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Rent-A-Center Optimizes Retail Network with Alteryx

CHALLENGE

Rent-A-Center sought to empower its frontline real estate, market planning, and strategic development employees to make faster, more efficient decisions and to streamline cross-department decision-making.

SOLUTION

With the *Alteryx Analytics Gallery*, Rent-A-Center's frontline users can obtain rapid insight through ad hoc analyses by interactively querying prospect sites and adjusting trade areas to research markets, all without the need for technical training or programming experience.

RESULTS

- **Deeper Insights:** Enhanced decision-making process as frontline users have instant access to necessary maps, reports, and files any time, anywhere
- **Hours vs. Weeks:** Reduced time required to create GIS maps for 3,000 stores from 12-1/2 weeks to just under three hours
- **Intuitive Workflow:** Created a central repository of all store locations and customer maps utilized by nearly every department in the company, including drive-time calculations from different neighborhoods served by the store and the corresponding demographics within each store's trade area

Introduction

Rent-A-Center is a rent-to-own industry leader and currently operates over 3,000 store locations, while employing more than 22,000 people in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Best known for its leadership in the rent-to-own business, the company offers an entire lineup of quality products that enhance the everyday lives of its customers, including computers, furniture, smartphones, electronics, and large appliances such as dishwashers, washing machines, and refrigerators.

“We are very customer-focused and take care of our customers by renting them products that help them daily,” says Deanna Sanchez, Market Planning and GIS Manager at Rent-A-Center. “One of the ways we address the focus on customers is by providing our corporate departments with demographics for a particular store trade area to show them what types of customers reside in that particular market.”

Sanchez says there are many layers to the company's market planning analytics, including real estate, synergy analyses, competitor distribution, demographics, customer mapping, and finding target households. Rent-A-Center needed an application to improve decision-making in each of these areas, while also enabling segmentation analysis to determine how best to customize the merchandise mix in each store.

Situation

Prior to Sanchez's arrival in 2010, Rent-A-Center created maps individually on a request-by-request basis, sometimes with numerous requests from multiple departments every day. Each store map with customers and competitor locations required multiple data queries and manual compilation using GIS software, and took about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. With a roster of nearly 3,000 stores, mapping all the stores would take the equivalent of 12-1/2 workweeks. What's more, a portfolio map view of all the stores within the same timeframe was not available, so the team focused mainly on ad hoc map generation and geospatial data updates.

“Before Alteryx, map creation was a manual process with a lot of clicking and joining and queries and sub-queries,” explains Sanchez. “Employees trudged through a lot of processes where they wouldn't really see the map output until the entire process ran and then they might realize, ‘Oh, we skipped something,’



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—Deanna Sanchez, Market Planning and GIS Manager at Rent-A-Center

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or ‘We need to change something.’ Now, with Alteryx, we can see the flow of data during the process and immediately make adjustments without having to wait for the output.”

The challenge of prioritizing requests and the limited number of people who could fulfill them—trained GIS software users—often resulted in delays fulfilling those requests. Then, when the data and map output were finally available, they would be delivered via email, where attachment size limitations restricted what could be sent. Delays in making critical business decisions naturally ensued.

Solution

Having used *Alteryx Analytics* in her previous job and seen the value it brought to her prior employer, Sanchez worked to integrate Alteryx into Rent-A-Center’s processes upon her arrival.

“It was really a decision based on a knowledge of and experience with Alteryx,” recalls Sanchez. “At first, I used Alteryx only for data management and did all the GIS heavy lifting with GIS software. Then, I realized that I could transfer most of the routine mapping and a lot of the batch processes over to Alteryx. Finally, I realized that I could do all the drive-time generation, geocoding, customer demographics, and many of the spatial analyses in Alteryx as well.”

Today, Sanchez uses Alteryx for about 90 percent of her GIS work, and departments throughout the company access the data she collects through Alteryx in a single, central data warehouse. Employees can easily see all of the company’s store locations, drive-time calculations from different neighborhoods served by the store, and the demographic mix of each store’s trade area, thanks to Experian demographic and TomTom geospatial data integrated within Alteryx. The spatial and demographic data output accessed via the data warehouse has become instrumental in Rent-A-Center’s decision-making processes across the company, from HR to marketing and merchandising and even to international business.

“If I didn’t have Alteryx, I would probably have to export the demographic data summaries and email them to different departments. Then, there would be a scope creep, with each department wanting to customize the output to its needs—take out this field, rename this field,” says Sanchez. “When it goes straight to the data warehouse, it’s a standard table so people can modify field names and queries.”

Explaining how Rent-A-Center extends its use of Alteryx beyond real estate planning, Sanchez gives examples of the marketing and merchandising departments. “The marketing department is using the output I generate through Alteryx to better understand our customers by trade area and to adjust media mix and marketing promotions based on customer profiles.”

“What’s more,” continues Sanchez, “Alteryx demographic output may become instrumental in helping our merchandising department determine how to customize the merchandise mix in stores. With Alteryx we can cluster the stores using demographics and customer segmentation and optimize the merchandise mix based on local demand instead of having the same assortments in every store. The possibilities may be endless because this will impact what products they stock and what promotions they run in a particular area.”

Results

The benefits of Alteryx for her current workload are substantial, says Sanchez. Where she previously spent 12-1/2 weeks manually creating maps for Rent-A-Center’s 3,000 stores, she can now perform the entire process in just under three hours using a batch process.

Sanchez goes on to note that Alteryx has been a huge time saver for others in the company as well. “*Alteryx Analytic Gallery* applications run quickly—some in only about two minutes—and can even be accessed via a smartphone or other mobile device during a meeting, so that frontline employees can get information wherever and whenever they need it.”