SnapLogic Supports Browns Shoes Through COVID-19 Pandemic

Browns

<48 hours
new processes and systems rolled out in less than 48 hours

Streamlined
existing processes and built out new ones, with lean IT team

Insights
increased data movement across systems generating timely insights

USE CASE
Process Automation

INDUSTRY
Retail

DEPARTMENT
Central IT

CHALLENGE
Manual, inefficient processes prevented business speed and agility

SOLUTION
Streamlined existing processes and built out new ones, with lean IT team

INTEGRATIONS
Salesforce Commerce Cloud, WMS by Generix Group, OMS by Tecsys, BoxKnight, Fedex, AWS, Tableau

Browns Shoes Backstory

Browns Shoes is a family-owned business established in Montreal in 1940, and is synonymous with top international designer collections and exclusive street-savvy fashion for men, women, and children. With 68 locations throughout Canada, Browns recently celebrated its 75th anniversary as a thriving and growing family-owned Canadian company, and marked the five-year anniversary at its new LEED head office building in Montreal.

As North America's leading independent footwear chain, Browns is embarking on a new phase of growth with a renewed commitment to elevating the shopping experience for their customers. The retailer has also invested heavily in a state-of-the-art distribution center, featuring a fully automated 'intelligent' system which is comprised of 63 robots fulfilling store orders as well as e-commerce orders.

The Challenge

As part of its efforts to continually improve the customer experience, the IT team at Browns Shoes was looking to better embrace the growing amount of valuable data it collects and manages via new business intelligence and data warehousing initiatives. The retailer started with Tableau and Python script to move all the data needed in a SQL database, but in order to scale the project and make it business-ready the IT team needed an efficient way to move large amounts of diverse data from the various systems it had into its data warehouse. To do this, Browns Shoes sought an ETL tool that would match its requirements.

The Solution

After reviewing many ETL offerings on the market, Browns Shoes selected SnapLogic as it not only met all of the company's ETL needs, but it also addressed a wider set of business requirements and provided the IT team with the flexibility to do much more in the future.

Alexandre Hubert, Senior Director of IT Strategy and Logistics, commented: "At Browns Shoes, we want to ensure that our customers have the best possible experience, which extends across both our physical stores and our website. Delivering on this promise starts with a deep understanding of our customers, across multiple touchpoints, which requires new ways of collecting, managing, and analyzing data. Just as we started to integrate SnapLogic into our IT environment to help build out these new business intelligence processes and capabilities, Canada went into lockdown following the disruption caused by COVID-19."

Business Outcomes

Like many businesses around the globe, COVID-19 introduced a new set of challenges for Browns Shoes seemingly overnight. Stores had to close, staff members in the head office had to work from home, and the distribution center workforce was dramatically reduced. But while physical stores where shuttered for the time being, this didn't mean customers weren't still shopping for their favorite shoes. After a quiet first week in lockdown the retailer saw one of its biggest spikes in online purchases, recording more than a 300% sales increase.

With this rapid increase in demand for online services, the now lean IT and logistics team had to quickly ramp up and improve processes in order to meet customer expectations. Which is where they turned to the SnapLogic Intelligent Integration Platform, something they had only just recently acquired, and SnapLogic consulting partner InterWorks.

In less than two days, the team had developed new applications to support the distribution center, using existing front-end applications and systems with SnapLogic as the backend. By using SnapLogic in this way it was able to bring together data from different systems in real-time and provide insights and answers to the team right away. This made the reduced workforce much more efficient and enabled the team to keep the promises made to customers on shipping and delivery lead times.

Another area of significant focus for the reduced IT and logistics team during this period was the customer returns process. Traditionally over 90% of returns are manually processed in-store, but with stores closed the team in the distribution center was suddenly facing a huge increase in requests for return shipping labels, and pallets of shoes were stacking up, with only time-intensive, manual processes in place to process both.

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Shipping labels, understandably, needed to be dealt with first. Using SnapLogic's API management functionality, the IT team was able to rebuild the end-to-end labels process less than 24 hours after it was first requested, by modifying an existing packing tool and integrating it with the carriers own systems to allow for customers to print their own shipping labels.

Processing the pallets of returns was arguably more challenging as it was a process which had never been tested before, there was limited technology already in place, and staff were used to hand-writing key information on paper. To resolve this, the team set up a brand new software program using React as the front-end application and SnapLogic as the backend data platform. In just a single week, the new software was developed, tested, refined, and deployed so that staff in the distribution center could quickly and efficiently process the returns.

But it wasn't just Browns Shoes affected by COVID-19. Like many carriers around the world, the carrier typically used by Browns Shoes to ship parcels to customers suffered a major bottleneck in deliveries with delays of over two weeks. With orders coming in and customers expecting timely delivery of shoes, the Browns Shoes team had to pivot to a new carrier. To keep the process moving swiftly, the team used SnapLogic to integrate the new carrier into the existing workflow within 48 hours.

"The type of growth we normally would expect to see on our e-commerce platform over three years took place in just two months," said Hubert. "We've had to be creative, agile, and fast-moving in how we address the changing circumstances that we've faced, and without a doubt, much of that wouldn't have been possible without SnapLogic."

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Hubert concluded: "COVID-19 has put a lot of stress on the supply chain and with SnapLogic we've been able to quickly respond to new issues and remain competitive in an increasingly challenging environment. It was reassuring to know that every time we had a potential issue I could use SnapLogic to dynamically respond, introduce new automated processes, all without business interruption or delay. Plus, it's been so quick to do that it has been like having a Porsche within our IT estate."

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