

How Park Dental Drills into Their Data with Panoply

With report requests coming in faster than they could create them, Park Dental's static reporting process was struggling. Get an insider's look at how they used Panoply to make their analytics more sustainable and to get a granular view of mission-critical metrics.

The Company

Founded in 1972, Park Dental is a group dental practice with over 150 dentists and more than 50 locations, primarily in the greater Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

One of the things that sets Park Dental apart from most other dental practices is its scale. While many dental offices have one or only a few practices united under one roof, Park Dental has 50+ general dental practices, as well as a subsidiary that offers six dental specialties to serve the broad needs of their patients.

The Challenge

Park Dental knew that if they wanted to grow, they needed to better leverage their data and get it into the hands of as many business users as possible. And that's where Adam Bender, Director of Finance and BI came in. When he joined Park Dental, data was already a sore spot within the company. The organization was growing, and with it so was the need for accessible and reliable information.

"At one point we had over 120 report requests, and the average time to completion was measured in weeks or months," says Adam. "It was very clear that our static reporting process was going to struggle if we asked to keep it up with the growing demands of our business."

That's when they started looking for a better way.

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The Solution

“We knew we needed a modern data infrastructure that could grow and scale with us, but we also knew we needed something that would be easy to manage,” Adam explains.

They knew they wanted a cloud data warehouse and started out thinking that Redshift or Snowflake, or even a Microsoft solution might be the right move. But as powerful as those data warehouses are, they required too much hands-on management.

“One of the big reasons that we chose Panoply is because we didn’t want to hire a full time DBA,” says Adam. “We really wanted to focus our resources on data and dashboard development—leveraging the information inside the organization as opposed to managing the systems to get to it.”

Panoply was the perfect match for Park Dental because it meant they could do complex analytics without taking on complex infrastructure. Adam explains, “Panoply really is hands off, but we still have the security of somebody on the other end of the phone or email who can look into problems.”

That choice paid off a few years back when a contractor accidentally deleted every table in the database. Park Dental wasn’t sure if they’d be able to restore the data, so they submitted a ticket to Panoply Support to see if they could help.

Panoply’s response? “Yep, not a problem. When do you want it restored?”

“Two and a half hours later we had the entire database back and it was nothing to worry about,” said Adam. “That accidental test early on gave us a lot of confidence that we had made a good choice.”

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The Result

Bringing Panoply on board has enabled Adam's team to get to the root of some incredibly granular metrics.

With dentistry, pulling stats at the provider- or day-level is an easy way to get an overview of how things are going. But getting those metrics at the chair-level? That's like pulling teeth.

To drill into that more granular view, Adam's now has the capability to team track dentists' schedules in 5-minute increments to account for dentists moving between multiple chairs (e.g., completing an exam in one room then immediately going to another to take care of a filling).

That kind of detail helps Park Dental optimize scheduling and better forecast revenue, but it's not something they could have done with their old setup. Adam's team estimated that on SQL Server, one of their overnight processes would take between 4 and 10 hours. With Panoply, they cut that down to around an hour.



But the real win is that making data readily available to users throughout Park Dental "has significantly changed the culture of the organization," says Adam. "It's a big difference. I'm hearing people say things like, 'We need to see the data' instead of accepting anecdotal evidence. They want certainty around the decisions they're making, and it's our job to give that to them. That's helped us make some good decisions and stay away from some bad ones."

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The Twist

An example of Park Dental putting data in action happened in early 2020, just as COVID-19 was starting to make headlines.

“Within the span of a few days we put together a handful of dashboards that gave us insight into appointments being created, appointments being kept, and appointments that were being canceled or missed. And for a little while, we didn’t see anything happening.”

But in short order, they saw appointments slowing down and realized that revenue would be impacted as well. And that’s why Park Dental decided to close its doors ahead of official word from the Minnesota governor requiring the shutdown.

In advance of reopening, Park Dental leaned on those dashboards again. They realized there was pent up demand for dental appointments and adjusted staffing to meet it. But they also saw that as a result of the shutdown, there would be a significant dip in appointment volumes a few months down the road because patients with canceled appointments hadn’t been booked for their regular cleanings.

“We got in touch with our patients and significantly impacted the appointment volumes,” says Adam. Thanks to that data, “we were able to proactively take action in a way that we would not have been able to with our previous system. The ease of access to the important data, and the ability to quickly share it is what has made the biggest difference.”

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The Future

So what's next for Park Dental's data team? That's a good question. Along with integrating even more data sources, they're working to get more visibility into insurance reimbursement and fine-tuning dashboards that users are working with the most.

Of course, the organization knows that machine learning and AI will need to be a part of their business as they continue to grow. So what does Adam think about this? "While we haven't begun heavily using machine learning or artificial intelligence, we know it will need to be a growing part of what we do in the future, and what we've built with Panoply has set us up for future success."

“The infrastructure we’ve built with Panoply has us set up for future success.”

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About Panoply

Panoply is a cloud data platform that makes it easy to sync, store, and access your data. Panoply enables you to:

- Connect all your data sources without complicated code
- Automatically store raw data in the cloud in analysis-ready tables
- Build core business logic into your data to keep metrics consistent
- Seamlessly update dashboards and BI tools, no manual effort required
- Spend more time on analysis and less on managing data

If you'd like to learn more about Panoply and whether we're a good fit for your modern data stack, book a demo with us! We'd love to show off what Panoply can do and learn more about what your organization is hoping to achieve with data.

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