

# WhereScape®

## SMITH & WILLIAMSON

### *Understanding the full capabilities of its data*



Smith & Williamson is an independently owned professional and financial services group with over 1,500 people. The group is a leading provider accountancy, tax, financial advisory, investment management and private banking services to a range of clients, from individuals and families to entrepreneurial businesses, mid-large corporates, professional practices and non-profit organisations. It is one of the top ten largest firms of accountants in the UK\* and its investment management business has £16 billion of funds under management\*\*.

***“I have been involved in a number of data warehouse and ETL projects in the past and this was by far the quickest and most straight forward I have encountered and so I am delighted we opted to work with WhereScape.”***

***Mark Prior, Head of IT,  
Smith & Williamson***

### ***The challenge: Fragmented data and inconsistent reports***

Smith & Williamson has a small development team within IT, which provides data to the business, from their legacy UNIX system using COBOL. It has some stand-alone windows-based applications but they largely access data from the legacy HP systems.

The process for getting data to the business could be slow. A typical process would be a user request for data which would lead to an instruction for IT to write a COBOL programme. This programme then needed to be tested before data could be delivered to the user. As such, time to delivery could be several weeks.

As it was difficult to use business intelligence (BI) tools over the legacy systems, the business had created sophisticated Excel spread sheets and Access databases to analyse data, many performed similar functions and tried to find answers to the same questions. The challenge for IT was to provide a single version of data that could be trusted and used for BI by the business.

In April 2015, the company recruited a new head of IT, Mark Prior, with the remit to modernise the IT landscape at Smith & Williamson. A major building block in this process was how to migrate reporting workloads off the legacy Cobol platform.

Some options had been considered previously, such as *pushing* data off the legacy system into a SQL database. However David Rutherford, head of application and data architecture, who had recently returned to Smith & Williamson, believed the correct approach would be to create a standard business model by pulling the data from the legacy system

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and transforming it within a data warehouse. Ultimately, Smith & Williamson could not risk wasting time and money on a data warehouse that would not be able to produce the reports and accuracy required, so it was important that the right solution was identified.

## ***Solution***

David recommended using WhereScape, the leaders in data warehouse automation software. The WhereScape RED data warehouse application automates the entire data warehouse lifecycle, from design and implementation to operation making it agile, fast and cost-effective to deliver. David had first-hand experience of using WhereScape in his previous role at a global risk management company and had been impressed by it.

“I had only recently returned to the company, so I couldn’t have risked recommending a solution unless I was 100% confident in its ability to deliver,” said David, “But because I had used WhereScape, I knew what it could do, I knew its capabilities. WhereScape RED is clearly the best and most cost effective solution in this space for what we needed.”

On David’s recommendation the company invited WhereScape to demo its RED product to a group of developers. Smith & Williamson also attended a webinar on how to integrate WhereScape to gain BI. From these Smith & Williamson commissioned a pilot to see if WhereScape could perform as David had suggested.

## ***The Pilot***

Smith & Williamson opted for a four week pilot with the goal of replicating an existing overnight extract (a summary report which runs nightly off the UNIX legacy system). The IT team at Smith & Williamson had SQL experience but were new to data warehousing. So WhereScape trained them to use the software, as well as offering further resources during the pilot process to ease the transition. Within three weeks the extract report was reproduced and reconciled, through the newly built data warehouse.

In order to recreate the extract, data needed to be pulled in from the legacy system and, whilst the report was at a high level, the data that was pulled and transformed was at a far lower level of granularity. So, as the extract was replicated, rich data was generated in the data warehouse at the same time. This gave Smith & Williamson the ability to produce far more detailed reports. An OLAP cube was created on the back of the data transformation, allowing for drill-down capabilities through tools such as Excel.

- WhereScape RED data warehouse application automates the entire lifecycle, from design and implementation to operation and provides full documentation

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***David Rutherford,  
Head of Application and  
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## ***Benefits***

“Through interactive development, WhereScape delivered in three weeks what we estimate would have taken several months using a traditional approach with hand crafted code.” commented David.

As well as reducing the time it took to formulate reports, the data warehouse improved data lineage, traceability and documentation. The pilot also helped to identify areas for data quality improvement, which meant these could be addressed by the business.

“Through the data warehouse we got clear granular visibility into the data, the analysis was much faster and we could begin to build trust in the data source. With WhereScape, the whole reporting process was far more efficient and accurate than our previous model. This allowed us to get business insights faster, which would have been far more difficult to achieve previously with the fragmented data sets.” said David.

## ***Productionising***

With the pilot running successfully Smith & Williamson was able to create consistent fully documented OLAP cubes for querying via Excel and other desktop tools. It has also started to experiment using a visualisation tool on top of the cube data. This experiment should bring further insight to the business, easily allowing data to be examined by different categories, for example; client, country, risk profile. With accurate results and information, Smith & Williamson can react quicker to changing market conditions.

“We have achieved a lot in a short space of time, and we’re still learning, but there is more to come,” said David, “Additionally, whilst we in IT have delivered initial data insight to the business, the business itself is now actively engaging with other requests. As a result of this, development of a data warehouse, that is agile, is imperative.”

## ***The future***

Now that the data warehouse is fully operational, Smith & Williamson have put in place a process for how the business can make requests from it. They also have a number of new projects to implement new applications, and wherever possible and appropriate, data will be sourced from the data warehouse to support these new systems.

Mark Prior, head of IT concluded, “As David notes it was key that the entire process was successful as it is a major component of both our systems and data architecture strategy, I have been involved in a number of data warehouse and ETL projects in the past and this was by far the quickest and most straight forward I have encountered and so I am delighted we opted to work with WhereScape.”

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## ***Benefits***

- Gained one single centralised source of trusted data
- Speed of access and reduced query complexity for the business
- Reporting has become more streamlined
- Clear visibility into the data to help make informed decisions
- Business insights through analytics now being developed
- Automated workflow and fully documented reports now available

\*Accountancy Age 2015

\*\*As of 31 December 2015

[www.smith.williamson.co.uk](http://www.smith.williamson.co.uk)

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## **Disclaimer**

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## **Smith & Williamson LLP**

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## ***About WhereScape***

The pioneer in data warehouse automation software, WhereScape empowers organizations constrained by time, money or lack of resources, to deliver business value from their decision support infrastructure – including enterprise data warehouses, business facing data marts, and big data solutions. WhereScape has global operations in the USA, UK, Singapore, and New Zealand. [www.wherescape.com](http://www.wherescape.com)