INNOVATING TO CREATE SIGNIFICANT NEW BUSINESS INSIGHT

Computacenter is exploiting the power of the Microsoft Power Platform to provide an informed viewpoint on the technology market, and is now sharing this insight with our customers

SERVICES
- Process Automation
- Software Development
- Data and Analytics
- Application Migration
- Application Engineering Support
- Microsoft Power Platform

TECHNOLOGY
- Microsoft Power Apps
- Microsoft Power BI
- Microsoft Power Automate
- Microsoft Dataverse

USER EXPERIENCE
- Faster decision making
- Improved access to information
- Improved communication/collaboration
- Improved user satisfaction

BUSINESS IMPACT
- Accelerates Innovation
- Boosts business agility
- Enriches customer experience
- Improves productivity
- Reduces costs
- Standardisation
- Supports digitalisation

OBJECTIVE

The mission of Computacenter's Office of the CTO (OCTO) is to ensure that the company continues to be relevant to our customers and partners. OCTO's interaction across a broad landscape generates significant insights and provides an informed viewpoint on the technology market.

The OCTO team has been focusing on how they can better leverage data and create new business insights through an improved version of their application known as OCTivity. To fully exploit this, multiple processes needed to be put in place to clarify strategy, capture insights, share information, and to better track Solutions Development activities.

SOLUTION

OCTO helped Computacenter's Power Platform practice to understand goals and current ways of working before the practice developed a significantly updated and improved 'Model-Driven' Power App version of OCTivity, which is underpinned by a complex set of tables, relationships, and business rules in Dataverse. It was also necessary to migrate historical data from the previous version of OCTivity.

OCTivity is now a sophisticated platform of modules underpinning the OCTO Strategy and is allowing the formulation and communication of a coherent technical strategy across our entire portfolio. New functionality includes a data recording module which captures anonymised details of customer engagement, and the mapping of anonymised customer conversations to elements within the technical strategy. Customer-facing dashboards and reporting on real-time data, are also enabling initiatives to be taken to market faster.

OUTCOME

The new application is bringing considerable benefit to Computacenter UK. We are now generating meaningful information which enables the creation of new IP/Business insights that are also made available to customers. We are also improving our operational effectiveness through better traceability and clarity of our offering's developments, as well as supporting enhanced collaboration across the business through the ability to share meaningful information that enables more effective decision making.

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> We have been looking at how we can share and leverage knowledge much more effectively as a central pillar of our growth strategy. Involving both cultural and process changes, delivering on this aim can help us to support our business and our customers better. "
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> **Paul Bray**
> **Chief Technology Officer - UK&I**
> **Computacenter**

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> Focusing on user aspects, as much as data and process, is critical in breaking down resistance to change and securing adoption to realise the value."
>
> **Paul Bray**
> **Chief Technology Officer - UK&I**
> **Computacenter**

OBJECTIVE

Laying the foundations to enable information sharing and to generate business insight and value

The Office of the CTO (OCTO) is a team of twenty-five customer-focused technologists, whose mission is to ensure that Computacenter continues to be relevant to our customers and partners. As Paul Bray, Chief Technology Officer at Computacenter says: "We are a business that thrives on the strength and depth of our customer and partner relationships. The interactions we have across a broad landscape generates significant insights and provides us with a fascinating point of view on the technology market."

However, sharing our insight was not one we had previously had the mechanism to exploit efficiently. As Paul Bray explains: "We have tried to capture this information before but lacked the specific clarity we were looking to achieve. Often, we got drawn to anecdotes and sentiments rather than stepping back and really understanding the wider perspective. We knew that deeper insights were possible, we just needed to find new ways to unlock them."

Examples of questions which OCTO were trying to answer in a more coherent and objective manner, included:
- What are we seeing in specific market segments that could be relevant to adjacent industries?
- Which organisations or industries are following similar paths in transformation where we could share experiences?
- What trends do we see emerging where we should accelerate our investment and focus?

Also targeted was the sharing of insights, substantiating anecdotes, validating opinions, transitioning from subjective to objective, and reflecting on challenging situations. As Paul Bray explains: "What we were seeing, hearing and sensing needed to be channelled better, creating a more robust approach to deliver direction and impactful outcomes to our stakeholders."

By focusing on a new purpose-built tool, and embracing the cultural aspects of change to secure user buy-in, a vision was defined of how OCTO could leverage data to drive team effectiveness, this being centred on four key questions:
- What is useful for us to capture?
- How could we exploit the data better?
- What would make it valuable to team members?
- How do we make it easy?

To progress, it was necessary to lay the foundations to fully exploit the OCTO team's insight, and to achieve this, the following processes were put into place:
- Clarity on the technical point of view and strategy for the UK business, to provide clearer and consistent perspectives across our stakeholder groups.
- The sharing of anonymous information on the various touch points within our key customers, to demonstrate value by "joining up" our conversations and helping customers to recognise beneficial alignment in activities.
- Capture of OCTO insights to gain a better understanding of what topics are common and of importance to our customers. This enables us to drive focus and clarity on our development and growth priorities.
- Demonstrate and articulate the value of OCTO in understanding the types of engagements we are having with our customers and their impact.
- Effectively track the development activities that are performed by our UK Solutions Development team, enabling us to ensure proactive campaigning of new offerings and tracking demonstrable ROI to our activities.

> "The emergence of tools like Microsoft's Power BI has been a huge benefit to us, as a company, in quickly creating visualisations of data and iterating them as further opportunities become apparent."

