

CASE STUDY

How Meredith unified 200 data streams to drive revenue growth

Technology has disrupted the publishing industry. Operational data from multiple monetization and systems partners has exploded. What was once a neatly integrated BI environment has become a disparate data ecosystem in a state of constant flux and growth.

Harnessing this raw information – to drill down into which ad categories are performing best, or how to effectively optimize prices across different properties and regions – has never been more challenging. Meredith, a media powerhouse with an audience of 150 million and deep relationships with major brand advertisers, was built upon a culture of data-driven decision-making. They found their solution by using automation to unify data at scale to drive revenue growth.

The challenges of scale

Meredith's Monetization Strategy team, led by VP Rich Zeroth, needs to unlock real-time ad revenue insights across all 40 of Meredith's digital brands synchronously. However, with **two billion rows** of disparate revenue, delivery, and bidding data coming in **daily**, the complexity and velocity of that data were becoming overwhelming.

Zeroth's Revenue Analytics team supports several business functions, from granular guidance for Media Planning and Sales Operations, to timely reports for the C-Suite. Each new data integration makes a manual reporting process more complicated, time-consuming, and increasingly at risk of human error. In the past, the team spent more time gathering data than performing and sharing analysis – with the rise of programmatic adding to the pressure. Multiple challenges included:

Disparate data from proprietary APIs, FTP sites, and raw CSVs delivered by email.

Inconsistency across partner metrics requiring extensive normalization, mapping, and business logic to obtain a holistic picture.

Data quality and reliability from glitches across one or more partners at any time. This creates an operational burden to constantly detect, triage, and fix errors so the data can be trusted.

Manual mappings between revenue and order data to understand revenue by advertiser.

A well-known departmental reporting solution was unable to keep up with the size and complexity of

the incoming raw data, let alone the custom transformations needed to support specific business requirements. Operational hiccups and data quality surprises led to a loss of faith in the accuracy of reports.

Quick and scalable solution

Meredith partnered with Switchboard, the leading SaaS platform for enterprise data unification. Switchboard's proven solution was up and running in weeks and easily handled Meredith's most complex and massive datasets. Switchboard's Customer Success team provided data science expertise that enabled the 4-person Revenue Strategy team to release a new analytics suite covering the entire business. Before Switchboard, such a project would have taken a dedicated engineering team more than six months to develop. Now, the Revenue Strategy team can routinely roll out a fully automated and thoroughly validated set of holistic dashboards without writing a single line of code. Today, the team can:

Create foundational datasets with trusted revenue and delivery data extracted from Meredith's entire ecosystem of ad servers, SSP partners, order management, and direct sales systems.

Normalize and map disparate partner data using customizable data "recipes" according to Meredith's unique business rules.

Consolidate business logic from previously disparate spreadsheets and tools.

Enable continuous data warehouse integration,



Two billion rows

daily data harnessed to drive ad revenue for brand partners

Six months

development and data preparation saved

One source of truth

for revenue reporting across 40 brands

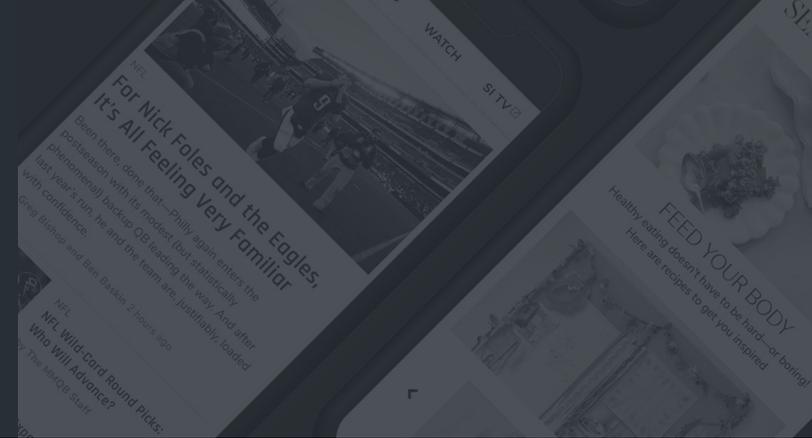
"Today, Meredith can extract unique revenue insights from over 40 brands and 20 partners, without burdening our BI team. Switchboard enables our analysts to aggregate, normalize, and apply complex business logic to hundreds of disparate data sources at once."

**- RICH ZEROTH
VP Programmatic Monetization
Meredith Corporation**



KEY RESULTS

- **Half a terabyte** of data harnessed daily to drive ad revenue for brand partners
- **5,000 engineering hours** per project of development and data preparation saved
- Over **200 daily data** streams connected; **several hundred** business rules implemented
- Time to backfill API data reduced from **several months to just a few hours/days**



making “finished” data automatically available within the existing EDW.

Rely on end-to-end reliability and quality governance with standard alerts to monitor partner feeds for anomalies, outages, or inadvertent data corruption.

Backfill months of data to correct partner outages or errors with the click of a button.

Real-time results

Using Switchboard to connect hundreds of daily data streams and automate over a hundred revenue recognition and advertiser mapping rules, Meredith can power a suite of fully automated executive dashboards fed by real-time data.

Control over the data ecosystem leads to new capabilities: Instead of becoming distracted by risky custom development, Zeroth’s team can focus directly on business results. A new capability is making brand-specific editorial and product recommendations to maximize upsell and cross-sell opportunities in each of Meredith’s distinct verticals.

Granularity drives rapid insight: The team can dig deeper into page-level and impression-level data, enabling them to answer strategic questions in minutes, conduct A/B testing across ad categories, and monitor the mix of categories over time.

Scalability supports growth: When Meredith acquired Time Inc. – a 200% increase in the volume of data and partners – the Switchboard platform scaled seamlessly to handle the surging load without additional technical resources.

Scope for comparative analysis: Zeroth’s team can now perform historical analysis for instant month-on-month and year-on-year comparisons that simply would not have been possible before.

By establishing a strategic data asset comprising Meredith’s entire digital network, the team now can run ad hoc, real-time analytics that goes far beyond static reports to support teams in other parts of the business.

A data-driven future

As digital publishing reaches beyond ads into first-party audiences across social, marketing, e-commerce, and events, the team is already looking to leverage Switchboard’s technology in other areas: Cross-channel revenue forecasting, integrated sales processes, and proactively developing new revenue streams. With a unified data solution in place, Meredith is set to continue driving innovation in digital media.

“The burning question used to be: how much did we make yesterday? Today, we can dig deeper and answer questions like: which ad products and content yield the highest ROI with which advertisers?”

About Meredith

We are Meredith Corporation, a publicly held media and marketing services company founded upon serving our customers and committed to building value for our shareholders. Through our national and local media groups, we are on the pulse of pop culture, entertainment, food, fashion and lifestyle, news, business and finance, and sports. From that, we have built businesses that serve well-defined audiences, deliver the messages of national and local advertisers, and extend our brand franchises and expertise to related markets. Our products and services distinguish themselves on the basis of quality, customer service, and value that can be trusted.

About Switchboard

Switchboard enables enterprise business teams to be data-driven. From the team that launched Google BigQuery, Switchboard’s ready-made data unification platform turns disparate data into a single source of reliable, trustworthy information. Business stakeholders at Meredith, Pearson, Spotify, and others get a strategic data asset for customer insights and revenue operations, while their technical teams retain control without the burden of day-to-day operations. Be Data Strong with Switchboard.