



How Admiral Insured Itself Against Excessive Time to Value.

Industry: Insurance

Location: Cardiff, Wales

Employees: 9,000

Solutions: WhereScape® 3D,
WhereScape® RED, Teradata,
Microsoft SQL Server

Highlights:

- Time to production down from one week to under one day
- Bug fixing down from two weeks to two hours
- IT enabled to collaborate closely with business using prototypes to confirm exact requirements

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Data Warehouse Technical Lead - Admiral Group

Introduction

Admiral Insurance has progressed its data modeling methodologies from manual coding to a repeatable, automated framework in just a few months of working with WhereScape.

Challenges

Admiral's digital ambitions, combined with the increasingly disparate and complex nature of its data ecosystem, had outgrown waterfall methodologies. While the C-level needed fast, accurate data to inform and shape strategy, a reliance on hand coding meant requests took an unacceptable time to complete.

Aside from hand-coding restraints, Admiral also had the following challenges:

- Building and executing of database deployments were slow and inaccurate
- Technical and business documentation creation delayed and out of date
- No lineage
- No database change impact assessments
- Problems in scheduling and managing component dependencies



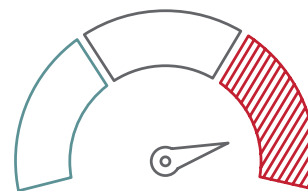
The Solution

This clear gap in technical capability led the Admiral team to realize they could only achieve the agility they required with automation. They sought a tool to aggregate their data infrastructure into an efficient data warehouse, then enable them to model that data quickly to fuel custom BI reports.

While in the past this was done by developers writing custom lines of code by hand for each request, Admiral discovered that WhereScape automation software enables the same team to move data sets around to rapidly create new structures within a wizard-driven, drag-and-drop GUI. It then automatically creates the code needed to action these requests using industry best practices, without human error. WhereScape writes thousands of lines of code in seconds to drastically accelerate development. This allows IT to react to end user requests in a fraction of the time, significantly reducing time to value.

Proof of Concept

Admiral's IT team invited WhereScape to their offices in Cardiff, Wales, to see if their WhereScape 3D and WhereScape RED products could meet requirements around time to production, but also future-proofing their technology investment and strategy. The team knew that with constant disruption from new technologies, any change made must also be adaptable in future in case (or perhaps when) the rules change again. The Admiral team wanted to avoid having the same problem as they were facing in a few years' time.



Experience fast.

During the POC, WhereScape demonstrated:

Time to Production - While Admiral's demand was for WhereScape code to be deployed into production within a week of development, they found this can now be done in under a day. This includes dev to test and test to deployment.

Performance Testing - The time taken to refresh a new dashboard (showing three months' worth of data) takes 50 seconds compared to multiple hours previously. Data can be loaded daily rather than weekly, and this ingestion process takes just nine minutes. Delivering requirements around a web statistics project took a single two-week sprint, which was half of the time Admiral expected. Key features requested were a flexible design and self-service capabilities, both of which were fully enabled.

Futureproofing - The futureproofing of Admiral's architecture was confirmed with a demonstration of WhereScape RED's ability to manage migration from Teradata to SQL Server from one database to another. WhereScape's platform agnostic capability gives Admiral the agility to switch technology quickly and easily should the team need to. "WhereScape is database agnostic, compatible with multiple platforms. This has become very important to us recently," said James Gardiner, Data Warehouse Technical Lead at Admiral Group.

The WhereScape Journey Begins

After excellent feedback from Gardiner's team, the POC was deemed successful and Admiral signed up to WhereScape's agile philosophy. This started by arranging all data sources, from various silos, into a cohesive data warehouse structure. Rather than relying on a warehouse built by hand-coding and prone to human error, IT and business stakeholders agreed on the ideal architecture and modelled it using WhereScape 3D, then built it by automatically creating faultless code that follows industry best practices using WhereScape RED.

Admiral chose a third normal form enterprise data warehouse on Teradata. The switch to this architecture was attempted previously but changes, bug fixes and deployments took far too long to implement, which didn't suit Admiral's agile delivery mechanisms. By using automation to speed up these processes, including complex change management, WhereScape has enabled agile development on Teradata.

Gardiner said: "WhereScape is very rapid to develop, very easy to learn. Even junior members and graduates with little experience can learn how to use it.

"Quick turnaround of deployments is very important. Running through all the checks and generating a deployment package is really straightforward and quick - we've been able to run multiple deployments and reconcile environments in hours rather than days.

"The turnaround of our bugs has been incredible. It takes two hours now where it used to take us two weeks. The autonomy the developers have over deployments means a quicker turnaround for performing re-tests.

"We have up to date technical documentation and mapping that testers use as a baseline, and lineage out of the box so it's very easy to maintain and debug because you know exactly where everything is derived from."

