Tipico is the market leading sports betting provider in online and retail business in Germany. Tipico operates branches in Germany, Austria, Croatia and Gibraltar. More than 6,000 people work for the entire Tipico Group and the associated franchise network. Franchise partners operate some 1,100 Tipico shops in Germany and Austria. The company is a founding member of the German Sports Betting Association (DSWV), and sponsors football and basketball teams, including FC Bayern Munich and Hamburg SV, in Germany and Austria. Tipico is an official partner of the Bundesliga (DFL) and the second Bundesliga and is proud to have Oliver Kahn as a brand ambassador.

Requiring real-time self-service access

In the sports betting sector, 80 percent of the business is related to data. To track betting and game results down to the second and deliver the best customer experience, Tipico needs to manage massive volumes of data, and access and serve it with very low latency levels. Daily the Tipico data warehouse processes 675 GB worth of data and receives over 150 GB of real time messages. Dealing with changing regulations is also a major challenge, especially when each region where Tipico operates has its own set of data and rules.

The biggest data challenge Tipico faced was that it did not have a consolidated data platform. Tipico had to work with many different systems using different technologies and storing data in different formats, which all needed to be integrated into a single source of truth.

“Before the data platform was implemented, extracting any information was a manual, time-consuming and error-prone process which involved connecting to multiple systems," says Micallef. “We have built processes which obtain data from all the necessary systems, consolidate it, and serve it to the self-service and reporting platforms. We have also automated all validation and verification tests of data. We now empower the business so that Tipico can make informed, data-driven decisions faster and with ease of mind that the information they are seeing is correct.”

The company resolved to become more data-driven to enhance its competitive position and to offer new services to its customers. A part of this digital transformation was a decision to run almost all IT solutions in the cloud—an architecture for which Talend was ideally suited.

Why Talend?

To solve the problem of siloed, performing a simple function like accurately counting the number of customers required Tipico staff to query up to 21 databases, export data into separate Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, then merge the data. This severely impacted Tipico’s ability to make informed, data-driven decisions at the right time. Manual processing resulted in poor data quality which impacted the trustworthiness of data.

“Talend was an end-to-end solution, from data integration to data quality, to data analytics.” says Micallef.

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"We then did a comprehensive vendor analysis, looking for a software solution that could meet our requirements for where we wanted to go," said Adrian Vella, Head of Data and Business Intelligence at Tipico. "Those requirements included a cloud-first strategy, excellent performance, big data native connectors for other products such as Salesforce, and data quality. Talend was one of the finalists in our vendor analysis and after a proof concept, it came out as the best solution which met all our requirements at a good cost-performance ratio."

Talend is particularly suited for the cloud. With Talend as a core component, Tipico has deployed a data platform that runs entirely on Amazon Web Service (AWS). The fully integrated real-time cloud data platform includes Amazon S3, Amazon Redshift, and Amazon Lambda technology, along with Apache Kafka, Talend Big Data and Talend Data Quality. For data visualization, Tipico uses QlikView, Kibana, Elasticsearch and more.

The platform ingests data from as many as 60 sources, representing about 50TB of data, and sends it to another 20 target systems, including Salesforce, back office systems, affiliates and a data science environment. "And we're providing real-time alerting, as well as enabling the business to make better decisions with enhanced real-time data," Vella says.

Tipico has also created a framework to easily deploy any models—traditional or Artificial Intelligence (AI)—provided by the data science department. Each day the models are updated and executed through Talend as microservices in the production environment.

Identifying player characteristics for the best customer experience

Tipico's central data platform has become an essential asset company-wide, and most business services now use the new cloud platform. The new architecture makes possible two levels of self-service. One is for analysts who query the database to find insights; the other is for business users who need a 360-degree view of customers to deliver a high level of omnichannel customer service.

Tipico's data platform is taking a more central role now in all Tipico's processes and is fuelling and empowering initiatives around the organisation.

The integrations with Tipico's customer service platform hosted on Salesforce, marketing CRM platform, affiliate system and back office through Talend's connectors allows for better marketing communication with players. Tipico is now able to link data from a chat to a customer profile, combine machine data in the stores with online data, and generate more personalized customer profiles. This process also leads to more-precise behavioral segmentation, which improves the customer experience and contributes to a higher lifetime value for customers.

Business users can also measure the efficiency of a marketing campaign, which they can use to fine-tune it to increase activity on the Tipico site. "We can determine a customer's preferences or favourites games and hence tailor the experience on Tipico to the individual. In the near future, we plan to use real-time data to personalize the site itself," says Micallef. "We can use data science models to drive a recommendation engine to give each Tipico customer a truly personalized experience that, for example, shows customer events coming up which would interest them or games which they will enjoy more than others. That capability can be a great asset in customer retention."

In addition, Tipico is using Talend Data Quality to help the company increase the quality of customer data and to comply with the new GDPR standards for data protection.

"Before deploying Talend here, I worked with other tools, but I've found Talend to be one of the most open and the easiest to use to improve virtually any data handling process," said Micallef. "In fact, we haven't run into a case yet where we couldn't do what we wanted with Talend. It's a very good enabler and it multiplies the productivity of our comparatively small team."

"We believe that we have turned the corner and now data has become a revenue driver in Tipico," says Adrian Vella. "We are continuing to invest in AI and tooling around data. We will push more on AI-based marketing to deliver automated, personalised and omni-channel experiences."