

Rodan + Fields Transforms Its Enterprise Data Platform with Confluent and Google Cloud

RODAN + FIELDS

Headquarters

California, United States

Industry

Retail

Challenge

Replace a batch-oriented, database-centric legacy data platform that was slowing the business and becoming increasingly difficult to scale

Solution

Work with Confluent and Google to set data in motion with a cloud-based, real-time streaming architecture

Results

- Accelerated business transformation by more than a year
- Cut administrative costs
- Leveraged more internal expertise
- Eliminated hour-long latencies

A leading skincare brand and direct selling company in North America, Rodan + Fields (R+F) operates under a unique consumer-connected model. In this model, data-driven insights are used to drive sales directly to consumers as well as through the company's 300,000 Independent Consultants. The success of this model is tied to the efficient and rapid movement of data, both between the company and its consultants and within the company itself.

R+F recently transformed its core data platform from a batch-oriented paradigm centered around databases to one in which vital data moves in near real time between services in the cloud. This transformation, powered by Confluent and Google Cloud Platform, has enabled R+F to lower costs, synchronize data during its on-prem to cloud migration, shutter its physical data center operations faster, and provide analytics teams and Independent Consultants with the data they need faster.

"Our consultants rely on data to run their businesses, and my team is responsible for ensuring that data — and all the data we need internally — is flowing. The platform we had put in place several years ago was becoming too costly, both in hardware and software resources, to scale with the business. Our existing systems could not keep up with the peak-volume days we have each month, and the latencies were becoming disruptive," says Jason Mattioda, Senior Director of Enterprise Platforms and Data at Rodan + Fields. "Confluent and Google enabled us to address our large database footprint and retire our legacy data platform, which was in many ways our Achilles' heel. After moving to real-time streaming on a cloud-based modern architecture, we can now deliver new features and capabilities to our customers and know that they won't be slowed by an outdated architecture. And, while in my experience it's often a challenge to get two partners to work together, we saw just the opposite with Confluent and Google; their teams worked hand-in-hand to help us drive our transformation."

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Having completed the first phase of its transformation, R+F is positioned to capitalize on its ability to set data in motion throughout the enterprise. "Getting our data to the cloud and streaming in near real time was our focus last year," says Mattioda. "It's like we went through surgery and then completed physical therapy. Now we're ready to start running and sprinting, and that includes plans for more microservices and a headless commerce architecture."

Business Results

The following are some key positive business outcomes stemming from this transformation:

- **Accelerated business transformation by more than a year.** "It's not an exaggeration to say that our transformation — including cutting the cord on our old data center and retiring our database architecture — could easily have required three years to complete," says Mattioda. "We finished it in about 15 months, and among the biggest factors in our ability to move as fast as we did was our partnership with Google Cloud and Confluent and their dedication to our success."
- **Cut administrative costs.** "We'd heard that running Apache Kafka clusters can take a large administrative toll to set up and manage," says Mattioda. "We wanted to eliminate overhead costs of administration and maximize speed and agility. That's why Google Cloud and running Kafka as a fully managed service with Confluent Cloud was a perfect fit for us."
- **Leveraged more internal expertise.** "Our team had little experience with Kafka or public cloud services, but they had lots of expertise with our data and the needs of our business," says Mattioda. "Confluent and Google Cloud services made it easy for our SMEs to apply their knowledge to address complex challenges with technology that was new to them. Whereas if we had brought in an outside consultancy, it would have taken them a year just to come up to speed on our model."
- **Eliminated hour-long latencies.** "With our previous architecture and the latencies due to our batch processes, it took about an hour for our systems to move the data for a new order or account and make it available to our consultants," says Mattioda. "With Confluent and Google Cloud, that data is now available in near real time."

Everyone on my team has told me that it was a great opportunity to be part of our transformation project. We improved overall performance, reduced costs, and got out of the old-school data center and database model. Google and Confluent helped us reach that pinnacle and now we're looking forward to the next one.

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Technical Solution

Each month, when R+F calculates consultant compensation and program incentives, there is a surge in activity that in the past strained the company's data platform. Marketing events and holidays sales presented similar challenges. "It's like we have 12 Black Fridays a year, in addition to product releases and other high-volume days," says Mattioda. "During those times, we saw latencies in our RFO platform that we relied on to get data from our commerce system to our large SQL Server database, and from there through the batch processes to the consultant portal, reporting applications, and other downstream systems. It was clear that we were outgrowing that platform and its architecture."

When R+F launched its program to completely replace its legacy RFO platform with a modern, microservices-oriented architecture based on real-time streaming with Confluent, it was part of a larger move to the Google Cloud Platform, which started with transitioning their SAP from an on-premises deployment to the cloud. Taking a *better together* approach, R+F worked with both Confluent and Google Cloud to drive the complete transformation.

A top early priority was the training of the R+F teams, who had no prior experience with streaming technologies. "It was a big transformation from a skill and learning standpoint, so we scheduled training and workshops to get the ball rolling," says Mattioda. "Later, we engaged a Confluent Resident Solution Architect. In retrospect, we should have done that from the start, because we could have been more efficient and saved even more time." The emphasis on building in-house knowledge and expertise by working with Confluent's Professional Services and Education teams has paid off: It enabled R+F to complete its move without engaging a third-party consultancy.

Today, data from the R+F commerce system streams via Confluent to Google Cloud Storage and Google Big Query, where it is immediately available for analytics. "Our analytics teams have expressed how much they appreciate the speed at which they're getting data now," says Mattioda. "Our SVP who oversees analytics said that his team was able to complete a program in two days that would have taken a month previously."

Mattioda and his colleagues have taken time to reflect on all they've already accomplished even as they look ahead. "Everyone on my team has told me that it was a great opportunity to be part of our transformation project. We improved overall performance, reduced costs, and got out of the old-school data center and database model. Google Cloud and Confluent helped us reach that pinnacle and now we're looking forward to the next one."

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