CUSTOMER STORY

DATA ANALYTICS

Simpler, faster, better: Henderson Group transforms operations with Qlik



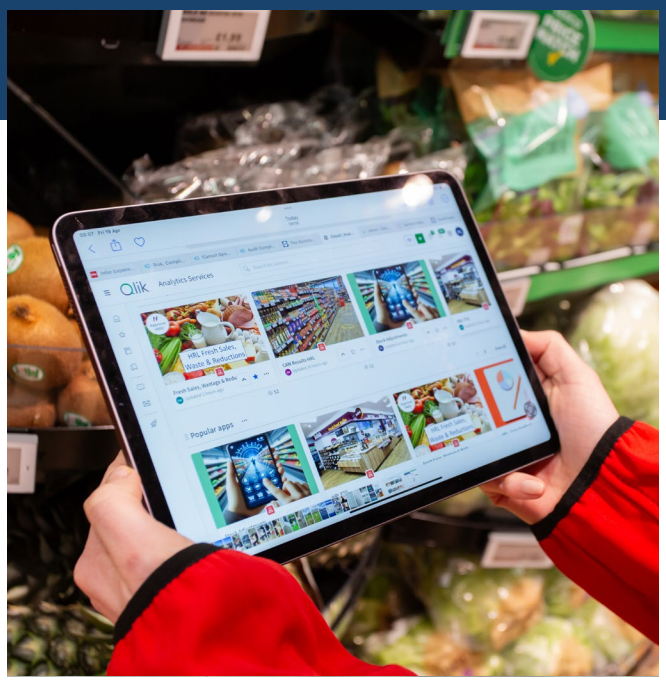
About Henderson Group

Henderson Group is a leading fourth-generation family-owned wholesaler and retailer. It operates the Spar, Eurospar, ViVO, ViVOXTRA and ViVO Essentials food retail franchises in Northern Ireland, with over 100 company-owned stores and around 400 stores served by its own wholesale business. The company has 5,500 staff and a business portfolio that extends to property, print, retail technology, food production and foodservice.

Henderson Group's transformation motto is 'Simpler, Faster, Better', driven by a vision to become an agile, learning organization. Business intelligence and self-service analytics lie at the heart of this strategy.

"Our move to Qlik Sense SaaS for analytics has been a standout transformation initiative. Our self-service model has created a buzz across the organization."

Emma McAlister, Business Intelligence & Data Analyst, Henderson Group



Customer Name
Henderson Group

Geography
Northern Ireland, UK

Industry
Retail & Services

Function
Finance, IT, Marketing, Sales, Supply Chain Management

Challenges

- Increase time for innovation and strategic activity
- Unify data across a vast and complex infrastructure
- Replace outdated processes with data-driven initiatives

Solution
Henderson Group placed Qlik data integration and analytics at the heart of its data transformation project.

Results

- Self-service capabilities democratize data
- Sales per employee rise by 7.75%
- Total of 1,300 work-days saved in the first year

The growing importance of data

Henderson Group's expertise in the convenience retail market has led to commercial success and rapid expansion. This fast-evolving business landscape presented challenges.

"We compete with larger retailers but at heart we're a family-run business that feels like the local store in your local community," explains Emma McAlister, Business Intelligence and Data Analyst at Henderson Group. "That's still our unique selling point.

"We felt the challenge of optimizing processes, enhancing strategic decision-making and providing our workforce with timely access to critical data. Our business divisions were consumed by day-to-day operations, limiting time for innovation or strategic initiatives."

Henderson Group also saw an urgent need to break free from outdated practices and transform into a more agile, data-driven organization. The company had used QlikView® since 2006 but saw the need for a more comprehensive approach. It also realized that giving staff the tools to be more self-sufficient would allow them to adapt more quickly while IT delivered more complex projects.

"The number of people wanting better information was rising and the concept that data was critical was also gaining traction across the business," McAlister continues. "We decided to embark on a journey of data transformation and leverage the power of Qlik."

