

Virgin Media

Virgin Media is the first provider of all four broadband, TV, mobile phone and home phone services in the UK. Virgin Media is a part of Liberty Global plc, the world's largest international cable company. Together Virgin Media and Liberty Global serve 27 million customers across 14 countries, helping connect people to the digital world and enabling them to discover and experience its endless possibilities.



PROBLEM

Virgin Media, the UK's first quad-play provider of broadband, TV, home phone and mobile with nearly five million customers, has historically grown through acquisition, merging Telewest and NTL with Virgin Mobile. The combined company had numerous separate cable billing systems. "We wanted to simplify processes and billing to ensure consistent data increases," says Farrukh Hasan, Information and Governance Architect at Virgin Media.

In the highly competitive industry of telecom services, new service bundles and products are generated constantly. Each year, there is more pressure to shorten the delivery time for new product offerings—lifeblood for broadband media companies.

With Virgin Media's different billing systems using many slightly varying combinations of reference data—the company previously had some 200,000 reference billing codes, many overlapping.

IT and business staff from different units could not communicate using the same data terms. Operational systems worked, but reports sometimes did not. According to Hasan, "At times IT had to tell business users, 'The systems cannot do what you want. They cannot produce that report.'"

In response, groups across the company tried to piece together a picture on their own. This approach was practical but time consuming. Each data store benefited just one department, not the entire company. The company wanted to create a single, authoritative view of marketing and sales data. "We can't hide the data. We must have tools to make it available, drive value and drive value quickly.

"With Kalido MDM's web browser interface, you don't have to be an IT practitioner to understand what it is doing."

Farrukh Hasan
INFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE
ARCHITECT
Virgin Media

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SOLUTION

With an explosion of overlapping reference codes to describe its residential cable products, Virgin Media decided to create one centralized product hierarchy, and govern the runaway creation of new reference codes. Implementing the Kalido Master Data Management (MDM) solution was a key subproject within a larger enterprise data warehouse project.

Virgin Media's requirements:

- ▶ The ability to load all billing reference data from multiple sources.
- ▶ A simple interface for updates by business users, to implement a validation and authorization process.
- ▶ Once mapped to the centralized hierarchy, the data had to be available to a data warehouse for exploitation and reporting.

Virgin Media studied multiple RFP responses, then selected Kalido MDM for its strong business orientation and generic, flexible model with integrated workflow. Additionally, Kalido's thin client architecture matched Virgin Media's requirement.

The Team and Timely Implementation

To implement Kalido MDM, Virgin Media brought together a small technical team from Kalido, internal IT staff and business analysts, and product experts from revenue assurance. "We did not need a large team to build the solution. Instead, this project called for a rather small interdisciplinary team with specific data knowledge."

The team implemented an architecture that includes the Oracle DBMS and JBOSS web server, with Kalido's Category Reporting scripts for data extraction. The team met the initial project timeline of eight months for creating and populating the data model. The team also defined a complete product code hierarchy, and established the policies and process to define new products

RESULT

"MDM sparked a new thought process within our business," says Julian Vercoe, MDM Specialist at Virgin Media. "It enabled Virgin Media to set up a data governance process for new products, with workflow guiding the creation of new codes by product managers and business managers. Master Data Management gave us the framework to formalize this. We saw that we could master the situation." As more users within Virgin Media engaged with MDM, and agreed on the definitions, according to Vercoe, "It ended the question of which definition or code was correct."

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Kalido MDM became Virgin Media's standard for product definitions. When Virgin Media staff need to consult an authoritative list, they turn to MDM. Says Vercoe, "If it isn't in MDM, it's not definitive."

Kalido MDM also became a beneficial tool for effective collaboration. Business groups now could dialogue with one another via the common framework. And for IT, "Kalido MDM is now a key vehicle for engagement with our external users."

MDM Increases Amount of Dependable Data for Reporting and Analytics

Hasan, who communicates frequently with business units around Virgin Media, hears reactions to Kalido MDM around the company. For instance, users in Finance and Product Reporting confirm they see data flowing consistently, and their confidence in MDM enables more freedom to join data from additional sources. "We can link more data to MDM-based definitions, which strengthens our reporting."

MDM's ability to extend unambiguous meaning to more data also improves predictive analytics and forecasting. In an industry where companies battle every day against customer churn, forward-looking tools are crucial to management.

MDM now plays a beneficial role every month in Finance, which draws from accounting and billing system to produce monthly journals. Each month, a substantial block of unclassifiable data had to be dropped into a default bucket where an accountant would "crawl through it."

Now, 80 percent of that data is rolled up automatically via MDM's data mappings. The remaining 20 percent is an explainable, understood amount; known as "murk," it is easy to allocate with Kalido MDM's drill-across and drill-down capabilities. Thus MDM helped almost completely automate a tedious, error-prone task and freed up accountants' time — Virgin Media can produce its Director Level Month End Packs a day earlier, with increased report accuracy.

Confidence and Compliance go Hand in Hand

With workflow in Kalido MDM now defining an authorization process for edits to financial attributes, IT has an additional safety layer for Sarbanes-Oxley compliance. Now reports for both internal and external financial, sales/marketing, and audits—land on managers' screen faster and are used with greater confidence.

Support Faster New Product Introductions

MDM has also enhanced Virgin Media's ability to cut time to market by speeding up new product definitions by business units. "MDM is a key part of our framework for new ideas, and we can come out the door much quicker."

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Virgin Media: Strategic Benefits from Data Governance and MDM

MDM helps Virgin Media speed time to market for new products, while it improves analytics. “To grow our business, quality data is key to good decisions, and better data speeds up understanding,” says Hasan. “In IT we work with data every day. Now we also engage the business side in data governance, and it is a powerful change.”

Rather than data existing in multiple unsupported, incomplete duplicates around the company, IT now has governance over consolidated, single-truth data that business users can leverage. The speed and improved data quality of reports have a positive impact on how the residential side of Virgin Media performs as a business.



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