

CASE STUDY



www.getsmarter.com

Industry
Education

Profile

GetSmarter, a brand of 2U, Inc., is a digital education company that partners with the world's leading universities to select, design, and deliver premium online short courses. The company offers premium online short courses to working professionals and is driven by a mission to improve lives through better education. 2U helps universities to evolve into their best possible digital incarnations, so they can offer transformative education to more students than ever before.



GetSmarter Leverages the Denodo Platform to Improve Time-to-Market and Customer Service

GetSmarter has been experiencing steep growth for quite some time, due to the popularity of its university accredited online courses, hundreds of which are available through the company's many online campuses in video and audio formats. As GetSmarter's customer base and operations grew more extensive and more complex, so did its data repositories, containing a variety of functional data covering marketing, finance, courses, students, and many other domains. With data spread across so many heterogeneous systems, business users could not perform a unified analysis of the enterprise data or achieve a single version of the truth.

Business Need

GetSmarter had been running many of its companywide and departmental operations in the cloud, via invoicing and payment gateways or as SaaS applications, such as BambooHR and Asana, and the company also leveraged traditional databases and data warehouses running on SQL Server. As GetSmarter's online education system encountered rapid growth, the management team wanted faster deployment and announcements of newer features and services. In response, GetSmarter IT created many microservices targeting business contexts or entities such as enrolment, registration, student portal, user interface, payments, billing, and communications.

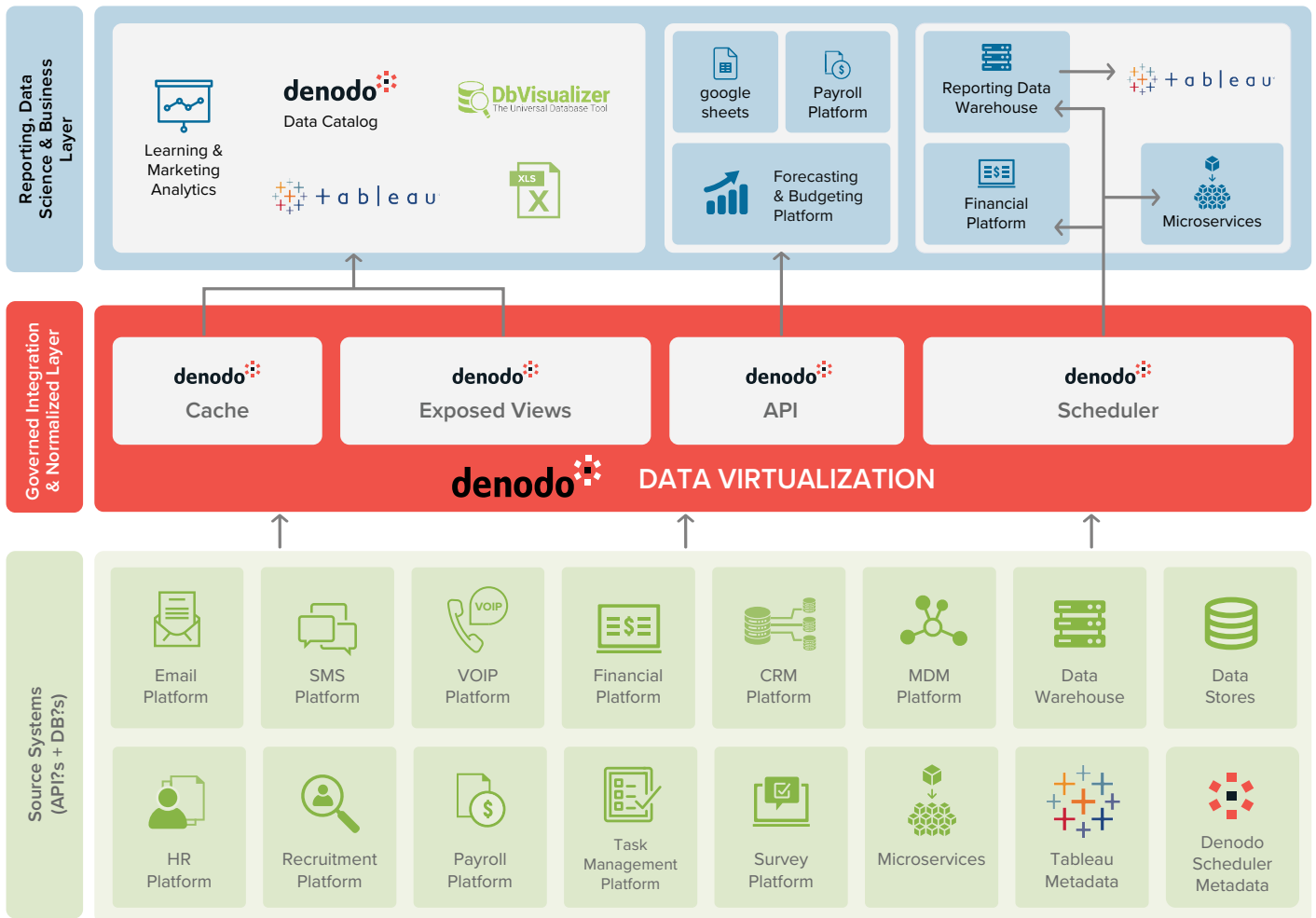
GetSmarter also wanted to capture the entire customer lifecycle starting from the prospect stage to the certification completion stage. The IT team created a number of microservices to capture all this information related to the customer's journey. While microservices accelerated GetSmarter's feature deployment and product announcements, the company's reporting tools now needed to talk to many databases instead of just one. GetSmarter needed a way to accommodate the many-to-many reporting tool and avoid having to manage multiple database connections.

