CASE STUDY

Creating a personalised customer experience

How Travelopia used a digital data platform to improve customer engagement and increase sales

EQUAL EXPERTS

Travelopia is the world's largest collection of **experiential** travel brands. As part of a company-wide strategic plan, the executive board wanted to rationalise investments in data initiatives and improve ROI. Travelopia engaged Equal Experts to help build a digital data platform that would improve business outcomes while keeping costs low.

> The goal was to use data from Travelopia's brands to effectively understand the preferences and behaviour of customers, to provide them with a more personalised engagement experience. Equal Experts built a new digital data platform that identified opportunities to engage with customers at key moments in their journey, across multiple brands within Travelopia.

In just 4 months we built the foundations of a data platform that provided more complex customer marketing engagements, whilst at the same time **reducing the size of the team by 80%.**
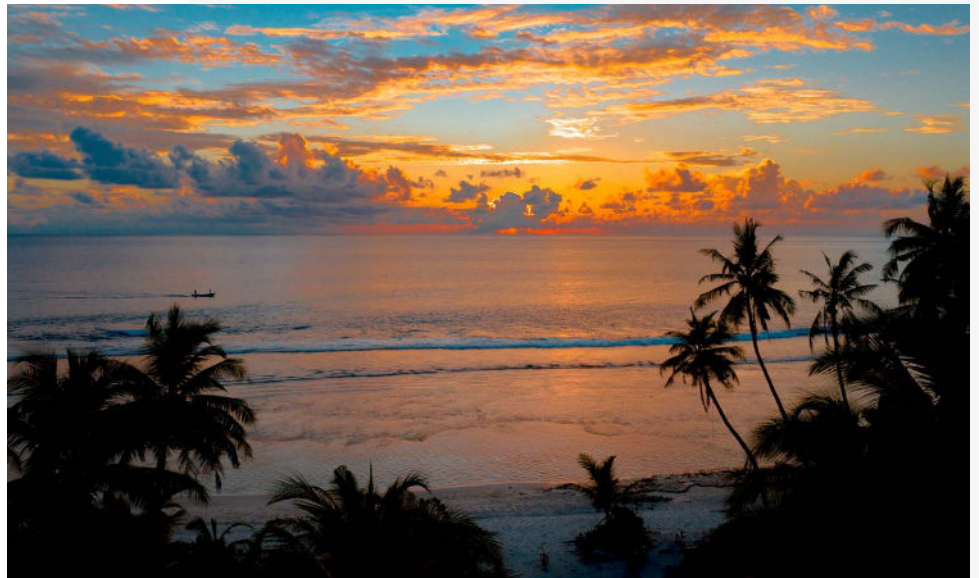
85%
Reduction in
team costs

80%
Reduction in
infrastructure cost

30%
Increase in revenue
first 3 months

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About Travelopia

Travelopia is the world's largest collection of EXPERIENTIAL travel brands. Their award-winning travel brands create unique experiences for their guests around the world. From wildlife encounters to polar expeditions, from cultural tours to yachting adventures, their business is not just about showing people the world, but designing new ways to experience it. Covering 7 key sectors: Polar, Private jet, Marine & waterways, Adventure, Tailor made travel, Education and Events, each sector is made up of unique brands, focused on being the very best at what they do.
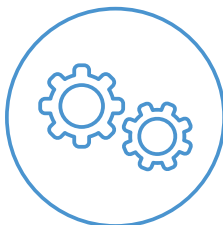
INDUSTRY	ORGANISATION SIZE	LOCATIONS	SERVICES
Travel	1500 employees, approximately $1b revenue	UK	Specialist travel experiences

Applying Data Science and ML to improve customer engagement and sales.

The first iteration of the initiative had been developed with another partner. It was built on a proprietary vendor platform with significant annual licence fees. The vendor platform had limited data observability, and this made it harder for the business to understand the outcomes of the ML models.

Equal Experts started with an exemplar use case for a single brand. We built the new digital data platform using standard AWS components including Lambdas, SNS, SQS, RDS, Managed workflows with data observability baked in.We used good software engineering principles including automated tests, continuous integration and deployment pipelines. This enabled the team to get rapid feedback from the business and improve outcomes. **We were also able to deliver outcomes faster and with a much smaller team,** compared to the incumbent partner.

The following models were delivered:

In market model	Repeater model	Abandoned Basket Activation
Uses customer browsing and past booking data to:	Uses customer demographic data and recent purchase history to:	Uses abandoned shopping cart data to:
1. Generate a score indicating the propensity of customer conversion	1. Generate a score that indicates the propensity of a repeat customer purchase	1. Identify customers who did not complete a purchase
2. Recommend products that improve customer engagement	2. Recommend when the next purchase is likely	2. Recommend products that help with customer re-engagement
	3. Recommend relevant products for the repeat purchase	

Machine learning models helped the business leverage historical data to predict future behaviour and target customers with more precise, personalised engagement, instead of sending generic marketing emails. Delivering exactly the right message at the right time in the customer journey resulted in increased sales from each interaction.

How small teams can generate rapid return on investment through continual iterative developments

From the start, the goal was to build a platform deeply aligned with Travelopia's business strategy of understanding customers and delivering targeted value. The previous version of this project took 18 months to go live. The new iteration took just 3 months to build and deliver, 6 times faster than the previous version. The new platform started to deliver value very quickly, with a 3% revenue uplift within the first month, and 30% increase in sales generated just 3 months after starting the project. Sales continued to grow month on month, with costs being recovered in less than 6 months, despite the challenging business environment during the pandemic.

The business currently attributes about 4 percentage points of revenue to the new platform to date (9 months since the first delivery). The customer is also **saving £300K per year on licensing costs.** The simpler architecture and the **"You Build It, You Run It"** mindset employed by Equal Experts meant that the team was able to deliver impressive results with just 6 consultants (4 from Equal Experts, and 2 from Travelopia).

Getting results quickly was made possible by the very close working relationship Equal Experts consultants had with our customers. We worked in 6-8 week iterations, each with a specific business objective to be tested in production. Learning from each other, this iterative approach allowed us to continually deliver value and improve outcomes.

When starting small leads to business transformations at scale.

Once the platform for one brand was fully up and running, we then started replicating the success for other Travelopia brands. The next brand had very similar results with an even shorter time for completion, due to the lessons learned on the previous iteration.

The project has had strategic visibility at board level, with progress and impact monitored on an ongoing basis. Having seen the effectiveness of the platform in the first slice, other brands signed up to leverage the new digital data platform for their businesses. In terms of scale, Travelopia is a $1 billion+ company, and this will be an ongoing strategic project with a **revenue share of 3-4 percentage points across the whole business.**

Want to know more?

Are you interested in this project?

Or do you have one just like it?

Get in touch. We'd love to tell you more about it.

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