

Customer Case Study: Crocs, Inc.

Crocs and Alation: The Right Fit
for Data Governance



- **Industry:** Retail
- **Headquarters:** Broomfield, CO
- **Interesting Fact:** Founded in 2002, the company's brands include Crocs and HEYDUDE. Their products are sold in more than 85 countries.

Growing Company, Growing Data Sprawl

Crocs, Inc. has experienced several years of accelerating sales growth and continues to set high revenue targets for the future. This growth was naturally accompanied by an increased focus on data and analytics across all areas of the enterprise, including finance, digital, operations, supply chain, and more. Continued management of disparate data sets proved challenging when trying to navigate and understand data-related differences across disparate systems.

To help manage this proliferation of data, Crocs began making investments in cloud-based infrastructure and technology. These included implementing a Snowflake data warehouse on the Microsoft Azure cloud platform. The company also expanded their use of the Microsoft Power BI platform to gain business intelligence insights across the organization. In fact, Crocs wanted to put Power BI insights into the hands of 900 employees, from retail clerks to the CEO.

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Business Results



Supports [Power BI](#) Expansion:

Users gain insight into the context of data used in reporting



Speeds Change Management:

Processes that took three months are expected to take less than a week thanks to owner and data source identification



Facilitates [Cloud Migration](#):

Cataloging data prior to moving it helps identify unused data that can be deleted

Michael Kavalchuk, Manager of Data Governance at Crocs. “At the same time, if they don’t understand what reports are out there for them to use, they might not be using the full complement of information available to them. That information can help them perform their jobs at a higher capacity and make more informed decisions.”

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Michael Kavalchuk
Manager of Data Governance, Crocs

Crocs quickly recognized that they needed to put a higher priority on governing the data they rely on for insights and decision-making. An internal audit team identified several opportunities where [data governance](#) would provide value to the organization. Crocs subsequently created a data governance team and hired Mike Kavalchuk as the Manager of Data Governance at Crocs.

“I knew that to meet our data governance goals, we’d have to build a strong technology foundation to support the initiative,” says Kavalchuk. “In my experience in data governance, that starts with documentation, scoping, and evaluation of the data.”

His first goal was to implement a [data catalog](#) to help both technical and business users find, understand, and govern the data they needed for their individual roles.

The Right Tool for the Job

After considering several data catalogs, Crocs chose Alation for its ease of use, simplicity, and adaptability. With Alation, business and technical users alike can get up to speed quickly.

Thanks to Alation’s proven Right Start implementation process, Kavalchuk’s team began using the catalog within weeks instead of months. “Alation’s responsiveness during the sales process successfully translated into responsiveness from the implementation and support team,” says Kavalchuk.

Crocs also appreciated the fact that the tool connects directly to multiple disparate data sources. They can manage connections directly from the user interface without needing to completely rely on APIs to create connections to their different systems.

The fully integrated [Alation Data Governance app](#) adds even more features to support data governance at Crocs:

- Searchable policies for all users
- Analyst's easy-to-use single pane of glass
- Open Community workflows to align teams

A Tool for Both Business and IT

Kavalchuk anticipates that Crocs will always have a set of Alation "power users" who use the catalog for creating reports, facilitating change management, and understanding data ownership. He estimates that these will comprise about 20% of Alation users.

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Michael Kavalchuk
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These technical folks will use Compose, the Alation SQL editor, to build reusable queries that other users throughout the business can run to gain insight into their data. They'll use Alation's built-in [data lineage](#) features to ensure that Power BI users across the company can understand the context of their reporting data.

The other 80% of Alation users, primarily business users, will benefit indirectly from the catalog's data governance capabilities as part of their day-to-day functions. As more people across the company use Power BI to access data for reporting, Kavalchuk's team will take advantage of Alation to identify duplicate reports or deprecated data, helping ensure that business users of Power BI will have the right reports and data at their fingertips.

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Building Trust in the Data

As Crocs catalogs the data in their [Snowflake data warehouse](#), they are using the Alation TrustCheck feature to flag data for deprecation, point people to the

most appropriate data for their purposes, and, perhaps most critically, identify data owners to facilitate future change management. Crocs uses the catalog to administer their sandbox environments. This ensures that data is constantly being moved to production, and that users document ownership to keep their environment in its best possible state.

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Michael Kavalchuk
Manager of Data Governance, Crocs

As they build out their central data dictionary, Crocs is cataloging data attributes for their products, stores, and more, and establishing ownership of those attributes at the lowest possible functional level. The data catalog will equip users to understand these data attributes. This is especially valuable when bringing new users up to speed on the company’s operations, because all the terminology is recorded in the Alation Business Glossary.

Establishing ownership of the data early on further helps avoid issues with premature deletion or deprecation and facilitates future change management. When it’s time for an update, the user can contact the data owner recorded in the catalog.

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Better Context Leads to Greater Insight

Helping Crocs improve their speed to insight is a critical part of the governance team’s job, and they’re using Alation to get there. Although still early in their journey, Crocs anticipates that the Alation [data catalog](#) will help them achieve benefits such as:

Align data definitions

The central data dictionary, Crocs’ business glossary, will provide consistent terminology across the company. This helps eliminate confusion caused by conflicting definitions and provides a resource for better assessing and understanding KPIs across business units and the company. It will also help ensure quality control, global alignment, and comprehension across the organization.

Facilitate expansion of Power BI use

Thanks to the lineage features in Alation, Power BI users can better understand the context and origin of the data they analyze. They can also see available reports to help them gain faster insight from data.

Speed change management

Change management processes that used to take three months are expected to take less than a week because data lineage allows the data and analytics team to trace data to its original source and owner. Charting data lineage in Alation brings greater awareness of how changes will impact teams across the organization.

Support cloud migration

Cataloging metadata in Alation prior to migrating to the Snowflake cloud data warehouse helps Crocs identify data that can be deleted due to lack of use. Together with the lineage feature, this process also helps ensure that data used for specific purposes other than general reporting is not deleted or deprecated.

About Crocs, Inc.

Crocs, Inc. (Nasdaq: CROX) is a world leader in innovative casual footwear for women, men, and children, combining comfort and style with a value that consumers know and love. The company's brands include Crocs and HEYDUDE, and their products are sold in more than 85 countries through wholesale and direct-to-consumer channels.

Data Environment

- Microsoft Azure
- Snowflake
- SAP
- Power BI