"People were accessing databases directly. There was no data governance framework in place, and there was no single version of the truth," explains Schoeman Loubser, Information Architect at GetSmarter. From an analytical and reporting perspective, the company wanted to create a faster and simpler way to provide data to the data science and reporting teams. GetSmarter wanted to ensure that the company's data scientists focus only on their primary task of creating data models and not waste their time in data preparation tasks.

The Solution

To simplify the process of providing data for reporting and analysis purposes and to maintain overall data quality, GetSmarter chose the Denodo Platform. The Denodo Platform acted as a governed and normalized data aggregation layer where the business contextual definitions were created. The IT team also created a reporting data warehouse. Depending on what was required, these definitions were either exposed directly to the consuming application or were loaded into the reporting data warehouse using ETL sessions. Business, reporting, and data science teams now had access to the same data definitions. This data aggregation layer, built on the Denodo Platform, is the single source of data for GetSmarter's partner universities, student users, and corporate customers. GetSmarter also leveraged the Denodo Platform's data governance and security features, facilitating compliance with the European Union's GDPR, the UK Data Protection Act, and South Africa's Protection of Personal Information (PoPI), in addition to ensuring that the data aggregation layer was fully governed and was feature-rich in terms of security, risk, and compliance.

2U Cape Town Data Architecture Diagram



Benefits

Using the Denodo Platform, GetSmarter achieved major efficiency gains by getting its data warehouse ready for production in about 2 weeks, which otherwise would have taken about 6 months. The Denodo Platform made it possible to hide the complexities of the underlying data sources from upstream consuming applications. In addition, GetSmarter found it much easier to connect to different data sources and join data sets from different data sources. The Denodo Platform greatly simplified and shortened business reporting activities.

Additional benefits:

- GetSmarter is able to announce and launch products and services faster, while keeping quality-of-service intact, for a direct boost in revenue.
- With a single view of centralized information, GetSmarter business users can make business decisions faster than ever.
- As the virtual layer reduces the need to make copies of sensitive information such as PII and financial data, and centralizes all data protection and security rules, it has become easy for GetSmarter to adhere to regulations such as GDPR and PoPI, while executing granular access control.
- By virtualizing and combining VoIP and CRM systems, GetSmarter is able to assign appropriate student success managers to students, significantly increasing customer satisfaction.