Gwyn Smith
Workplace Technologist,
Computacenter

> "The ability to 'see' the data we were capturing and the effect of compounding or joining up different data points has allowed us to rapidly move to a dataset that is now significantly more impactful."

Ashley Richardson
Workplace Chief Technologist
Computacenter

Paul Bray adds more. "We had also focused on the user aspects – i.e. "What's in it for me?" – as much as data and process. This is critical in breaking down resistance to change and securing adoption to realise the value. We then started to think about an actual tool that would not only let us capture information and process but would enable us to do something effective with it."

This tool – OCTivity – already existed at Computacenter as a bespoke Microsoft Power App, but although it tracked OCTO team activity and ticked reporting and compliance boxes, it lacked much of the functionality required to deliver the effectiveness that Paul and his team were looking for.

SOLUTION

Delivering additional insight and value with OCTivity by exploiting the power of Microsoft Power Platform technology

Computacenter has recently established a "Microsoft Power Platform" practice. With their inherent knowledge of the company's business processes and goals, and their ability to deliver at pace, the new practice team were ideally placed to consult and guide OCTO on the new OCTivity initiative. Initial engagements were undertaken between OCTO and the Power Platform to define the goals and vision of the application and to understand current ways of working, and later, to help implement a new platform that would deliver as required.

The original version of OCTivity was used to capture simple metrics such as the number of interactions with customers, tools, technology, solutions, etc. The new version required a much more complex data model and so the intention was to build it as a Model-Driven App using Dataverse for secure storage and management of data. As Gwyn Smith, Workplace Technologist at Computacenter explains: "An initial prototype OCTivity app was built in ew days and was iterated and improved upon even as it was being tested and used. The power and flexibility of Power Platform, Dataverse and Model-Driven Apps made this possible without writing a single line of code."

Paul Bray adds: "We began to leverage 'low code' technology to rapidly build a platform that supported our needs, without the overhead, cost and complexity of an 'off the shelf' software platform. We were able to quickly build a central repository for key data, with a supporting engine of workflows and processes that integrate seamlessly to our existing tools."

The new and much-improved OCTivity application was soon delivered across a number of sprints, and delivers the following new functionality:

Technical Strategy Module:
- Enables input and mapping of areas of technical/market interest onto our technology radar visual, providing clarity of our technical strategy.
- New workflow allows new items to be suggested by supporting teams within the business. These are then reviewed by a strategy group and subject to approval are added into the tool to maintain a "living view".

- **Customer Engagement Module:**
- A new data recording module enables the recording of key details of customer engagements using a web-based form or a responsive app.
- Allows the user to map their customer conversation to topics on the technical radar. This produces a dynamic highlighting of the topics most prevalent in customer conversations.
- The ability to review/search on customer activities in order to understand the various discussions taking place within an account.

Development Module:
- Allows Solution Leaders who are creating new offerings to record the progress and deliverables against our established development processes and timelines.

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What we have done is deliver new valuable business information, with only the smallest changes to current working practices. We now have much clearer visibility of the priority conversations and focus areas of where our customers need our help today, and where we need to get to in the future."

Paul Bray
Chief Technology Officer - UK&I
Computacenter

THE OFFICE OF THE CTO

The Office of the CTO (UK) is Computacenter's team of technology and market experts who engage with our customers to provide industry and market expertise, thought leadership and technology expertise within a range of domains across the IT Infrastructure landscape. Its purpose is to support customers in undertaking their digital transformations, from start to finish, to achieve their business goals and to help them operate more efficiently, whilst enabling agility and growth.

Reporting Module – a capability that enables:
• Customer-facing dashboards and reporting on real-time data.
• Monthly "status reporting" for items in the Development Module, to provide clear and accurate information on development progress.

Role-Based Access Control (RBAC):
• The tool is fully RBAC-enabled ensuring security in access to information and integrity of data.

User Experience:
• The application was developed against standard Model Driven App approaches and is web-enabled and mobile responsive.
• App development accommodated existing business processes, with minimal changes to established practices, to ensure user adoption.

OUTCOME

Generating meaningful information for both Computacenter and our customers, and enabling us to develop a stronger role as thought leaders

The improved OCTivity application is bringing great benefit to Computacenter UK and our customers, as follows:

• Generation of new IP/Business insight which underpins the value of the OCTO team, demonstrating thought leadership and market understanding.
• Real time access to data to demonstrate and use directly with customers, and to share with a range of stakeholders.
• Compelling customer-facing dashboards that enable us to explore topics of interest with customers and identify what topics are trending across our wider customer base.
• Monthly development reporting, enabling initiatives to be taken to market faster by integrating better with Sales Enablement and Education activities.
• Enhanced operational effectiveness through the introduction of the Development Module.
• Enhanced collaboration across the business through ability to share information, and inclusion in key processes such as Strategy reviews.
• A more user-friendly interface for OCTO and reduced volume of user input.
• The OCTO team value is now presented in bids, explaining how we perform horizon scanning and how we leverage emerging technologies.

"Having relevant data at our disposal," says Ashley Richardson, Computacenter's Workplace Chief Technologist, "enables OCTO to present a credible, objective market view across multiple sectors. This provides insight and focus to inform our customers, and a counterpoint to other sources of information available."

Paul Bray agrees. "OCTivity is creating lots of output and visuals that are very useful with customers to help aggregate into common themes and patterns what my team are talking to customers about. However, OCTivity is just the start of our data driven journey. Our efforts so far have only gone to validate what is said elsewhere that the value and opportunity of data is limitless. Over time, as the data grows, it will become much more the basis for the decisions that we make and will continue to improve our services and insight to our customers."

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about our enterprise services and read more customer case studies, log on to
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