Currently there are over two billion people globally who are either overweight or obese, which translates into about one-third of the world’s population. The market for health and fitness products and services is therefore understandably huge, totaling over 80 billion dollars per year.

Beachbody, a worldwide leader in health and fitness headquartered in Santa Monica, California, was founded in 1998 with the mission to help people achieve their goals and enjoy healthy, fulfilling lives. Beachbody’s formula of world-class fitness, nutrition, motivation and support has proven again and again to deliver results for its 23 million customers. The company grew to over $1 billion in revenue in 2016. Beachbody products can be purchased on its websites, and via its Team Beachbody Coach network of more than 450,000 independent distributors.

Keeping pace with data growth

Beachbody averages more than five million monthly unique visits across its digital platforms. As the fitness market moved online, Beachbody started streaming its fitness videos in 2015 via Beachbody On Demand (BOD), featuring more than 500 streaming workouts. Beachbody wanted to be able to answer such questions as How can we better target and retarget customers leveraging master customer data? How can we personalize offers for each customer? and What indicators determine if a subscriber is about to cancel? “Those bigger questions span multiple data sources or larger volumes of data,” says Eric Anderson, Executive Director, Data for Beachbody. “We’re moving away from questions that can be answered with 10 million rows to ones that rely on billions of rows. The database technology we were using simply couldn’t keep up with the pace of the business and the data growth that accompanied it.”

The problem was, it took too long—months, in fact—to acquire a new data source that could provide business visibility into new product offerings. “We were running a conventional on-premises Oracle data warehouse to store our corporate information,” says Anderson. “But it was too slow and wouldn’t scale quickly or cost-effectively”

Anderson says the decision to use a cloud architecture was easy to make. “Creating on-premises the type of data lake we wanted would have been not only very difficult, expensive, and time-consuming, but would have required us to hire a lot more people with the right big data skills,” he says.

After evaluating several vendors of integration and big data solutions, Beachbody selected Talend. Beachbody’s IT team, Hortonworks and Talend worked together to upgrade the company’s analytics architecture by adding a scale-out Hadoop cluster in combination with a cloud data lake on Amazon S3 so Beachbody could move closer to real-time access to essential information.

Why Talend?

Beachbody selected Talend Real-time Big Data for a range of reasons, including its ability to work across heterogeneous environments, built-in connectors to AWS, native Spark processing, and broad out-of-the-box connectivity to traditional on-premises data sources. “We knew we needed the flexibility of a big data integration tool to ingest and analyze our data, and Talend met all our criteria,” says Anderson.

We can understand in near-real-time consumer behavior in fitness centers with a cloud big data lake and self-service analytics. The benefits are increased effectiveness for our digital marketing campaigns, and decreased customer churn.

Eric Anderson, Executive Director, Data, Beachbody LLC.
In order to get to insights more quickly, Beachbody used Talend Real-time Big Data to accelerate its ability to load massive amounts of data into its cloud data lake. With Talend and AWS, Beachbody easily ingested dozens of critical data sources into the cloud in less than six months. The company originally estimated that this type of project would take over a year if done on-premises.

Beachbody also used Talend Data Preparation to deliver self-service data access. “One of our guiding principles is open systems,” says Anderson, “and a big part of that is self-service. Our IT team can’t scale infinitely, so we knew we needed to provide self-service access. We now do that by sourcing information at any scale and any frequency, and making that available to our users.”

“Strengthening coach and customer engagement

Since creating its cloud data lake, Beachbody enjoys near-real-time data access to essential information about its customers, coaches and more. This enables the company to make faster decisions based on more-comprehensive data.

The data lake can be accessed by line-of-business users via self-service analytics tools using Beachbody’s Bring Your Own Tool (BYOT) approach. The tools enable users to analyze website activity, logs from Beachbody On Demand, call-center records, and external data on customer acquisition and spending, as well as sales and financial transaction data.

“Our fitness library is vast, with more than 500 workouts. It has self-improvement products to help customers reach specific goals, including programs to lose or gain weight,” says Anderson. “We developed a recommendation engine that generates suggestions for customers looking at all our product lines.”

“Ask to summarize the principal benefits of the Talend/AWS solution, Anderson says, “The ones that really stand out are faster time-to-market, increased effectiveness for our digital marketing campaigns, and decreased customer churn. All of those can have a major impact on our continuing success.”