The transition to self-service

Henderson Group established a set of common objectives, then groups of 'Digital Super Users' and 'Transformation Champions' pushed the transition to self-service.

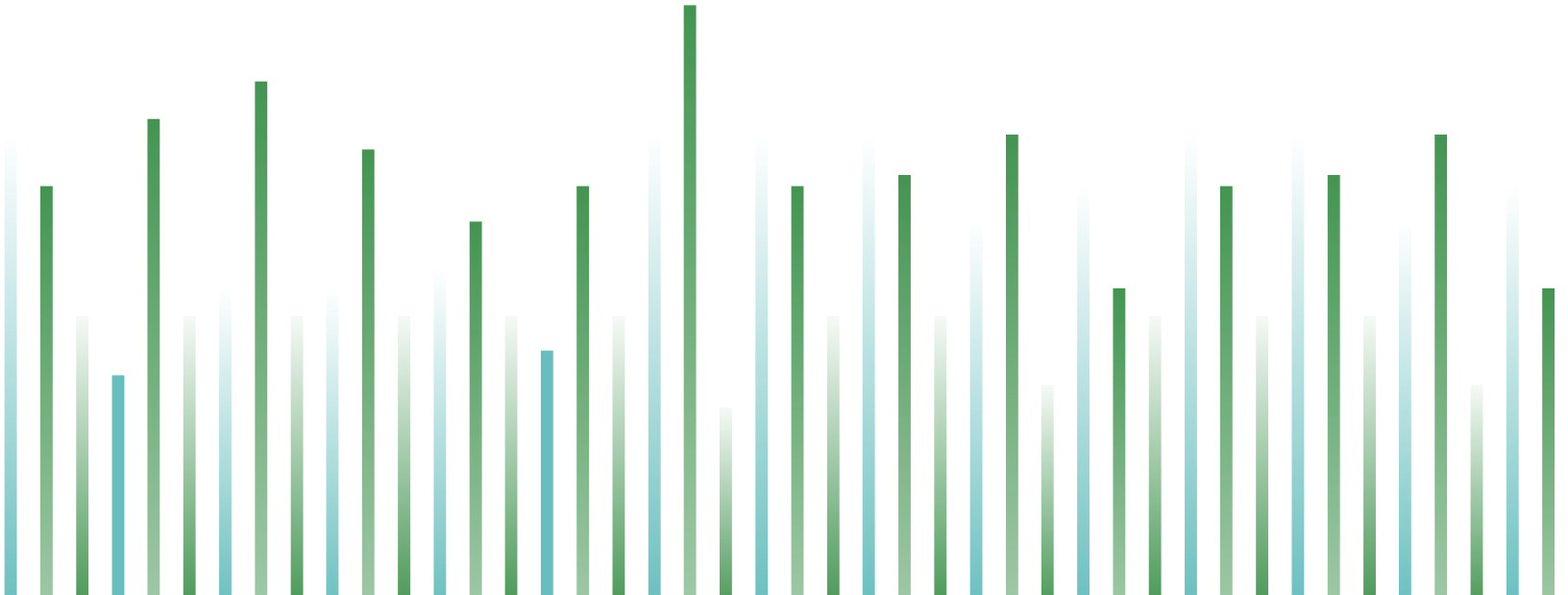
"In 2022, we created 'Business Intelligence (BI) Champions' and extended into data analytics," McAlister recalls. "That's where Qlik came in."

The first part of Qlik Cloud® that really impressed Henderson Group's IT data team was Qlik Catalog®, which enabled the organization to turn its multiple data sources into a unified resource.

"Using Qlik Catalog encouraged our vision of datasets to be a single source of the truth within the business," says Danielle Wilkinson, Data and Analytics Manager at Henderson Group. "This ensured good data quality, accuracy and reliability across all data-driven decisions, and allowed us to push that data-cleansing initiative throughout the departments."

This gave Henderson Group a solid foundation on which end users could build a growing range of self-service apps and dashboards in Qlik Sense® SaaS.

