

ANALYTICS

AutoNation

AutoNation drives insights, user uptake, and returns on investment with transition to the cloud



About AutoNation

AutoNation is an automotive retailer based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, that supplies new and pre-owned vehicles and related services across the U.S. AutoNation was founded in 1996 with 12 locations and now operates over 300 retail outlets.

By moving from Qlik Sense® to Qlik Cloud Analytics™ and Snowflake, AutoNation has expanded the benefits of Qlik across the business, providing vital feedback on marketing activities and return on investment. Engineers and developers can focus on innovation instead of infrastructure maintenance and updates while also exploring future opportunities with Qlik Automate and Qlik Answers™.

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Aaron Corneail, Senior Business Intelligence Developer and Administrator, AutoNation



Customer Name

AutoNation

Industry

Retail

Geography

Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA

Function

IT, Marketing, Sales

Challenges

- Optimize marketing spend and investment
- Improve data accuracy and speed of access
- Increase uptake, use, and deployment of data and analytics

Solution

By switching to Qlik Cloud Analytics with Snowflake, AutoNation was able to overcome network issues and broaden user adoption.

Results

- Qlik user base increased by around 300% and growing
- Staff can focus on new developments instead of problems and maintenance
- Qlik Automate and Qlik Answers offer exciting and valuable ways forward

Capitalizing on the key advantages

Buying a car from the largest dealer group in the U.S. has multiple benefits. AutoNation covers all the bases in the car retail journey, from selling both new and used vehicles, operating its own finance provider, and an extensive spares, service, and repairs operation. AutoNation's impressive scale also gives it purchasing power with leading manufacturers that can be passed on to the buyer.

"Our size gives us advantages the smaller guys can't offer," says Aaron Corneail, Senior Business Intelligence Developer and Administrator at AutoNation. "If you come to AutoNation, you can finance your purchase directly with us, and we can offer related promotions. A local dealership is going to have a hard time competing with us on that."

Central to AutoNation's success is its marketing operation. From direct-to-customer campaigns through Google Ads to after-sales opportunities, AutoNation's success is a result of its return on marketing investment (ROMI).

"That's where the analysts come in," says Corneail. "They're looking to answer two main questions: What results did our marketing investments deliver? And where should we invest next?"

When Corneail joined AutoNation, Qlik Sense was already in place, working with Snowflake to deliver data to meet critical marketing requirements. However, user uptake was low, and many users insisted on sticking to tried-and-trusted spreadsheet-based analysis. Corneail quickly saw what was holding things back.

"We were frustrated by network connectivity issues," he explains. "We would have to bring data down from Snowflake in buckets and then just reload the current quarter each day because reloading the entire history took too long. It was a painstaking process."

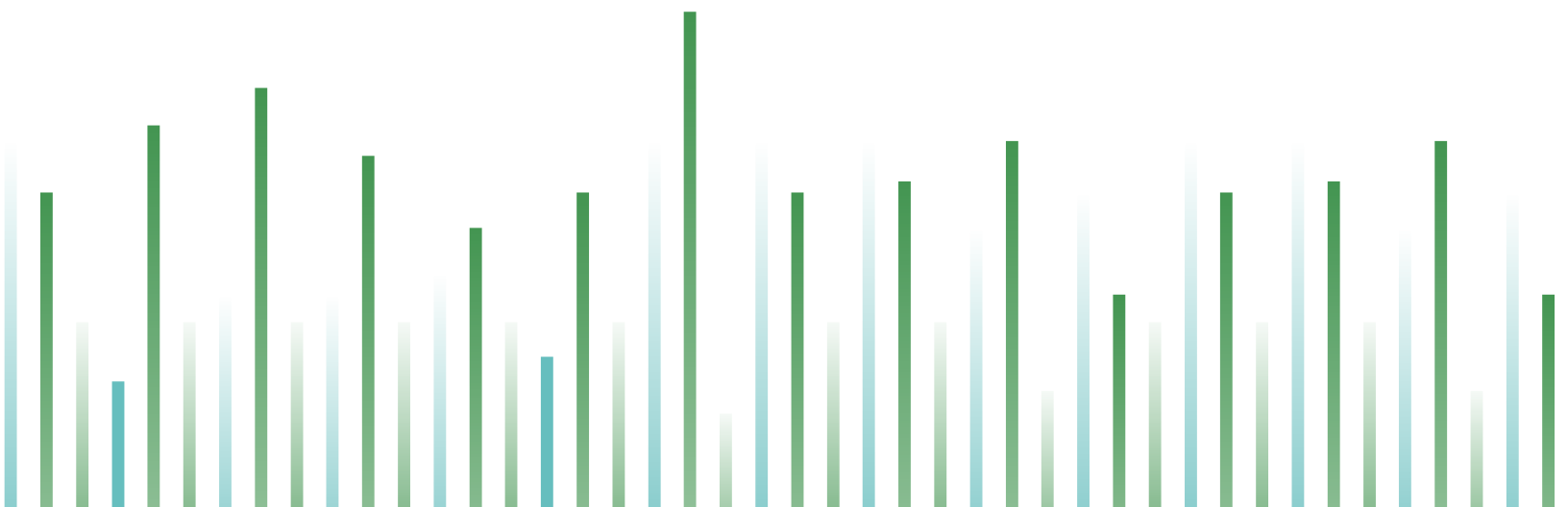
It also meant that analysts weren't taking full advantage of either AutoNation's growing reserves of valuable data or Qlik's visualization capabilities. Corneail needed a way to optimize the infrastructure and simplify key processes such as updates and maintenance.

