

Stardoll Makes Business Analytics and Intelligence Fast, Fashionable, and Available to All



WWW.STARDOLL.COM
FOUNDED: 2005
HEADQUARTERS:
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

CHALLENGES

- Replace complex, cumbersome spreadsheet-based reporting
- Accelerate accurate decision making across the business
- Empower business users to define and prepare self-service reporting

SOLUTION

- Tableau Desktop
- Tableau Server

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Lowered analytical reporting time from days to minutes
- Enabled Stardoll to adapt its services, target new audiences and geographies, and increase revenues
- Created interactive visualizations and drill-down reports quickly and easily
- Tableau is more interactive and easier to use than either CrystalReports from SAP or QlikView
- Delivered self-service business intelligence and empower the business users to make agile, real-time collaborative decisions
- Visualize trends and situations instantly with mapping feature

When Liisa Wrang created Stardoll in 2004, she wanted to offer young girls a place where, “they could get away from the shooting and killing games that boys played”. Eight years and 206 million users later, her vision led to one of the largest online community for girls who love fashion, making friends, shopping, and being creative. However, with growth comes data. Lots of it. In response, Stardoll has standardized on Tableau interactive visualization to drive fast, effective analytical business intelligence. The best-in-class solution has enabled the Swedish company to lower the time needed to create reports from days to minutes, adapt its services, target new audiences and geographies, and increase revenues.

World’s largest online fashion and dress up games community struggles with data

Stardoll has made the paper doll a global phenomenon. More than 206 million users worldwide—mainly teenage girls—engage with the browser game to dress up dolls using a range of tools, participate in interactive activities, and take part in educational games aimed to improve quick thinking. Stardoll members can also create clubs, in which they communicate with other members.

The Swedish company has grown quickly, and part of the reason for that growth is a laser-like focus on improving the product through data. By understanding more about who uses Stardoll, where they are based, the types of games they play, which characters they prefer to dress, and much more, the company has been able to adapt its services, target new audiences and geographies, and increase revenues.

However, until recently, getting to that intelligence was easier said than done.

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— Per Strid, Analyst, Stardoll

Whenever the business asked for a report of some kind, a dedicated developer would create it, either in the form of a spreadsheet or an HTML table transferred to a CSV file. The process was slow and labor-intensive—and because the reporting process took so long (up to three days in some instances), the data was often out of date by the time it reached the business and couldn’t effectively impact accurate decision making.

It was a problem that Peter Sandström, the company’s chief technology officer, had been concerned about for some time. “I was browsing ideas, came across Tableau



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— Peter Sandström,
Chief Technology Officer,
Stardoll

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Software, and thought it was awesome,” he explains. “This was game-changing technology that enables Stardoll to create interactive visualizations and drill-down reports quickly and easily.”

No other technology Sandström and his team looked at came close. “We evaluated CrystalReports from SAP and QlikView, but neither was as simple, as visual, or as business-oriented as Tableau. Instead of pushing insights from the top down, Tableau enables our team to discover insights on their own, anywhere in the organization.”

Self-service visual business intelligence provides the missing insight

It took Stardoll just 10 minutes to go live on the trial version of Tableau, and this has been followed by a comprehensive deployment of Tableau Desktop and Tableau Server across the organization, to deliver self-service visual business intelligence and empower the business users to make agile and innovative decisions. Using Tableau, business people consolidate relevant data from multiple Stardoll sources into a single application and explore the associations in the data. Tableau enables secure, real-time collaboration, and delivers it all through compelling visualizations. It is principally used by the Stardoll membership and advertising sales teams at Stardoll Media.

“The graphics visualization treatment is one of the best features of Tableau,” explains Per Strid, an analyst at Stardoll. “Our teams can be much more creative and incisive with their decision making now that they can see their reports on maps, box plots, charts, and other graphic devices. When you focus on rows and rows of data in a spreadsheet, your train of thought is on the data itself and you can easily overlook

trends. Tableau educates users about the data: put someone in front of the data and they immediately understand what the data is telling them.”

Reports can be on almost anything: advertising click-through rates, the average time teenage girls spend on the site, the dress-up games which are most popular, the appeal of a Kate Winslet doll versus an Emma Watson one, or analytics concerning Stardoll Clubs & Friends. The operational analytics has also been used to influence decisions around the launch of innovative new services, like StarDesign Jewellery and StarDesign Hair.

Reporting on trends in 28 languages

For a dynamic, fast growing online service like Stardoll, the Tableau mapping software is especially useful. The service is available in 28 languages, and the team can instantly visualize trends and situations in any of those regions. In a few clicks, they benefit from filled maps that allow them to investigate geographic trends, such as the number of Stardoll users per territory, the value of those customers, the number of time they log into the service, and hotspots. Strid says, “Stardoll is growing very fast in Brazil, and the mapping feature gives us a real-time view into the trends in this important region. This allows us to make key analytical strategic decisions about the territory based on a real-time, visual view of the situation in the region.”

Reports are also available in a fraction of the time compared with previously. Whereas before a developer was dedicated to producing the reports and it could take days to complete the report, the reports are now available within the hour. Moreover, the results are based on actual data, not an aggregated view with the possibility of errors and omissions.

