Solving the Lakehouse Bottleneck

How a Global Top 10 Insurer Accelerated Access to Real-Time, Trusted Data

Overview

A global top 10 insurance company had started building a modern data lakehouse to enable faster delivery of use cases and business self-service, but the expected business outcomes still weren't materializing. Valuable data remained scattered across cloud and on-premises systems,including the lakehouse, and analysts were still spending time manually reconciling data – sometimes pulling the data itself, other times just trying to locate the right source. This effort relied on manual ETL and lacked consistent governance, masking and automation. Timely insights were still elusive. The company needed more than a new platform; it needed to optimize both its modern investments and existing systems with a federated approach, one that connects data across platforms without requiring it to be centralized to one location.

Following a rigorous proof of concept, the insurance provider selected Denodo, paired with Databricks, to establish a logical data layer and deliver universal semantics and federated governance. The shift accelerated high-value use cases and laid the foundation for a governed, data-product-centric strategy.

Business Need

While the data lakehouse team had made some progress consolidating enterprise data, much of the enterprise data remained locked in platforms like Oracle, SharePoint, Azure, and cloud platforms. Cross-functional teams still relied on SAS programs, manual ETL, and custom scripts for data reconciliation, resulting in delays and inconsistent results.

Attempts to modernize with Databricks alone were significantly delayed, impacting the timely delivery of business outcomes, particularly where integration with these critical systems was required. To address these challenges, the company was looking for:

- A unified semantic layer to enable governed views across systems, ready for business analysts' use with substantially less data preparation and reconciliation effort required
- Consistent access control policy enforcement with secure and governed integration across Oracle, SharePoint, and Azure-native systems, delivered within the company's secure cloud environment.
- A way to reduce lead times for critical use cases like claims reconciliation
- Built-in dynamic data masking and centralized access control

The Solution

The company launched a proof of concept with Denodo to explore a logical, federated approach to data access – one that would unify data across both cloud and on-premises systems without duplication. The success criteria were stringent: Denodo had to match or exceed SAS performance, connect to challenging sources like SharePoint, and natively support both role-based and attribute-based security policies.

The results exceeded expectations. Denodo unified access to Oracle, SharePoint, Databricks, and Kafka, enabling business teams to query and reconcile live data using simple joins. Use cases that previously took weeks were completed in hours. For example, retirement analysts were able to validate annuities by joining siloed datasets in real time, and SharePoint documents were extracted directly into Databricks notebooks, something no previous platform had delivered.

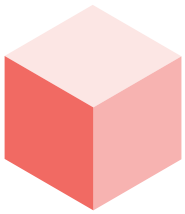
Security was unified and enforced through Denodo's built-in capabilities, including dynamic data masking in Power BI and centralized policy control aligned with the insurer's standards. Business logic was shifted to Denodo's logical data layer, improving maintainability and reducing duplication across platforms.

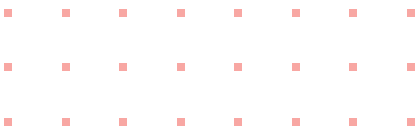
Key Outcomes

Denodo's success during the POC quickly shifted internal momentum. What began as a trial became a strategic pivot in the company's data transformation.

- Delivery of claims, contributions, and annuity validation use cases were accelerated from weeks to just a few hours
- SAS program benchmarks were exceeded for both data preparation time and query performance, with Denodo delivering greater agility and less overhead
- SharePoint integration – where Starburst and TIBCO had failed – was achieved out of the box
- Over 50 engineers and data scientists now access trusted data via a governed, self-service model

Denodo and Databricks play complementary roles in the company's modern data architecture. Databricks powers advanced analytics and machine learning, while Denodo provides the governed, real-time access layer that unifies data across critical platforms without replication. Together, they've enabled the company to accelerate data delivery, minimize duplication, and shift toward a product-centric, business-aligned data strategy. Denodo is now embedded as a strategic layer in the company's data roadmap, enabling secure access across key business domains.





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