Delivering results from day one

When AutoNation saw the opportunity to implement Qlik Cloud Analytics, the benefits became clear immediately. Moving away from its on-premises solution not only eliminated any connectivity issues but also unlocked new levels of efficiency and reliability.

"The migration was far simpler than I ever expected, and that was down to Qlik DataTransfer," Corneail recalls. "I just produced a QVD file for each app and dashboard that was moving upstream and boom! They just populated. The very next day, all the cloud-based apps were working exactly as we'd wanted them to when they were in-house. I was very pleasantly surprised. I thought I would have to go through them all one at a time to make sure everything worked."

With Qlik Cloud Analytics, AutoNation has finally achieved the environment it had always envisioned. Data from its in-house SQL server is now transferred to Snowflake as a QVD file via Qlik DataTransfer, which then feeds into Qlik Cloud Analytics.





“The issues we were having with our internal network just went away,” Corneil adds. “We have a much faster connection to Snowflake and we’ve been able to remove a lot of processes from the environment. It took care of everything from day one; the data matched exactly and it now reloads at the same time. It is very impressive.”

Better decisions, better outcomes

With Qlik Cloud Analytics, AutoNation now has a reporting platform that gives its marketing teams the information they need to inform AutoNation’s strategy and its future.

“The tools we’re now giving people help them make better decisions,” Corneil explains. “They could spend hours and hours working through data and not achieve the insights we can with Qlik. That makes everyone look good, and our user base has tripled as a result.”

For AutoNation, this means assessing the reach and effectiveness of each marketing campaign, determining ROMI, and using the knowledge gained to better plan the next project and make it even more effective.

“Accuracy is the main driver here. Our budget data changes very rapidly, so that refreshes every 30 minutes. For other areas, it’s daily,” Corneil says. “People can work through the data, slice it, and drill down much faster. The interface on Qlik Cloud Analytics is so much better than anything we had in house.”

Qlik’s tabular reporting is taking AutoNation away from what Corneil describes as the “Wild West” of spreadsheets, while the as-a-service environment frees him up from routine maintenance and updates to focus on valuable new developments.

“We’re giving them usable screens, and we recently enhanced them further with Qlik GeoAnalytics, for example,” he adds. “My focus has moved away from fixing broken tools to building new ones, as people ask me to add new tables, dashboards, and maps. And GeoAnalytics allows us to focus on the areas that matter and cut wasteful spending on areas that don’t bring us any advantage.”

As news of what Qlik is bringing to AutoNation's marketing teams spreads across the business, Corneil is already looking to the future. A pilot of Qlik Automate is proving to be highly successful, and he is particularly excited about the possibilities offered by Qlik Answers.

"Engineers are developing tasks in Qlik Automate to bring predictive AI into our dashboards and apps, taking results and building new KPIs and what-could-happen scenarios," Corneil says. "Qlik Answers has a huge potential benefit, and it will take the benefits of Qlik further across the business as people see that they can just ask a question and have charts, graphs, and tables fed back to them. That's really going to be the next big thing."

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About Qlik

Qlik transforms complex data landscapes into actionable insights, driving strategic business outcomes. Serving over 40,000 global customers, our portfolio leverages advanced, enterprise-grade AI/ML and pervasive data quality. We excel in data integration and governance, offering comprehensive solutions that work with diverse data sources. Intuitive and real-time analytics from Qlik uncover hidden patterns, empowering teams to address complex challenges and seize new opportunities. Our AI/ML tools, both practical and scalable, lead to better decisions, faster. As strategic partners, our platform-agnostic technology and expertise make our customers more competitive.

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