NEUDESIC

CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH FUND

Modernizing data management for improved accessibility, sophisticated reporting, and efficient support to public charter schools nationwide

The Challenge

- Improve ability to support deep analysis of complex academic and operational data to enable more high-quality public charter networks to grow nationally

- Update data systems to manage expansion in types and sources of information

- Increase accessibility to data across the organization

- Simplify reporting, shifting from manual data analysis to streamlined, automated systems

- Connect with a technology partner to transform existing systems for long-term growth and performance, without adding outside consulting requirements

The Solution

- Leverage the competence of a proven Microsoft partner for effective support of Office 365, Salesforce.com, and Microsoft Power BI

- Capitalize on Azure as an integrated platform and data repository

- Establish a platform for seamless data management including visualization tools

- Create a self-service data environment, with companywide accessibility to reporting and analysis

The Benefit

- Close partnership created a strong pattern of knowledge transfer and training

- Ready-made reports simplified and accelerated use of the new system

- Comprehensive modernization of data management has transformed data access, reporting and visualization from manual operations to fast, automated processes

- New efficiencies enable faster and more sophisticated segmentation in data reporting

- Organization is now a more responsive entity with access to deeper data insights

> *Neudesic's partnership has been invaluable in optimizing our data management options. Shifting from manual to automated systems is a dramatic evolution that will benefit our schools, and allow us to achieve even more with our formidable resources.*
>
> *– Kevin Hall, CEO, Charter School Growth Fund*

CSGF IS NOW A MORE RESPONSIVE ENTITY WITH ACCESS TO DEEPER DATA INSIGHTS.

The Client

Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF) is a national nonprofit devoted to growing the nation's largest nonprofit charter school networks. Driven by a conviction that all children deserve great public schools in their communities, CSGF identifies the country's best charter networks, makes multi-year philanthropic investments in their expansion, and provides them with support to increase their impact as they grow. Currently, CSGF portfolio members operate more than 800 charter schools nationwide, providing more than 370,000 students with high-quality education.

The Challenge

To identify and support the strongest charter networks in the nation, it is critical for CSGF to have access to high-quality data. The CSGF team looks at many data points, including standardized test scores, student demographics, operational and financial metrics and graduation rates to determine an organization's efficacy in academics, leadership, and financial health. This information is critical not only in selecting CSGF portfolio candidates, but also in the ongoing support of CSGF's portfolio members. In addition, the data plays a key role in outreach to donor groups to facilitate investment funding. "To help us create the greatest value from available information, data must be accessible across the enterprise, in smart ways that reveal deeper insights, faster," said Tung Le, Vice President of Analytics at CSGF. "This is a challenge, as the type and number of data sources continue to evolve across our national footprint. We recognized the need for an advanced technology architecture that could streamline our rigorous data analysis and enhance our overall capacity."

CSGF initially focused on the need for data flexibility, visualization, and structure. Because data was collected and tracked but not stored in a central repository, various internal teams had difficulty accessing the information in a timely fashion. "The new solution needed to address where and how data was stored and accessed, how we could turn that data into visual, actionable intelligence, and create an infrastructure our teams could utilize with seamless integration," said Le.

Ideally, CSGF's data systems would be integrated and accessible on a single, powerful platform – offering convenience, self-service reporting capabilities, and premium accessibility to data as needed.

The Solution

CSGF chose Neudesic as its technology partner for this transformation, based on Neudesic's depth of knowledge with Microsoft technologies as well as its collaborative approach in developing solutions. "Neudesic assembled a team that incorporated CSGF resources. This was a unique approach, in that they didn't just tell us what they thought we needed. They created a real partnership -- getting to know the way we work, preparing us for change, and transferring knowledge at every step."

A first priority for CSGF leadership was to move from a single-table data model to a multiple-table data structure. "Over time, new additions to the database created complexity both vertically and horizontally in terms of storage and access," said Le. Neudesic migrated CSGF's architecture away from the organization's existing proprietary on-site servers to Microsoft's Azure cloud. "We now have the foundation to be able to ramp up data capacity in the future as needed with no limitations on managing information," reported Le. This implementation also established a central hub of data storage. Per Jeremy Serna: "we immediately saw significant new value in our data analysis capabilities. Rather than accessing knowledge from over 20 separate sources, we had both data storage and access a single, smart platform."

Having tackled the data flexibility and structure challenges, Neudesic turned to providing a robust interactive visualization tool to deliver a custom reporting experience for CSGF. With the Microsoft framework in place, the organization's Power BI software became a comprehensive solution that readily addressed CSGF's need for complex reporting throughout. "Power BI has provided us with sophisticated reporting options, translating our data into thoughtful, usable information," said Le. Reporting was further accelerated through the use of pre-established reports developed by Neudesic as part of the initial transformation.

The Benefit

Armed with a dynamic and integrated data platform, CSGF is realizing greater strategic and operational value. With data readily stored in a central hub, the entire firm gains efficiencies in access, reporting and analytics. "We're faster and more efficient in our overall data analysis capabilities, and pre-designed reports gave us an excellent head start. The system is intuitive and convenient, really transforming how we as a company access and visualize data." The system itself is manageable with minimal development requirements and without a dedicated internal IT staff.

For CSGF, creating more effective data management in a scalable platform relied on more than just new systems and processes. Ensuring an environment of collaboration, communication and responsiveness was essential to the project's long-term success. "Our team was extremely pleased with Neudesic's project engagement, in terms of communication as well as overall management," said Le. "Neudesic's ability to listen was pivotal to understanding what we were trying to accomplish. It was a breath of fresh air to work with a true partner on such a massive project."

Moving forward, CSGF is poised to better align its mission and priorities with its most important asset… data and intelligence. CSGF CEO, Kevin Hall said, "With a scalable data infrastructure in place, we can work most effectively – keeping in step with increasing data requirements and creating positive impact for students across the nation."

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