"We also liked that it was cloud-based," Wilkinson adds. "People can use tablets and mobiles to take Qlik Sense into retail stores and warehouses, and get all the current information they need right there where business actions are implemented."





Building knowledge and confidence

Training a team with no previous experience in Qlik Sense was a crucial step in the transformation process and the Qlik Continuous Classroom (QCC) was an invaluable resource. It gave the data team the knowledge and confidence to not only build their own skills in Qlik Sense but, crucially, to pass them on to the wider workforce.

"We all started from zero but with the help of QCC and our Customer Success Engineer (CSE) we learned how to use Qlik Sense and trained it out to the business within a year," McAlister explains. "We took the QCC content and applied it to Henderson data, training 25 BI Champions across the business, who then delivered 31 Qlik Sense apps, with another 44 currently in development."

A key step was building a governance model for the BI Champions, which provides guidance, enables improvements and additions to apps and stress-tests them before they are presented to the wider business.

"These are important guardrails to ensure that all information is accurate," McAlister adds. "It's a best-practice process that increases confidence in the platform's validity and ensures the highest standards."

Enhancing service to customers

By democratizing data access and fostering a culture of self-service analytics, Henderson Group is empowering teams to extract actionable insights from vast datasets. And even at this early stage of a continuing journey, Qlik Sense is delivering impressive results and demonstrating the possibilities of data.

A category performance app allows a team of retail space planners to regularly assess the performance of individual product categories, and how changes in retailer type and in-store location affect sales. Actions can then be taken on the validity of new product ranges and any needs for ongoing planogram changes on a bespoke, store-by-store basis.

A logistics app uses expected sales out of the warehouse for the following four weeks and determines if products are in the best picking location to best service the demand.

"This has allowed us to move product locations within the warehouse ahead of increased or decreased demand," says McAlister. "This results in fewer replenishes during loading and an overall more efficient process."

An extraordinary impact

To date, Henderson Group's data-driven approach has seen sales per employee rise by 7.75%, while net trading income per head has soared by 26.14%.

"The impact of our transition to Qlik Sense, along with wider transformation initiatives, has been extraordinary in such a short time," McAlister says, adding that tangible benefits directly attributable to Qlik Sense include a saving of over 1,300 work days per year to date.

"With Qlik Sense, we have new analytical techniques that were not previously possible," she adds. "We have faster, more accurate reporting and alerts and an entirely new way of presenting data that's even been used and praised at board level."

Henderson Group's success with Qlik extends beyond technology; it's helped to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, contributing towards three Henderson Group businesses being awarded gold and platinum status by the UK's prestigious Investors in People.

"Qlik has helped us to nurture a community of BI Champions who are driving change at every level of the organization," says McAlister. "It's enabled us to democratize data and provide our workforce with the insights to make informed decisions and drive business performance."

The next steps for Henderson Group are to build yet more inter-departmental collaboration and business agility, and to continue to develop the BI Champion community. Also on the roadmap are exploring Insight Advisor and Qlik AutoML, and extending Qlik Sense's reach further across the business, including an ongoing migration to Qlik Cloud.

"Qlik has proven to be hugely motivational; people are convinced it's the way to go and that this is just the beginning," McAlister concludes. "It's improving their day-to-day lives and the self-service aspect is giving them new skill sets."

Take action with AI-powered insight

Learn more

About Qlik

Qlik transforms complex data landscapes into actionable insights, driving strategic business outcomes. Serving over 40,000 global customers, our portfolio leverages advanced, enterprise-grade AI/ML and pervasive data quality. We excel in data integration and governance, offering comprehensive solutions that work with diverse data sources. Intuitive and real-time analytics from Qlik uncover hidden patterns, empowering teams to address complex challenges and seize new opportunities. Our AI/ML tools, both practical and scalable, lead to better decisions, faster. As strategic partners, our platform-agnostic technology and expertise make our customers more competitive.

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