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CASE STUDY

Building a Vision for More Effective Utility Data Analytics and Applications

A public utility district in Washington wanted to use modern data analytics but needed clarity on what it wanted to measure, where its data would live and which tools would support long-term goals. The utility shifted from technology selection to develop a practical strategy and road map for enterprise data use.

Challenge

A confidential public utility district in Washington state saw an opportunity to use data more effectively across the organization. Leaders wanted to move toward modern data analytics but lacked alignment on what information they needed to track, which decisions the data should support and what technology would be required to make progress.

Much of the utility's data work depended on manual processes, spreadsheets and business unit-specific practices. Data lived in different systems and with different teams. Because there was limited centralization and alignment, employees had to spend time finding, preparing and reconciling information — through frequently duplicative and often manual efforts — before they could use it to support planning, reporting or decision-making.

The utility also faced a common risk in technology planning: selecting tools before defining the business outcomes those tools should support. Without a shared data vision, new systems could add complexity rather than improve operations. The organization needed a clear understanding of its current data environment before it could make informed choices about platforms, processes and priorities.

Project Stats

Client
Confidential public utility district

Location
Washington state

Solution

After the public utility district chose to work with 1898 & Co., we began by pausing the conversation about technology implementation and shifting the focus toward clarifying data vision. Rather than starting with a preferred tool or platform, we worked with utility leaders and stakeholders throughout the organization to define what being data-driven should mean for the utility and how data could support its goals.

A series of workshops helped document the utility's vision, priorities and business needs. These conversations included executive leadership as well as focused sessions with personnel from across operations, engineering, information technology, operational technology, accounting, regulatory affairs and customer service. The workshops helped build a shared understanding of current challenges, desired capabilities and the organizational changes needed to support better data use.

We also documented the current state of the utility's data environment, including the tools in use, where data lived, how teams accessed it and where manual processes created delays or inconsistencies. This assessment gave the utility a practical baseline for making decisions about data storage, governance, integration and analytics. The systems involved included geographic information systems (GIS), customer information systems, work management, asset management, financial systems and other tools.

From there, we developed a strategy and road map that connected business priorities to specific technology, process and staffing recommendations. The road map addressed how data should be stored, which tools could support future analytics needs, how use cases should be prioritized and what change management steps would help teams adopt new ways of working.

The utility retained our team to help implement the road map. That work included standing up cloud-based technology, supporting data model development, building dashboards and training employees to use new tools and workflows. We project-managed the initial implementation, serving as "training wheels" until the utility was ready to take ownership of the process. Over the following years, we have continued to augment the utility's team with strategy and data science services, helping leaders evaluate priorities and maintain momentum as needs have changed.

Results

The utility improved existing data processes and created new capabilities that made information easier to access, analyze and apply. Teams gained a clearer understanding of how data could support daily work and long-term planning, which helped increase interest and conversation around data use across the organization.

The strategy and road map gave the utility a practical path for advancing its data vision through people, processes and technology. Instead of relying on disconnected tools and manual workflows, the organization gained a structured approach for building analytics capabilities that align with operational needs and enterprise goals.

The utility plans to refresh its strategy and road map in 2026, with an added focus on the impact of artificial intelligence on its business. That update will allow leaders to reassess priorities, evaluate new opportunities and continue building on the foundation established through the original data strategy effort.

About 1898 & Co.

1898 & Co. is a global business, technology, and security consultancy serving critical infrastructure industries. We partner with clients to plan, secure and optimize their business. As part of Burns & McDonnell and our 120 years of industry experience, we understand the complexity of your asset-intensive business model, the trends impacting your industry, and the need to ground big ideas in operational realities. Learn more at **1898andCo.com**.

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