

ZeroedIn Client Case Study, Williams-Sonoma Inc.

Williams-Sonoma Inc. (WSI) is a specialty retailer of high quality home products and furnishings. Their brands include Williams-Sonoma, Pottery Barn and affiliate brands, and West Elm, among others. They are one of the largest e-commerce retailers in the U.S. and operate over 600 retail stores employing more than 26,000 associates.

WSI's initial goal for implementing workforce analytics was to automate associate productivity reporting across the retail hierarchy and give managers the ability to quickly identify top producers. Toward that end, WSI began working with ZeroedIn in 2013 to get a better handle on their retail sales and workforce, and to streamline reporting and visualization of that data.

The Challenge

For WSI HR Information Systems, pulling together retail metrics from all stores and across different data platforms internally was a difficult effort at best. The company's prior system made auditing data and reporting results highly challenging in such a large organization and much too costly in employee time. The process was very manual and prone to mistakes.

ZeroedIn was hired to collect, analyze and present retail and workforce metrics in a way that would be visible and useful to the managers of each store, particularly toward their goal of maximizing top-producers. As Scott Jacobsen, Senior Manager of HR Information Systems at WSI said, "Managers were blind to sales and working hours – they just didn't have the data in usable form. We were trying to put a window behind what we needed to know."

The Approach

WSI first wanted to solve the problem of how to report sales data. At WSI, sales associates commonly move from store to store. Productivity metrics follow the associate as they move. So in the WSI retail environment, you have to look at different hierarchies to get a true picture of associate productivity, a task that quickly gets complicated.

Determining the best presentation for the managers was a process of discovery and a way to establish the working relationship. WSI wanted visibility across all the different metrics including headcounts, sales, labor hours, selling goals, and more, but didn't know how the information should be laid out. ZeroedIn presented multiple options and over time created different dashboards for leadership to test until everyone felt they had the best reporting format for the company. ZeroedIn's flexibility helped get approval for the extended project. "Once we had buy-in, it was go, go, go," said Jacobsen.

Project implementation started with retail analytics. ZeroedIn was able to tap into WSI's existing point-of-sale, time and labor, and human resource systems. They automated the daily importing of data into ZeroedIn's cloud platform and made it end-user friendly for store managers to measure and monitor associate productivity.

"When we first analyzed their data," said Chris Moore, Founder & CEO of ZeroedIn, we saw real opportunities to present compelling information to store managers.

From an HR perspective, the retail workforce insights show store managers which associates are most productive. From a retail perspective, the insights from ZeroedIn facilitate corporate discussions and strategies to increase revenue through same-store sales.

In the most recent work phase with ZeroedIn, WSI rolled out HR analytics across the entire company including insights into associate demographics, diversity, turnover, mobility and hiring patterns. Those coupled with retail sales analytics contribute a broad view from which WSI can solve immediate concerns as well as establish projections for the future.

The relationship between ZeroedIn and Williams Sonoma is ongoing. WSI subscribes to the ZeroedIn Workforce Intelligence Platform and now has on-demand access to analytics and dashboards, data transformation services, and advice on best practices.

The Results

Before working with ZeroedIn, WSI HR Information Systems was spending 10-20 hours a week maintaining the old data-reporting system; now they spend only about an hour a week answering questions about ZeroedIn, leaving more time to help the business use the data to inform decisions and meet goals.

According to WSI, working with ZeroedIn has increased:

- Visibility of information
- Availability of data on a daily basis
- Scalability, with new metrics easily added

Every store manager across the organization is able to log in to the WSI dashboard on ZeroedIn and view the data on their departments and associates for any time period. They have the tools to evaluate performance up and down the retail hierarchy from a number of different perspectives.

Being able to see HR and business data together, measure it, and act on it translates to higher efficiency and hard dollar savings – by reducing employee turnover and maximizing top performers. These insights demonstrate the power of workforce analytics that ZeroedIn brings to its clients.