was a do or die decision," says David Wilson, the Managing Director of HomeRepair. "If we were not performing, we wouldn't have a business. We spent ten years building this company and our reputation as a high performing service provider."

"It was clear that getting more work would be directly related to improved performance," Wilson says. "Of course, we were getting periodic feedback from our client about our performance, but not until some weeks after the end of the reporting periods."

"By the time we are in the performance management meeting with our client, it's too late to have any impact on the figures," says Wilson.

"We felt like we were a strong performer, but we didn't have the hard evidence to prove that," says Amanda McMullan, Director of Operations at HomeRepair. "There was a lot riding on our ability to understand our performance."

Show Me the Data

HomeRepair had the majority of its data stored in GClaim, a web-based repair administration and management solution developed specifically for HomeRepair. "Our database holds hundreds of thousand rows of data going back over 10 years," says McMullan. "We complete thousands of repairs each year and there are hundreds and hundreds of data points for every job."

More recently, HomeRepair has equipped its tradespeople with mobile systems that input real-time information into GClaim. Unfortunately, McMullan could not use that information in a timely manner.

"It was a little bit like herding cats," says McMullan, laughing. "The tradespeople are using sophisticated mobile devices and apps to feed data into the system saying, 'I've been on-site for two hours, I'm doing this job and this is the cost'

“In the first month we measured how long it takes to do a certain type of job,” says McMullan. “The average was 96 days over the 100 jobs of that type we completed that month. Last month the average was 16 days—and we completed roughly 140 of that job type.”

— Amanda McMullan,
Director of Operations,
HomeRepair

but I just couldn't see the data in a way that let me understand what it meant, or how we could improve the outcomes.”

With no in-house IT department, HomeRepair management relied on IT vendors to run queries and reports from the SQL database. “In terms of trying to understand what was going on in the business and how to radically improve the business outcomes, the process was too slow,” says McMullan.

HomeRepair management was able to pull some data out of the SQL database and into Excel pivot tables, but the resulting reports were not terribly helpful.

“We had more questions than answers,” McMullan says.

To truly understand productivity and cost-effectiveness, HomeRepair would need to look at data stored in other sources—its accounting system and some static spreadsheets, for example—in concert with its GClaim data. And any data analysis solution would need to offer strong security to protect the strict requirements regarding claimants' privacy.

HomeRepair discussed its needs with its transaction system provider, who suggested that they look into Tableau Software.

Ready, Set, Visualize

HomeRepair decided to heed that advice. They selected Tableau partner, Performance Analytics, to handle the implementation and subsequent dashboard creation. Jane Crofts, Director at Performance Analytics, authors the data visualizations using data extracted from GClaim and

other internal HomeRepair data sources. She then publishes the reports to the server, where Wilson, McMullan, and the various team leaders are able to interact with the visualizations.

Performance Analytics deployed Tableau Server inside the HomeRepair firewall for security. “We have set up credentials for everyone we want to have access to the information,” says Jane Crofts, Director at Performance Analytics.

Crofts estimates that maintaining the environment on Server takes her less than 2 hours per month. “Really it is just a quick monitor every now and then,” Crofts says. “It's a self-contained little gem. It just keeps going.”

The HomeRepair team was impressed with the speed and flexibility of the dashboards. “We would say ‘Well, what can we see about this problem?’ and putting together a Tableau report to find the answers was a quick process,” says McMullan. “And we could adjust it by bringing in other information if the first report wasn't answering our questions.”

“Tableau Is the Driver for What We Do Each Day”

The first reports that HomeRepair requested were straightforward replications of its client's performance reports. But they soon realized that they didn't want to stop there. HomeRepair quickly grew its initial three reports to nearly 30 distinct dashboards that the company uses to manage its entire business.

“We do not just use this tool to see how we did. Tableau is the driver for what we do each day,” says McMullan.



“From the back of the boat in the Mediterranean I could see our performance improving. That’s remote!”

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The HomeRepair team leaders use Tableau dashboards to see a complete task list and how long tasks have been open. HomeRepair has set service levels for each outcome measure to help teams track how performance is stacking up against expectations. Team leaders can then allocate their team members as needed to address areas where performance is likely to not meet the SLA on any measure.

“Now team leaders can see the entire picture. They understand that our clients don’t think about us in terms of how one team is doing, but our overall performance,” says McMullan. “Really, in my mind, using these Tableau dashboards has led to our team leaders and team members gaining a greater commercial understanding about how it all adds up.”

As a manager, McMullan feels more secure now that she can make decisions backed by data. “Now in our management meetings, the decisions about what to change and what to act on are fully informed,” she says. “I’m not dealing in hypotheses anymore. I can see the measures and trends and instantly respond.”

Set the Bar—and then Leap over It

“When we see that a key measure is starting to deteriorate we can reallocate staff, which is obviously more productive,” says McMullan. “Over the last year, through natural attrition, we’ve lost about 20 percent of the staff in the national support centre without missing a beat. Because we have such visibility into our business, our performance continues to improve.”

The flexible data visualization formats within Tableau have allowed HomeRepair to present information in ways that promote efficiency. For example, instead of providing its Job Start team with a list of claimant names and addresses, HomeRepair uses a map to display the information.

“Seeing it this way made it much more rational to book jobs in clusters instead of having inspectors driving back and forth across the state,” says McMullan.

This simple change has delivered impressive results.

“I believe that our initial performance expectation for booking an inspection was 2 days,” says McMullan “Over the months that we’ve been using Tableau the team has improved that so dramatically that our performance measure is now 4 hours.”

HomeRepair has seen other striking performance improvements across the business that they attribute to increased insight gained through Tableau.

“In the first month we measured how long it takes to do a certain type of job,” says McMullan. “The average was 96 days over the 100 jobs of that type we completed that month. Last month the average was 16 days—and we completed roughly 140 of that job type , so we are performing better, on larger job volumes, with fewer staff members.”

In other words, HomeRepair is completing these jobs 6 times faster than before. Of the tremendous improvement McMullan says, “It is due to people being able to see in Tableau



the breakdown of how and what their task contributed to the overall result, seeing the expected service levels, and working to improve.”

”From the Boat in the Mediterranean I Could See Our Performance Improving”

Both McMullan and Wilson say that they appreciate the mobile capabilities of Tableau, accessing dashboards from tablet computers when they are away from the office—far away, in some cases.

“Last September, right before critical performance figures were released by the client, I was away on a cruise,” says McMullan. “We had put the first Tableau dashboards in place just before I left. From the back of the boat in the Mediterranean I could see our performance improving. That’s remote!”

In the 7 months since HomeRepair began using Tableau, the company has seen its work load from the insurer increase as a result of performance improvement.

“As a businessperson I had a very critical, time-sensitive need to understand what was going on,” says Wilson. “I thought I was just going to be tracking history. Instead, Tableau gave us visibility to change on a daily, hourly basis what we thought was important, and put that in play.”

McMullan agrees. “The thing that was surprising and fabulous was that Tableau actually let me improve the business dramatically and quickly,” she says.

“Literally, we would not be able to do it without Tableau.”

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