Iceland Foods' modernises data estate with WARDY IT Solutions

About Iceland Foods

Iceland Foods is a British food retailer with over 900 supermarkets throughout the UK, a further 40 owned or franchised stores across Europe, and a global export business.

https://www.iceland.co.uk/

UK supermarket chain, Iceland Foods have a high dependency on data to allow key staff to assess customer and sales insights. In 2019, the existing data estate, a proprietary platform created by Teradata, was coming to its end of life.

The Iceland Foods team knew that replacing the Teradata platform would be a complex process. The data estate had been in place for 20 years and since its implementation, Cloud technology had evolved resulting in new alternative options for a modern data estate. Iceland Foods needed to increase the agility of the data platform in order to drive more value from the data.

Concerns with replacing the old Teradata platform with a newer version of Teradata also centred on the niche skillset necessary to access the data. Phil Oldfield, Database Administrator at Iceland Foods, contacted Microsoft to discuss options for the new estate.

> " A lot of our staff have experience working with Microsoft products, so Microsoft seemed like a possible option. The current platform is difficult for new staff to understand and access and it can pose challenges for recruitment. "
>
> - Phil Oldfield, Database Administrator, Iceland Foods

With time of the essence due to the approaching end of life, Microsoft connected Iceland Foods with data estate specialists, WARDY IT Solutions.

> **The WARDY IT Solutions team were able to demonstrate their skills very quickly. They reviewed elements of the estate and were quick to suggest improvements, changes and provide an overview. Other organisations we met with were much more reactive and did not have the strategic outlook that Peter and his team have.**

Phil Oldfield
Database Administrator
Iceland Foods

A long-distance relationship that worked

When it came to crunch time, the Iceland Foods team agreed that the technical knowledge and extensive experience that WARDY IT Solutions could offer, would be crucial for the successful migration of the data estate.

With the time difference between the UK and Australia being significant, Phil had some initial concerns about how the process would be managed. However he quickly discovered that time zones made no difference to the process, with WARDY IT Solutions ensuring engineers and consultants were available around the clock.

"The team aligned to all our meeting times and were very accommodating. Early on, they sent staff to the UK to get a deeper understanding of how we use the data estate and what we need from it," adds Phil.

The solution identified for Iceland Foods was to create a new modern data warehouse using Azure Synapse. This would accelerate the company's journey to the Cloud and introduce HADR (high availability and disaster recovery).

Before migrating, there was a lot of work of preparation work to be done, however WARDY IT Solutions' expertise and willingness to assist made the process much easier for Iceland Foods.

"Moving from such an established system to a brand new, revolutionary platform was definitely daunting because there are some unknowns. Essentially, we had to take a leap of faith. But we didn't have any concerns when it came to WARDY IT Solutions. The knowledge and level of support they provided made the decision a lot easier to make," says Phil.

The benefits of a modern data estate

The migration to Azure Synapse has resulted in significantly reduced operational costs. The modern data warehouse has transformed Iceland Foods from an expensive capital expenditure model to a cost-effective operational expenditure model.

The modern data estate is user friendly and built using familiar Microsoft technology. This enables key business leaders to access information with greater ease and easily ingest additional data sources to augment their existing data.

In turn this ease-of-use has made recruitment easier for Iceland Foods, as there are less technical skills required to access and analyse the information. This also means that onboarding staff and providing training is a quicker and smoother process.

The content itself, the most important component, has proven to be as robust and reliable as it was before the migration, meaning the transition has been a success. However, the opportunities for how to use this content are now much greater due to the intelligent functionality of Azure Synapse.

The new solution is also scalable and can adapt to meet the requirements of peak trading times including Christmas. With the former estate retired, the Azure data estate aligns with Iceland Foods' broader business plan of Cloud migration.

About WARDY IT Solutions

- 65 employees
- Information Technology
- Australia & USA
- www.wardyit.com

WARDY IT Solutions was founded in 2004 by Microsoft Valued Professional (MVP), Peter Ward. Today, WARDY IT Solutions is recognised as Australia's leading provider of Microsoft Data Platform consultants, trainers and Data Analytics specialists.

Our clients benefit from our deep knowledge in this area and provide support across a range of services including:

- Licensing reviews – assistance with understanding and navigating

- Migrating SQL Server – so it is seamless and stress-free

- Performance optimisation – to ensure you are getting the very best out of your platforms

- SQL Server Database Healthcheck – so you know what you need

- Cost clarity and control – to eliminate surprises and provide predictability

- Accelerate your journey to Azure – in a supported, timely way

Words of Advice

For Phil, the key learning he took away was that the process would have benefited with a longer lead time. Not specifically for the migration but for the internal work that had to be conducted beforehand.

"I think creating proof of concept is important for a partner but also for the internal team. By taking a subset of what you want to deliver and looking at the challenges, you can understand what you need to do to deliver the full project. The more time you have to do this, the better," says Phil.

Vision for the future

The next step for Iceland Foods is to explore the machine learning possibilities available to them. The team aspire to use AI to enable staff to conduct sophisticated data analysis. Additionally, Phil and his team are planning on working closely with WARDY IT Solutions to optimise the estate now it is in place.

"Our initial brief was to recreate the estate we had before, now we want to adjust that and optimise it to ensure we are improving performance and reducing cost where possible," adds Phil.

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