

ThoughtSpot Powers Robin Hood Energy's '21st Century' Analytics



The UK energy market has attracted lots of competition since deregulation began in 1989. Despite this, energy customers are among the country's most dissatisfied, complaining of over-inflated prices and very poor, disjointed service. Robin Hood Energy is a new type of company that started in 2015 as a publicly owned not-for-profit business, owned by Nottingham City Council. Its goal is simple: to provide fuel poor and vulnerable consumers with the cheapest possible gas and electricity, and great service. To help achieve this, Robin Hood Energy seeks to be the first UK energy company to put end user analytics at the heart of its strategy.

Since 2015, Robin Hood Energy has grown from six people on a single office floor to employing 280 people across four locations. It now serves over 200,000 meter points, providing gas and electricity to over 120,000 customers. In 2018, the company was voted the second best energy

company for customer service in the Which? survey.

Anthony Spence joined Robin Hood in July 2017, bringing 15 years of experience for the traditional energy sector. He was tasked with setting up a Management Information (MI) team to centralise data in order to drive business performance and decisions. Anthony knew he had to think differently in this leaner organisation, which couldn't support the high overheads and slow processes found in traditional energy companies.

As Anthony explained, "In my previous role I led a team of fifteen that produced hundreds of reports, some of which might only have been used once. Each report could take weeks to set up. By the time a report was ready, often the initial request had evolved or had been overtaken by events."



Searching for a 'report factory' alternative

Two years into his role at Robin Hood Energy, Anthony started growing concerned about the risk of his team evolving into another high overhead 'report factory'. They were relying on a combination of Excel and PowerBI for analytics and reporting, which bore the classic hallmarks of being manually intensive, slow, and reliant on intermediaries to get data and reports - all leading to poor adoption rates. Anthony needed to change tack, but this would require new analytics software. He thought, "there must be a '21st century' system out there with a different approach to that of the usual suspects."

After attending ThoughtSpot's 'Thought.Leaders' conference with his systems integration partner Assimil8, Anthony found the game-changing analytics system he hoped for. "What really struck me about ThoughtSpot was how easy it would be to give everyone in the business the ability to do quite complicated analytics without having to go through years of training."

Assimil8 worked with Robin Hood to build the data flows and implement ThoughtSpot in only eight weeks. This included getting input from the many different stakeholder groups involved across the executive team, finance, marketing, and customer support.

"People are naturally impatient in this day and age, because they're used to having answers to questions on tap. You Google whatever you want to now, and it's there instantly. Having weeks or sometimes even months to develop a report isn't good enough in this day and age. I wanted to change what my team does and how they do it, put more people into the data creation side and then let everybody do the analysis and the deep dives that they want to do instantly."

ANTHONY SPENCE
HEAD OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION & IT, ROBIN HOOD ENERGY

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Empowering business users to support vulnerable customers

Today 38 business users (and growing) across Robin Hood's finance, operations, and marketing use ThoughtSpot to get answers to data questions fast that enable them to do their day-to-day jobs effectively while meeting the company-wide mission to deliver high value, low cost energy to vulnerable customers.

One key area where ThoughtSpot is having an impact is in Robin Hood's Debt team, where now members can easily get answers to a typical series of data questions without having to involve the MI team. He explains, "A typical starting question is 'how many customers do we have in the Nottingham City boundary?' Next: 'Among those, how much debt is outstanding?' Finally: 'how is it split across the different ages of debt?'"

Before ThoughtSpot, the MI team would have needed days or weeks to serve this type of request, often having to create reports and dashboards on top. Not only was this too slow for Robin Hood's team to deal with customers efficiently and sensitively, the information was often out of date by the time it arrived.

ThoughtSpot is also enabling teams like the Vulnerability Department, whose members have never before had access to customer data. The team was set up in 2018 to help Robin Hood's most vulnerable customers, including those living in poverty and pensioners on low incomes. For example, in some areas vulnerable customers are paying higher rates due to having old and inefficient equipment, such as storage heaters and back boilers. As Anthony explains: "We're now able to spot those customers more easily and support them - whether it be contacting landlords to update their equipment, lowering their tariffs, assigning them a personal customer service team member or installing a smart metre."



Joining the dots

Many disgruntled energy customers complain about an absence of 'joined-up' customer service. A real game changer that ThoughtSpot provides is enabling teams like Debt and Vulnerability to collaborate using a shared view of data.

"One thing we have to be extra vigilant about in our business is not disconnecting service to a vulnerable customer. This means the Debt and Vulnerability teams have to work in lock step together on customer cases. By providing one version of truth and fast, reliable data answers, ThoughtSpot now makes this possible."

ANTHONY SPENCE
HEAD OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION & IT, ROBIN HOOD ENERGY

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About Robin Hood

Based in Nottingham, Robin Hood Energy is the UK's first not-for-profit energy company owned by a local authority. Launched by Nottingham City Council, Robin Hood was set up to tackle fuel poverty and help give people a cheaper, more helpful alternative to the Big Six. Unlike its private sector competitors, Robin Hood isn't beholden to shareholders nor does it pay out big bonuses to company directors so it can focus on its top priority: bringing customers the cheapest possible gas and electricity.



About Assimil8

Based in Nottingham, Assimil8 has been delivering world-class, award-winning data, analytics and AI-based solutions for more than two decades. Assimil8 works with clients to become insight-driven by defining, creating and executing data strategies and concentrating on business challenges and solutions. Assimil8 deliver managed hosted ThoughtSpot solutions in Amazon AWS environment and were recently awarded ThoughtSpot EMEA Partner of the Year.

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