



Data analytics for digital business

The Haufe Group utilizes its wealth of data to develop its business in a targeted manner

“An increase in the hit rate to 30 percent in sales – that is just one of the results achieved thanks to our data analytics. T-Systems makes these evaluations possible with a high-performance analytics platform.”

Jutta Hobbelhagen, Head of Data Analytics, Haufe-Lexware GmbH & Co. KG, a Haufe Group company

Made famous in the “DACH” region of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland through its “Loseblatt” (loose-leaf) compilation; today, the Haufe Group isn’t just a publishing house for HR and accounting topics – and hasn’t been for some time. It takes advantage of digitalization with and in its software, consultancy, and training solutions to make its customers successful. 180,000 attendees to Haufe Akademie in 2019 illustrates that the Group is on the right path. The Haufe Group provides services to all DAX 30 companies and, with around 2,100 employees, has an annual revenue of 393 million euros. However, digitalization is not just a big topic in terms of the company’s offerings to its customers; the Haufe Group is increasingly utilizing its internal wealth of data and is moving towards modern data-driven marketing and sales in order to discover new business potential. Therefore “Data to Action” is the motto of the Data Analytics business unit that is managed by Jutta Hobbelhagen. “We believe that it is our task to understand the existing data available in our systems and, by performing intelligent analyses, to enable new insights in order to move the business forward.”

At a glance

- Big data analyses for business decisions
- Need for higher-performance platform
- Provision as a managed service in the T-Systems data center
- Development of new opportunities for data analysts

Reference in detail

The challenge

With a terabyte (TB) volume that is almost in triple digits, the Haufe Group has a huge wealth of data. This data does not solely comprise conventional process-related and customer data from internal systems; it also consists of activities from various websites and much more. Real big data. As good as data is, insights on the basis of big data analyses are even better. Therefore, Haufe established a big data lab, the various opportunities of which are now being used within the Group for many issues. With the evaluations provided by the lab, the data analysts are answering central questions that drive the business owners: how will the usage behavior, interests for topics, or subscriber structure change over time? How can target groups be selected better? Which customers are likely to terminate the business relationship? "Although we must accept that we cannot look into the future and answer every question, we are surprisingly able to achieve clear added value in many cases," explains Jutta Hobbelhagen, Head of Data Analytics at Haufe-Lexware GmbH & Co. KG, a Haufe Group company. For instance, her team was able to significantly increase the hit rate for sales within the context of a project – to 30 percent. An exemplary result for modern marketing on the basis of data insights. The analyses help to optimize the sales and marketing processes which is reflected clearly in business KPIs such as revenue. However, the existing platform restricted the team's options. For example, it was barely possible to analyze unstructured data such as texts. "We needed a high-performance platform that also enables modern analysis processes, e.g., on the basis of the Hadoop suite," explains Jutta Hobbelhagen.

The solution

Haufe decided to switch to the high-performance T-Systems data center in Switzerland for the operation of its big data lab. There, T-Systems quickly established an installation of bare metal servers as a basis for the analyses. The computing power is provided securely and with high-availability as a managed service. The gateway servers and various open source systems – also Hadoop including the Hadoop Distributed Filesystem (HDFS) – that are also managed by T-Systems run on the infrastructure. The data analysts use SAS Viya as their analytics software. The Haufe specialists are responsible for the use of SAS Viya and data management. "With the technical security mechanisms employed and the available computing capacity, it feels like the analytics systems were installed at our premises and we can be sure that the data does not get into the wrong hands," explains Jutta Hobbelhagen. The data analytics team has not yet succumbed to the charm of the cloud, however. Haufe does not procure the platform services as needed but rather as a permanent full service. "The on-demand management of the various cloud instances for each individual analysis would cost us too much time." However, she also says that "the development towards hybrid architectures that may combine the best of all worlds is very interesting to us for future use."

Customer benefits

The set-up as a permanent platform service relieves the data analysts of additional organizational effort and is ultimately less expensive. As a consequence, the team can concentrate fully on its work. The opportunities for cyclic and acyclic analyses, which are possible thanks to internal resources that are available at all times, do not just make life easier for the team. With the new platform, it can also use new analytical methods, easily convert results with colleagues into concrete actions, and tap into further data sources with unstructured data. This results in ever-growing possibilities for the discovery of business potential, as the decision-makers in the company can count on the insight of the data analysts in an ever-growing number of cases instead of having to rely on their gut feeling. Therefore, Jutta Hobbelhagen's team is becoming one of the drivers for digitalization at the Haufe Group.

Further advantages:

- Data-driven insights for better business decisions
- Revenue increase through improved bases for decision-making
- Timely provision of analyses
- Ideal price model for continuous use
- Full service for the platform
- Service management included
- Future-oriented positioning

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