Alation

NTT DOCOMO Enhances AI Data Trust and Boosts Analyst Productivity by 10X

NTT docomo

Industry: Telecommunications
Headquarters: Tokyo, Japan
Interesting Fact: Almost 80% of Japan's population belongs to NTT DOCOMO's d POINT CLUB

Challenge: Govern complex data assets

NTT DOCOMO, also known as DOCOMO, is Japan's largest mobile communications provider, with around 90 million subscribers and approximately 8,000 employees. The company offers various B2C services such as credit card payments, video, music, and lifestyle services. Its d POINT CLUB serves over 100 million members by providing numerous ways to earn and redeem points across DOCOMO's services. The name DOCOMO comes from an abbreviation for "do communications over the mobile network" and from the compound word "docomo," meaning everywhere in Japanese.

Takashi Suzuki is the general manager of data platforms at DOCOMO. His team manages the data assets from subscribers and d POINT's members on the Snowflake cloud. "To maximize customer engagement, we focus on understanding each individual customer and using those data-driven insights to improve our services and marketing strategies," says Suzuki. "Due to the complexity of our data assets, proper governance is essential for their full utilization."

Business Outcomes

10X boost in analyst productivity

30% reduction in analyst workloads

7,000 registered Alation users

Governance is particularly important for the company's GenAI initiatives aimed at elevating the customer experience. DOCOMO deepens its understanding of every customer by creating a digital twin, allowing them to tailor optimized services to their preferences, lifestyles, life stages, and more. The company applies this strategy to both digital service recommendations and improving customer interactions with its call centers and physical stores.

"To effectively and appropriately leverage AI, management of our data assets across business domains is essential," says Suzuki. "Any deterioration in data quality or governance increases the risk of AI delivering inaccurate responses."

Suzuki's team empowers business teams across DOCOMO to fully leverage the company's data assets for analysis and decision-making to accelerate business growth. However, the company's 2,000 data engineers and analysts spent the majority of their time searching for data, leaving far too little time for action-driven analysis. Furthermore, the lack of a centralized knowledge repository meant that a deep understanding of the data was largely dependent on the asset's subject matter expert, limiting the scalability of data utilization throughout the organization.

"We had huge volumes of data and metadata, but the searchability was limited," says Suzuki. "It took too long to locate the data we needed, and we had to rely too heavily on individuals' knowledge." Suzuki urgently sought a solution that would accelerate the data team's time to insight, while improving data governance and literacy.

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> General Manager, Data Platforms, NTT DOCOMO

Objectives

To empower business units across DOCOMO to effectively utilize the company's data assets, Suzuki's team needed a data intelligence solution that would:

- Enable fast, accurate data search and discovery
- Capture individual knowledge in a collective repository
- Promote data collaboration across business units

Implementation: Seamless data discovery and utilization with Alation + Snowflake

After a proof of concept that saw a 30% improvement in engineers' productivity through faster data discovery, Suzuki's team chose the Alation Data Intelligence Platform. "Alation has three major strengths," he says. "First, it makes finding metadata easy and fast. Second, it helps us share data usage ideas and reuse SQL queries, making our collaboration efforts more effective. Finally, Alation makes it easy for data users to communicate with data owners or other users through the conversations feature to resolve questions about data quickly."

Alation's integration with Snowflake provides a comprehensive and efficient data utilization experience. Users can search and extract data from one source, access catalog information about Snowflake data to understand its context, and reference or reuse queries to boost productivity and save time. "We have three requirements for data platforms at NTT DOCOMO," says Suzuki. "They need to be open, secure, and productive — with ready-to-use, well-cataloged data. Together, Alation and Snowflake meet those requirements for NTT DOCOMO."

Shortly after signing with Alation in July 2023, DOCOMO participated in Alation's Right Start Program, which ensures a smooth launch by implementing best practices, defining project scope, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and setting up a sustainable program for long-term success. "Learning about Alation's features and functions in the Right Start program paved the way for us to move forward with concrete integration plans," says Suzuki.

To prepare DOCOMO for a company-wide rollout in April 2024, Alation formed an integration support team that met regularly and communicated daily with Suzuki's team at both the execution and management levels. "By setting up a testing environment, we were able to efficiently verify Alation's features and localized content," says Suzuki. "This allowed us to achieve our goal of deploying Alation across DOCOMO as scheduled."

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Results: Faster search and discovery delivers a 10X analyst productivity boost

After implementing Alation, NTT DOCOMO achieved a tenfold increase in analyst productivity and reduced workloads by 30% due to enhanced self-service and faster time to insights. With over 7,000 registered users and 3,000 active monthly users of Alation, DOCOMO has significantly accelerated data access and insights across the organization, fostering a stronger data culture through governed access and a deeper understanding of data.

DOCOMO has also boosted organizational trust in the data used for AI modeling. Alation ensures that users tap into reliable data for AI initiatives focused on optimizing the customer experience. "The key to business growth at NTT DOCOMO is a deeper insight into our customers so we can provide a better customer experience across our services," notes Suzuki. "Business users and analysts alike are now using Alation to gain actionable insights from the datasets of more than 100 million users."

"Before Alation, our data ecosystem could only be described as 'entangled,'" concludes Suzuki. "Now, I would describe our environment as 'harmonized.' Alation's easy-to-use UX empowers data users to discover and leverage the data they need more autonomously and efficiently, helping us scale self-service data utilization across DOCOMO."

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About NTT DOCOMO

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Data Environment: salesforce · dbt · Streamlit · +ableau