



# Data-enabled retail: SOFG leverages BigQuery to improve marketing and customer experience

## Overview

[Stand Out For Good, Inc.](#) (SOFG) is a purpose-based, inspiring lifestyle and fashion family of brands rooted in community and committed to giving back. Stand Out For Good is built upon the founding principles of giving back and making a difference in the world. They have partnered with over 4,000 nonprofits that provide food, clothing, resources, education, and love to children in need.

SOFG's brands are retailers with both an e-commerce presence and brick-and-mortar locations in the U.S. Applying a hospitality approach to the retail experience has been a significant growth driver and differentiator, and SOFG wanted to find a way to extend that concept into the online retail experience using customer data to create personalized experiences.

## The challenge

SOFG's data was unstructured and distributed across a number of sources, including TikTok, Facebook, Google Analytics, RetailNext, and Salesforce. Without a clear, consolidated view of each customer, it was extremely challenging for the marketing team to create truly personalized messaging—let alone have a dimensional understanding of the customer journey through marketing to sales.

The Chief Marketing Officer, Christina Ceresoli, also needed better access to consolidated data to understand their customers and analyze key customer marketing metrics such as customer lifetime value, customer acquisition costs, and customer retention costs.

To create a truly personalized e-commerce experience, SOFG needed a data model to provide global, holistic, and integrated customer insights.

The CMO took this request to SOFG's Chief Information Officer (CIO), Joergen Scheuser-Larsen. He recognized that the marketing team's requirements aligned with an existing project to update and simplify their data warehouse architecture in a way that would scale effectively for their growing organization. Opportunity knocked—and Pythian answered.

Joergen was already working with Pythian to assess and support their Microsoft Azure environment. Our team of data, cloud, and analytics experts found that the framework hadn't been set up properly. As a result, the existing framework couldn't scale effectively to meet their data needs.

## Technologies

- Cloud VPN
- Google BigQuery
- Cloud Composer
- Google Compute Engine
- Google Cloud Operations Suite
- Google Cloud SQL
- Google Cloud Storage
- Cloud Data Fusion
- Google IAM
- Google Workspace
- Secret Manager
- Virtual Private Cloud

Switching environments was the only way to unlock the data's value, but it would present a series of challenges. Joergen had a small IT team responsible for its Azure environment, warehouse management, and internal applications. If the system went down, it would cause major disruption and hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost sales. He needed a trusted partner to manage the infrastructure change but didn't want to hire and train costly new employees.

## The solution

By talking to different stakeholders and gaining an understanding of SOFG's marketing and data warehouse pain points, we were able to find a way to unlock the most value from the company's data. Our teams built SOFG an Enterprise Data Platform (EDP) on Google Cloud:

- Removing SnapLogic and other redundant cloud vendors from their existing tech stack
- Ingesting data into Google Cloud Storage
- Moving from SQL DataVault to BigQuery to support exporting and analyzing key marketing metrics
- Adopting an Extract, Load, Transform (ELT) model to accelerate development and create a new data model that supports business metrics
- An accelerated 6-month timeline to help them get to value faster

Pythian designed and built a modern data platform that addressed SOFG's key needs and pain points. The retailer could further optimize and personalize their marketing efforts by providing a richer and more accurate view of SOFG's customers.

SOFG freed up its limited IT team by outsourcing routine support work to Pythian for SRE Managed Services. These monthly hours ensure they have operational support for all their Google Cloud infrastructure and data pipelines, with 24/7 monitoring and alerting.

The shift to BigQuery has helped the marketing team overcome SnapLogic's data source restrictions. The marketing team has increased its effectiveness at analyzing customer acquisition costs by unifying data from Google Analytics, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, and other disparate sources.

With our data, cloud, and analytics teams working end-to-end with SOFG, opportunities emerged to add further value. The evolution to a modern data platform allowed for vendor consolidation, improving productivity by moving the company into one collaboration environment.

For example, about 80 percent of staff were already using Gmail. By shifting from Office 365 to Google Workspace, SOFG could streamline costs, simplify management, and take advantage of the overall integration with the rest of the [Google Cloud](#) ecosystem—all while improving the ability of the organization to collaborate and work productively.

**“Pythian is an extension of our team. I trust them because they understand what we are and what we need. This is very valuable as we move away from managing technology and enabling business outcomes.”**

**– Joergen Scheuser-Larson, CIO**

## Results

By fully understanding stakeholders' challenges and approaching the problem holistically, Pythian was able to solve multiple interconnected challenges from both a digital transformation and operational perspective. Our partnership with SOFG delivers end-to-end value for the CIO, the CMO, and their respective teams.

- SOFG can now **bring its in-store experience to its digital channels**. With analytic capabilities and a better understanding of their customers, SOFG provides a personalized, personable shopping experience that mirrors the targeted hospitality for which its stores are known.
- Now, the CMO and marketing team can **see the entire 'story' of a customer** with all of their data properly formatted in one place. They're empowered to make data-driven decisions to acquire and convert customers, resulting in reduced costs and more efficient marketing activities.
- The modern platform allows SOFG to **design and measure more targeted marketing campaigns**. Ultimately, this helps them grow their e-commerce business at a time when some companies are scaling back.
- Pythian also helped SOFG **reduce the number of cloud vendors** in their tech stack, **mitigating security and risk concerns** and **reducing IT complexity and support needs**. This resulted in cloud savings of about **\$100,000 per year**.

Since building this enterprise data platform, Pythian is now reviewing the customer's remaining Azure environment and consolidating it into [Google Cloud](#). We're providing SRE support for SOFG's Azure environment while they plan the migration.

## Want to see similar results for your company?

[Get in touch](#) with a Pythian Google Cloud expert to see how our team can help.

### About Pythian

Founded in 1997, Pythian is a global IT services company that helps organizations transform how they compete and win by helping them turn data into valuable insights, predictions and products. From cloud automation to machine learning, Pythian designs, implements and supports customized solutions to the toughest data challenges.

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