



Case study

Using data and analytics to transform the lives of New Zealand's most vulnerable kids.

As a provider of specialist home and school social services to New Zealanders between the ages of 5 and 12, Stand Children's Services is one of the nation's most recognisable charity organisations.

Stand has been making New Zealand a safer, healthier and happier place for children since 1919. Almost a century later, the methods and tools that Stand uses have evolved. Information from thousands of case files provides insight into the organisation's internal processes and is helping improve services to vulnerable children and their families.

Richard Parry, a CIO, spoke to us about the potential for deep analytics in the organisation, and how Stellar Consulting is helping to provide Stand with new insights.

Data-driven innovation for social change

Stand works with some of the most disadvantaged families in New Zealand, supplying services in homes and in the community, as well as providing respite care in Children's Villages. It's work that costs the government – and society as a whole – billions of dollars every year.

In response, the government announced plans in 2016 to build a national "data highway", a system of information gathering and sharing among departments and NGOs. The goal is to procure the best outcomes for New Zealand families at the best price, by making smart social investments and using data-driven tools to identify opportunities.

Microsoft's *Cloud for Good* initiative, announced in 2016 with a pledge of US\$1 billion in cloud services to assist not-for-profits (NFPs) and university researchers over three years,

has underpinned the transformation at Stand. After being selected as a community strategic partner by Microsoft, Stand was put in touch with Stellar Consulting to develop a data and analytics solution.

Transforming from the inside out

Like many modern organisations, Stand collects vast amounts of data but wasn't seeing much value from it. "The only things we get out of it tend to reflect the minimal reporting requirements that we owe to our stakeholders," says Richard.

"We knew there was a lot more our data could tell us, but we just didn't have the tools or resources to interrogate it effectively. It was challenging for our front-line staff and leadership teams to easily gain insights into how things were progressing internally, or to easily quantify the difference that we are making."

Richard Parry, CIO

Part of that visibility problem relates to timeliness. Richard notes that most organisations like Stand have reporting cycles that are not suitable for today's dynamic digital world. When Stellar Consulting were brought on board to assess Stand's internal processes, a high priority was to make reporting faster.



"Every organisation in our sector works to either quarterly, half-yearly or annual reporting, which tends to be the only point most assess how they're actually doing. Stellar's solution has really helped us gain new insights into how we are doing on a day to day basis – breaking down and comparing performance by region and programme so we can make informed decisions about the services we offer and the progress clients are making as they go through those services."

Stand measures its service effectiveness through clinical tools – the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI). By accessing this data in real time, Stand can assist children and families more effectively.

"Now, it's very quick for us to spot the outliers and high-risk cases, and we can also tell where we have bottlenecks in our organisation that are impacting our front-line services. We see clients faster, deal with them much more efficiently, and their outcomes will be better because we can spot potential problems before they happen."

Richard Parry, CIO

Public Cloud for Global Good

Using Microsoft's Azure public cloud services, Stellar has been able to provide a highly scalable and robust data and analytics solution for Stand. Azure Data Factory, SQL Database and Power BI services are used to ingest, store and expose Stand's case file data in a secure and surprisingly cost-effective manner.

Costing less than NZD\$0.20 per user per month to operate, Stellar's Azure-based public cloud solution is also helping to ensure that Stand's limited financial resources stretch further than ever.

The newfound accessibility and visibility of Stand's data have had a huge impact for the leadership team, allowing them to gain a more accurate overview of performance

and ask more informed questions of their teams. A new motto of "Insight to Action" has been adopted to describe the transformation the leadership team is hoping to drive throughout their organisation.

Stand is now positioned at the forefront of the Public Cloud revolution, prepared to explore advanced analytics with services such as Azure Machine Learning, and to join transformational initiatives such as the government's data highway.

Stand's experience with Stellar

Following workshops with key leadership and front-line staff, Stellar devised a systemised approach to collect and integrate core data sets that would enable staff to easily and intuitively assess performance indicators and spot outliers.

"Stellar have been awesome to work with – they're true experts at what they do, and the speed at which they got to grips with our baffling internal systems was amazing," says Richard. "They take a selection of data, anonymise it, put it up in the public cloud, then manipulate and present it in an intuitive set of Power BI dashboards."

Stellar's experience working across many areas of the public sector – including with a number of key government agencies and other NGOs – made them an ideal fit for Stand, according to Richard.

"They're talking to the people who will ultimately be end consumers of our data – the government – and have brought some really good ideas about the sorts of things the government will be looking for and how to share that data with them. I've found that because they're on all sides of the open government and social investment conversation, they're also an excellent channel for Stand to demonstrate our leadership and readiness in using data and analytics to transform the lives of New Zealand's most vulnerable kids."

Microsoft Partner
Gold Data Analytics
Silver Data Platform

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