CUSTOMER STORY

ANALYTICS

Qlik places Walker in the driver's seat

Dealership group saves time and realizes significant revenue growth with VizAuto

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Tim Beno, Chief Financial Officer, Walker Automotive

A leader in a thriving community

If you drive anywhere in Central Louisiana, it's pretty much a certainty that you'll be familiar with Walker Automotive. Now in its fourth generation, the Walker family has been selling and servicing vehicles in this thriving community for more than 100 years.

Having started out as a Durant dealership in 1919, Walker gradually expanded its scope and portfolio. Across seven sites, it now sells brands ranging from BMW to Dodge, GMC and Jeep to Toyota, and an even broader selection of used vehicles. Walker's new vehicle market share in the local area of around 300,000 people is a remarkable 60%.

It's a business that's justifiably proud of its history and local standing. It also realizes that businesses with such a long history only earn that position through consistency of service and by keeping an eye to the future.

"Everybody likes to do business with people they know; for over 100 years, Walker has focused on loyalty and integrity, and built a strong brand," says Tim Beno, Chief Financial Officer at Walker Automotive. "It's also a very sophisticatedly run company. We aim to adapt to technology and bring the best of everything we possibly can to the table."

Missed opportunities

Being a future-facing business, however, can have its challenges. While Beno and the rest of the Walker team were eager to take advantage of the opportunities that digitization and analytics could offer, they were hampered by the limitations of the available options.

Solution Overview

Customer Name
Walker Automotive

Industry
Retail

Geography
Central Louisiana

Function
Finance, IT, Marketing, Sales, Supply Chain Management

Business Value Driver
Customer Intelligence, New Business Opportunities, Reimagined Processes

Challenges
- Improve business performance by maximizing use of data
- Enable flexible analysis instead of 'canned' reporting
- Save resources spent on time-consuming chores

Solution
Walker Automotive turned to Capital Data Analytics and its VizAuto platform, powered by Qlik Sense®, to replace its previous underperforming solution.

Results
- Previously resource-heavy processes completed in a fraction of the time
- Significant benefits delivered in terms of time saved and revenue gained
- Staff productivity and customer service both substantially improved

"As a sector, car retail has historically been behind the times," Beno explains. "We've had systems that have accumulated great data, but we've always struggled to get information out of the box and turn it into viable information where we can actually increase our profitability, our customer experience, and so forth."

Walker is a longstanding user of Reynolds & Reynolds, a dealer management system (DMS) that is used extensively across the industry. And while Walker had no complaints about the platform's effectiveness, Beno realized that it, and other systems used by the business, were producing large volumes of data that were not being used to their fullest extent or easily extracted.

Looking for answers on how to better harness the huge amounts of data, Walker purchased a specialty reporting tool that many others in the peer group recommended. Sure enough, this tool met some of Walker's needs, but the business was frustrated by its lack of flexibility and inability to easily build custom processes and analysis.

Adaptability and agility

Car retail may be big business, but in many ways it's also a small world – and it was through a referral from industry contacts that Walker found the answer to build complex and robust custom reports. In 2021, Beno heard about Capital Data Analytics an Elite Qlik partner based in Wisconsin. Beno began working with Kyle Frye, Co-Founder and CTO who showcased the company's new platform that is storming the market, VizAuto. This platform would give Walker the agile, adaptable solution it was looking for and would leverage Walker's Reynolds & Reynolds DMS data.

The solution was VizAuto, with the processing and analytical power behind it provided by Qlik Sense SaaS. It would work with Reynolds & Reynolds and other data sources at Walker to provide the analysis the business was looking for. Critically, it had the capacity to allow Walker to define its own sets of tasks and parameters of analysis, instead of being confined to a 'canned' set of preset functions.

"The first time I saw VizAuto and Qlik, I knew we needed to switch," recalls Beno. "Our entire management team went through the presentations and absolutely nobody hesitated. They all thought the same thing: this is what we need to do."

Frye and his team at Capital Data completed the implementation in about 30 days for Walker. "We gave Kyle the data access and he did the rest," says Beno.

"We had no trouble in getting Qlik to harness all that data and get it into the format we wanted. It was smooth as silk with no heavy lifting."

Time saved and revenue gained

It's a decision that paid off almost immediately. VizAuto is now able to access and analyze data from across Walker's business and present it using easily comprehensible and compelling visualization formats. Tasks that previously tied up staff at each location for several days at a time can now be completed in minutes.

Beno has an extensive list of examples, top of which is the process of compiling, collating and submitting repair orders for submission to auto manufacturers in order to renegotiate warranty labor rates and parts markups. Previously a painstaking and time-consuming chore, it's now completed by a Qlik Cloud Analytics process that not only saves Walker significant amounts of time – Beno estimates between 40 and 80 hours a year for each location – but has also led to substantially improved terms for the business.

"We've seen substantial growth in what we're now getting from our manufacturers, which tells us that we previously underestimated what our rate should be," says Beno. "It's going to represent well over $300,000 in additional revenue for our company. It's tremendous."

This is, however, just the beginning. Significant time savings have been recorded in month-end closure processes. "Closes used to take three and a half days," says Beno. "I would then spend five days working through spreadsheets to create the executive and operational reporting. I can now get all of that completed in just a day and a half."

A dream come true

The list continues: Walker can now instantly track how sales staff are performing against targets and take any necessary actions quickly and effectively when anomalies are identified. Receivables staff have real-time access to the status of any finance agreements, while accounting managers can analyze profit and loss on an hourly basis and assess the business's performance against forecasts.

"Every operating manager, every department manager, every executive manager has access to Qlik, along with everybody at the office who needs it. It's on everybody's computer," Beno says. "Our time is now spent far more effectively, using the information VizAuto provides to improve our business's profitability instead of preparing reports. It really is a breath of fresh air."

It also means Walker is better able to meet its most critical goal of customer service. The business can manage inventory more effectively so parts are always available when needed, and ensure that enough service advisors and technicians are on hand to provide the best possible client experience.

Beno's next goal is to use VizAuto and Qlik to gain a better understanding of Walker's customers and use the knowledge gained to develop more effective and targeted advertising. It's an ambition that Beno has no doubts about achieving.

"Qlik is a dream come true. I've been in the business for 32 years and spent most of that time digging through reports and data to get the information I need," Beno says. "That's why Qlik is an amazing tool. It's cost effective, and thanks to the team at Capital Data Analytics, it gives us the flexibility to get whatever we need. That's ultimately how Qlik stands out from any other product on the automotive market."

The keys to success

$300k in additional revenue gained from just one process

1.5 days to complete month-end reporting, down from 5.5

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About Qlik

Qlik's vision is a data-literate world, where everyone can use data and analytics to improve decision-making and solve their most challenging problems. A private company, Qlik offers real-time data integration and analytics solutions, powered by Qlik Cloud, to close the gaps between data, insights and action. By transforming data into Active Intelligence, businesses can drive better decisions, improve revenue and profitability, and optimize customer relationships. Qlik serves more than 38,000 active customers in over 100 countries.
qlik.com

About Capital Data Analytics

Capital Data Analytics helps companies gain control of their data and turn it into real business value. Its expertise spans the entire data process, from architecture to infrastructure to data presentation, ensuring we have a deep understanding of data. Its solutions make data accessible and actionable to the entire organization, to facilitate smarter and faster decisions. It also developed the industry-leading VizAuto™ platform specifically for the automotive dealership market, see more at viz-auto.com.
capital-data-analytics.com

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