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Where Admiral Is Now

Admiral was fully self-sufficient on WhereScape shortly after a successful five-week pilot scheme. "We very rarely hit an issue where we need support from WhereScape. We can usually work things out as a team if there is something we are struggling with," said Gardiner.

The service IT can offer the business has been transformed – Admiral can deliver new projects at the speed demanded by today's digital marketplace. This means the IT team can now enable agility and reduce time to value, moving from short consultations with business users to rapid prototyping and into production in just a few weeks using Collaborative BEAM (Business Event Analysis and Modeling) meetings.

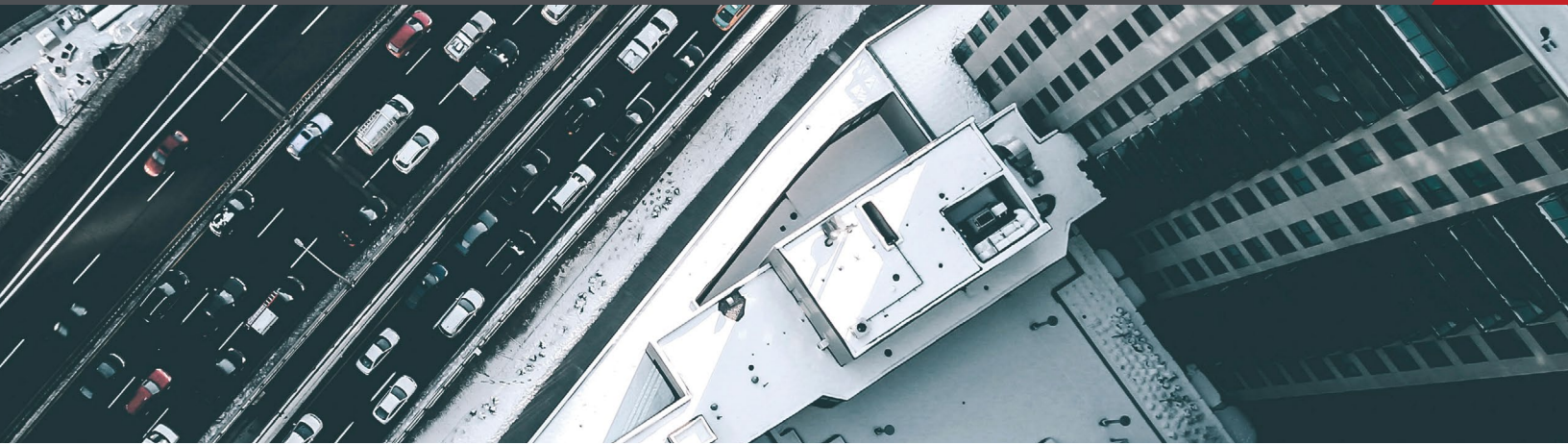
Now the business can communicate exactly what they want, directly to the developers. In the past, closed silos and communication through a third party sometimes led to demands being misinterpreted and hours of work wasted on projects that weren't exactly what the business had in mind. This cost valuable time and money, which is now being channeled properly with minimum wastage.



The Admiral team.

Using WhereScape, the Admiral team can now:

1. Prototype data models in WhereScape 3D to check requirements have been understood and can be actioned technically
2. Convert agreed prototypes to working data models with WhereScape RED
3. Deliver working functionality to end users at a fraction of the time it took them previously
4. Have vastly improved faith in the numbers, as automation removes the potential for human error
5. Automatically produce perfect documentation and full lineage to accompany every action committed



Summary

In the six months since the company started using WhereScape, Admiral has delivered four full projects to production in four different subject areas, and have leveraged the flexibility of WhereScape's scheduling tools to prioritize EDW loads depending on business need

What the Future Holds

Admiral is now expanding its data platforms by implementing SQL Server and Cloud technologies. The idea is to run the whole infrastructure under the common framework that WhereScape provides. Rather than specialized knowledge being held by just one team member, the whole team is now trained in WhereScape.

The full data lineage WhereScape creates automatically enables Admiral to be prepared for GDPR well before the regulations hit EU law. "There were huge benefits gained from the automatic documentation generated. We use the track back and forward functionality a lot for accurate impact analysis. We know exactly what we have to change in the model and where it is because we can track it all. It's all dependency tracked too."

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About WhereScape

WhereScape helps IT organizations of all sizes leverage automation to design, develop, deploy, and operate data infrastructure faster. More than 700 customers worldwide rely on WhereScape automation to eliminate hand-coding and other repetitive, time intensive aspects of data infrastructure projects to deliver data warehouses, vaults, lakes and marts in days or weeks rather than in months or years. WhereScape has global operations in the USA, UK, Singapore and New Zealand.