



Powering higher efficiency, customer service with quality data and analytics

AmeriPride Services exploits HPE Vertica big data platform to gain strategic view, find new benefits

Objective

Differentiate from competitors and achieve further growth by using quality data, analytics in decisions and process improvements

Approach

Create a cohesive, scalable big data platform to enable data access, analysis and inclusiveness from various formats

IT matters

- Provides optimized performance for querying large, diverse data sets; some processes done in 17 minutes (36 hours previously)
- Allows creation of 15-20+ touch points in data collection that enhance customer connections
- Scales cost effectively without licensing penalties
- Provides data seamlessly for use in strengthening work and machine performance

Business matters

- Enables better decisions by providing a complete overview of culture, finances and operations
- Fosters more intelligence and analysis to understand customers, increase loyalty, strengthen partnerships and improve work roles for greater employee satisfaction
- Helps the company institute improvements that enhance safety, efficiency and environmental initiatives
- Allows executives, marketing and customer-facing employees to use data inclusively to solve key issues and direct operations

After more than 125 years of business leadership, uniform rental and linen supply company AmeriPride Services still embraces innovation. Operating 115 production and service centers in the United States and Canada, AmeriPride supplies linens, uniforms, floor mats and cleaning products to nearly 150,000 customers weekly. The family-owned business headquartered in Minnetonka, Minn., ranks number one in Canada's service industry and fourth in the United States.

For further growth, AmeriPride needed to transition its complex enterprise of disparate business segments and operating procedures to a more aligned, centralized structure. To enable cultural and process changes, the data structure needed to be aligned and integrated. However, the company's traditional warehouse built on an older platform hobbled data access and aggregation. It was difficult to congregate all the unstructured data and various information types. Instead, AmeriPride established an HPE Vertica Analytics Platform with Tableau and Informatica software, customized for the company's business.

"We were struggling with our old world and certain processes that ran 36 hours," says Tony Ordner, AmeriPride's Director of Information Architecture. "We did a proof of concept with HPE and Vertica that ran in 17 minutes. Right there, we were sold on the performance changes. Then, we discovered another big advantage in the licensing model. We're able to scale this and provide data query services at a high speed, so we can maintain high performance without taking penalties against licensing."

Today quality data and analytics foster innovation, efficiency and supreme customer service. The company applies the data to bring forth mobile-capable tools that promote customer loyalty. Handheld devices provide customer-facing employees with significant information about customer routes, contracts, schedules, preferences, feedback, issues and more. AmeriPride hones its processes and boosts customer relationships with the information.

"We have 15 or 20 different touch points in the data collection that we use to analyze and understand our

customers better and partner more closely with them. We're providing them with more ways to access our products and devising other ways they might not have thought of for using our products and services. With all of those data points, it allows us to do a much better job of connecting with them," Ordner notes.

Data-driven insight fosters improvements

Data analytics applied to the company's extensive logistical network and field assets enhances safety, efficiency and environmental savings. It helps the company distinguish itself from competitors.

"With the route systems and telematics around our drivers, data analytics helps us to be more safe, green and efficient," explains Steven John, the company's Chief Information Officer. "In our plants, it helps us use the right levels of chemicals and conserve water. We're strengthening our work and machine performance with this information."

For example, the company uses the information from HPE Vertica to maximize the skills of its union-represented workforce. By knowing certain task-related information such as the amount of time a driver loads a truck with products versus actually delivering products, managers can recalibrate work roles and negotiate reasonable changes with the union.

John notes, "We're trying to make the workplace environment safer and jobs more appealing, so analytics can help us decrease employee turnover. Using this technology, we can change the roles for greater employee satisfaction."

A tool to run great companies

Another important development is that AmeriPride has become more data-driven in its decision-making, which positively impacts the bottom line. Executives consult the data enabled by HPE Vertica software to verify whether their speculations or conclusions are on point.

"Data creates a context for conversation," John says. "In the context of their judgment and experience, our leaders can leverage data to make better decisions. We're a route-based business with over 1,000 trucks delivering our products every day. We discovered that our greatest margin was from customers within a mile of another customer. Factoring that in changes how we sell and it helps drive up our margin. With that piece of data, we as leaders know some different questions to ask and different ways to orchestrate programs that drive higher margin."

The quest for innovation continues. AmeriPride will apply the data collected through a garment tracking and monitoring system and radio frequency chip technology (RFID) to improve workflow processes. Additionally, the company looks forward to integrating scan data, along with wash isle and in-vehicle telematics into HPE Vertica for further analysis. And to prevent disruptions, AmeriPride will incorporate live feeds from its equipment and laundry production.

"We're looking forward to some of the different ways that HPE Vertica will allow us to connect to those data sources," Ordner says.

Customer at a glance

Industry

Service/Hospitality

Primary software

- HPE Vertica Analytics Platform
- Tableau Software
- Informatica Software

John concludes, “Vertica is a platform in which we have only tapped a small percentage of its capability. There’s a whole set of things it can do. It’s exciting to discover them.”

“We query large sets of data in different information types with HPE Vertica to analyze what’s going on across time. Instead of being reactive with our customers, we’re now more proactive and predictive with our analytics. The idea is to get visibility and transparency with the customer.” – Steven John, Chief Information Officer, AmeriPride

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