

“The Data for Business project is an effort to re-empower our divisions by giving them free and governed access to data through Talend Cloud.”

Arnaud Maton, Data Management Manager, IT Group Kiloutou



INDUSTRY

- Services/Equipment rental

INFORMATION

- HQ: France
- 5,001-10,000 employees

USE CASE

- Financial management
- Pricing management

CHALLENGE

- Facilitate “Data 4 Business”

TALEND PRODUCT USED

- Talend Cloud Data Integration

RESULTS

- Process over **10 million data entries** per day to improve sales forecasts and price quotes
- Synchronize 10 million data entries per day in **5 minutes instead of 2.5 hours** to close financial statements
- Synchronize daily a database containing **tens of thousands of customers** with the CRM system

Empowering business divisions to work directly with data

Kiloutou is the fourth largest equipment rental company in Europe and a leader in France, offering its services and products to a highly diversified customer base. The group’s B2B activities are seeing brisk growth, with 95% of sales coming from business customers, including large national accounts, the construction industry, tradesmen, municipalities and local governments, manufacturing, the service sector, and various SMEs. Retail customers account for the other 5% of company sales.

Kiloutou was founded by Franky Mulliez in 1980 and is now owned by HLD. The group offers the broadest range of rental equipment on the market, with an inventory spanning 1,000 categories and 250,000 pieces of equipment for various sectors: personnel lifts, earthmoving, heavy and light construction, utility vehicles, modular construction, and energy.

Kiloutou has a presence in five European countries (France, Poland, Spain, Germany, and Italy), represented by a network of over 550 agencies. The company employs over 5,000 people.

Paving the way for “Data 4 Business”

“The Stone Age, a total headache for our company divisions,” says Arnaud Maton, Data Management Manager for Kiloutou, talking about the company’s previous data warehouse system.

In 2003, Kiloutou launched @Locpro agency’s ERP by Vega Systems, and began building an in-house data warehouse run on an Oracle database to handle division reporting. This data warehouse was fed through a nightly export/import procedure. Corporate reporting was handled on SAP BusinessObjects with data at day+1.

Over the years, however, data volume skyrocketed. The system was no longer able to handle the flows and became increasingly slow. “We had the data, but it was religiously kept under lock and key by IT,” recalls Maton. “Our business divisions were asking for data but had a hard time getting information and always had to go through IT”

In 2018, Maton initiated a radical change. The goal was to replace the company’s current data warehouse with a 3.0 version, one that was modern, powerful, secure, functioned in real time, and was accessible on a self-service basis through data visualization tools.

And so began the “Data 4 Business” project, designed to empower the business divisions to work directly with data. “This indeed got to the heart of the problem: provide company divisions with added value that would encourage them to use data in their operations and identify new business opportunities,” says Maton.

The goal was to provide management (sales, management control, logistics operations) the tools to run their own reports on dashboards and then communicate the information right up to the executive level.

The solutions Kiloutou opted for are cloud-based, powerful, and secure: Snowflake runs the system and unifies the data; Talend is used to feed and transform it; and Tableau Software handles visualization.

First came data migration where the company’s legacy databases were transferred to the Snowflake data warehouse, fed by Talend. Talend was also tasked with feeding data marts extracted from Snowflake for Kiloutou’s divisions.

With Talend, Snowflake and Tableau Software, we have a modern, agile, high-performance and secure data architecture, which means the business divisions can be autonomous in how they run reports, and also promotes a test and learn approach to their use of data.



Why Talend?

Initially, Kiloutou's choice of Talend was an issue of continuity. The company was already using the Talend system on site to retrieve flat files from its @Locpro agency's ERP before transferring them to its in-house data warehouse.

Following the change to a new architecture and moving to Snowflake, Kiloutou switched to Talend Cloud. "Talend Cloud makes it possible to meet all our needs in terms of scalability, performance, and security, plus we don't have to handle installation, updating or migration," explains Maton. "It's even easier to have Talend securely connect all types of data in any format or volume on the cloud or also on site."

Talend is now gradually becoming a cross-application brick-level exchange for Kiloutou's entire information system, in addition to the API management architecture (SOA).

Talend's role also helps Kiloutou ensure the quality of data. Business intelligence reporting or data visualization tools can only operate at full potential if data is of high quality. For example, suppose a telephone number does not have the same format in the CRM and sales ERP systems. Is that number for the same customer? Thanks to better data quality through the use of just one tool, what used to require multiple steps to resolve now just requires one process.

"Talend does the technology heavy lifting so that the divisions don't have to worry about any constraints regarding data," adds Maton. He also stresses that in choosing Talend, it was important to him to have a technology partner that could listen and evolve with the clients' needs.

Optimizing pricing and financial reports

Kiloutou aims to offer its customers the best equipment at the best prices. However, this price depends on a number of factors: where the reservation was placed, current inventories, customer type, purchase history, etc. Data on daily rentals, inventory, and occupancy rates are sent multiple times daily to a Kiloutou partner, which sends back recommendations on pricing strategies. Talend now feeds all this data into Snowflake, which amounts to over 10 million entries per day. At the division level, "the analysts are thrilled.

They now receive current prices twice a day and can implement more complete and precise predictive models to optimize sales," explains Maton.

What's more, "the use of Tableau reports allows us to set up simple, accessible alerts in a region to more quickly trigger sales actions plans. Before, an exhaustive analysis of Excel files was the only way to identify urgent problems, and even then, they weren't always identified," comments Laurent Fournier, Head of Pricing and Business Intelligence.

The improvement has been impressive, also for financial controllers, who now have access to real-time reports when verifying monthly financial statements. The teams can now access statements just a few seconds after the last entry and no longer need to wait hours before they can run their report.

"We are getting about 10 million data entries per day, stored on the Oracle E-Business Suite ERP. We resynchronize them in Snowflake through Talend, and we generate financial statements in less than five minutes, compared to the 2.5 hours it used to take," says Maton.

"On accounts closing day, the report was ordered at 6 p.m. and the results were available at 8:30 p.m. The verification meeting started at 9 p.m. Now we have the results at 6:10 p.m. and the verification meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. So now, we can run a report on demand where before, we only ran reports two times a day, at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. That changes everything," exclaims Maton.

Meanwhile, Kiloutou has multiple cross-application exchange projects in the works with Talend. For example, Talend is handling the daily resynchronization of all customer data between the CRM and its @Locpro agency's ERP.

Kiloutou also has its eye on IoT. "Our equipment generates an enormous amount of data, which we are planning to use for predictive maintenance," says Maton.

"We now have a single, unified platform to integrate all the data used by our business divisions."