

United Group

Vertica's cost-effective scalability and performance delivers superior customer experience in competitive Telco industry.

Who Is United Group?

United Group is the leading multi-play telecoms and media provider in South East Europe, providing customers with a full range of telecommunications services. With over 4,500 employees, its annual revenue exceeds €740 million.

Fast Company and Data Growth Calls for Enterprise-Level Data Analytics

United Group's companies have established a reputation for providing the highest quality content and services in their respective markets. With unmatched cable and DTH (Direct To Home) reach across the region, and internationally targeted media services, United

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CIO
United Group

Group's companies are able to provide content across all devices and formats, and deliver fast broadband and inexpensive voice calls. Their acquisition strategy has fueled growth and the company has doubled in size in recent years. With growth come new challenges, as Andrija Derežić, CIO for United Group, explains: "We add new companies, data sources, and subject areas all the time. When our existing analytics platform, Netezza, was declared end-of-life by the vendor, but our user number and data queries kept on rising, we realized we needed a new scalable solution. We looked for an enterprise-level platform that would give us the best value for money, while boosting our performance for complex queries and data mining."

In collaboration with local implementation partner Poslovna Inteligencija (PI) and after researching the market, United Group made the decision for Vertica. PI specializes in the implementation of intelligent information systems for decision support and Derežić's team enjoyed a close collaboration with PI experts: "When we work with PI, knowledge sharing is an important part of the project. This enables us to continue developing and optimizing the solution ourselves. The PI consultants are an integral part of our joint team and are always there to support us. Our long-term partnership with PI has helped us with our expansion and integration of other companies."



At a Glance

- **Industry**
Telecommunications
- **Location**
Serbia
- **Challenge**
Support data-driven operations and new service initiatives with an enterprise-level data analytics platform that scales with rapid company growth
- **Products and Services**
Vertica Analytics Platform
- **Critical Success Factors**
 - + 4X query speed improvement on comparable hardware
 - + Unrivaled scalability and performance for growing company
 - + Machine learning boosts addressable advertising
 - + 360 degree customer dashboard enhances customer service

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The first priority was to migrate data analytics from the existing platform by creating a mirror Vertica system. By running parallel systems for a few months, the organization ensured that data and results could be compared and tested under the exact same conditions. United Group’s analytical architecture is standardized to make new company acquisitions easier to integrate. All divisions run the same SAP-centred solution, from which data flows into an Informatica Extract/Transform/Load (ETL) environment. Here, the SAP data is combined with other data sources and fed into Vertica for pushdown transformation. Customer, operational, financial, and service-quality data is analyzed in Vertica and used as the basis for Tableau reporting and data-driven processes.

Vertica Machine Learning at the Heart of Addressable Advertising

With over 15TB of data to manage, performance was a major consideration in choosing Vertica. Derežić was pleased to note some quick results: “Our nightly ETL run used to take 100 minutes in the old environment. With Vertica, the same query would run in just 24 minutes, so more than four times faster. On average, query speed has doubled. It made us realise Vertica has a key role to play in other United Group use cases too.”

Recently, United Group launched its Video Dynamic Advertising (VIDA) platform. This

revolutionary application provides addressable TV advertising. It delivers a personal block of ads based on each customer’s interests. VIDA combines click stream data about channel changes with an Electronic Program Guide (EPG) to identify the customer’s preferred programs and what they’re currently watching. United Group’s streaming platform, EON, knows what device the customer uses to watch as well, and this will also influence the choice of ads. Vertica combines 50+ customer and device profile attributes, such as geography, demographics, customer value, and sport and lifestyle interests, with information about the particular program and device to train profiling algorithms. These are used to make near real-time decisions on how to fill an upcoming advertising block.

Derežić explains the value this offers to advertisers: “This unique offering enables such specific segmentation that even small and medium companies can benefit from advertising on a national channel, as we can offer their ads to a very specific, or regional, target audience. Vertica’s machine learning power really comes into its own here, as it ingests data from live broadcasts and responds immediately with customized ad suggestions.”

360 Degree Vertica Dashboard Enhances Customer Service

United Group was already a data-driven organization, focused on analyzing its KPIs, customer

needs, and making data-driven business decisions. Vertica has taken this a step further with fully integrated data-driven operational process execution. For instance, the SAP environment is used when a customer raises a query. As the SAP operator manages this, they receive a near real-time Vertica-driven customer profile, visualized within their SAP Web GUI. They have an up-to-date 360 degree view of any outstanding issues or requests. Vertica also recommends prioritization of customer requests, based on previous calls, service performance, and other segmentation factors. This means high-priority customers receive fast support, based on the near real-time situation.

“Sophisticated data analytics, provided by Vertica, are critical in understanding our expanding customer base,” says Derežić. “Scalability, performance, and rapid roll-out of new services are key to the success of our business in a competitive industry.”

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Data Sources

- SAP
- CRM, Billing, ERP, etc.
- Cisco
- Channel change events
- EPG

Transport Layer

- Informatica
- Apache Kafka

Reporting / Applications

- Tableau
- IBM Cognos
- VIDA