



LEAVING DATA BOTTLENECKS BEHIND

BOGGED DOWN BY DATA AND SPREADSHEETS? HERE'S HOW HP'S TEAM BROKE FREE.

When leadership for Hewlett Packard's 3D printing division needs a solution, they turn to Project Manager Anthony Powell. In the world of exponentially expanding data, it takes a keen eye to find simple paths through all the complexity. He knows from experience that bottlenecks start in the deep fog of spreadsheets and can be difficult to unravel. So Powell does what is necessary to get the job done for his supervisor, Pierre Kaiser, R+D Manager of the 3D division.

Powell's recent success was determining the best way to quickly channel volumes of testing data from many sources, global locations, and teams into digestible form — from the teams that generate it to those that consume, analyze, and annotate it. HP, a global leader in 3D printing, is so committed to quality that they must relentlessly test their hardware mechanisms. With data coming from a wide array of sources and serving six teams, timely analysis and the ability to pivot in new directions was mission critical. In order for HP to get to the next phase of production they had to move quickly. Time was not on Anthony's side...

A Solution Discovered

Powell discovered Interject Data Systems through Elliott Whitling, Interject's data scientist who shares co-working space with HP. Over a coffee with Powell, Whitling described his role at Interject and ways in which Interject creates efficient data reporting and workflow applications.

Whitling explained how the Interject platform allows companies to quickly create tailored reports across multiple sources and how those very same reports can collect user input. For people who manage data every day, the Interject platform creates entire workflow applications, filling the gaps within the existing software.

The end game is to remove the dependency on

manual spreadsheets, and Interject does that in an unconventional way. The Interject platform fixes manual spreadsheets with spreadsheets, using patented methods that keep spreadsheets interconnected to source data. This means avoiding disruptive changes for engineers and other users. They quickly learn how to use a familiar tool but in better ways. Powell was convinced Interject could help HP become more nimble in pivoting on their data.

Creating Freedom and Agility

HP's day-to-day churn was ruled by disparate sources of data, so they started a new initiative to centralize this data into Microsoft SQL Server. The next challenge was how a large team of engineers could best interact with the volume of data.

The objectives were clear:

- 1) Keep it simple for developers to quickly create and modify reports for the engineers.
- 2) Make it easy for engineers, no matter their skill level, to consume the data.
- 3) Have the ability to collect annotations on the data to enable workflows.

Interject's unique approach to spreadsheets was a good fit for meeting each objective. Through Powell's leadership, HP's manual spreadsheet reports and workflows were quickly updated with Interject to deliver a connected stream of data to engineers and upper management. Powell said "We're basically creating narratives of our program's health," he said. "The beauty of Interject is that within seconds, we can now see all the data to report to management."

The most critical benefit for Powell was how quickly the team could pivot. "We cut the better part of four days out of our delivery. What took almost a week has been trimmed down to about four hours."

In terms of the Interject team, Powell said, "I also couldn't ask for a more intelligent, knowledgeable, and fun group than Interject. We connected quickly and seamlessly, just like their product."

Solving Process, Reporting, and Data Problems

As an add-in to Excel, Interject enabled Anthony to keep management updated on the health of his programs while remaining in a familiar environment. "Interject was an obvious choice for data exploration, data discovery, some analysis work, but especially for reporting to management," he said. "It's a wonderful tool."

From the start, the Interject team was at home with HP's team, which now can easily digest all of their data. Because Interject lives natively within the spreadsheets, it's almost instantly embraced by users. Each user can adopt Interject while maintaining the freedom to take different directions by tailoring their experiences and exploring the data without breaking the controls.

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-- Anthony Powell, Project Manager at 3D Division

Designed with the Job in Mind

Interject Data Systems was founded by its president, Jeff Honsowetz, back when he was a CPA and financial controller. Every day, he was frustrated with the sheer volume of manual spreadsheets to wade through in order to meet ever-changing C-level deadlines and demands. "I started automating manual spreadsheets into out-of-the-box solutions and shared with my colleagues and executives," Honsowetz said. They continually asked for more, which eventually led Honsowetz down a path of discovering new IT best practices for spreadsheets and patenting key elements. Interject Data Systems is now a company of 25 people with high growth plans for the future.



Anthony Powell, Project Manager at 3D Division, HP Vancouver USA



Data Realized and Visualized

For executive and C-Suite consumption of data, HP's Powell feels it's important to employ polished and more well-rounded data visualization tools. "Interject not only can help power users on the data consumption team, but it can bridge the gap between their work and visual presentation to management," he said.

He conveyed a recent story where executives needed new visualizations within 48 hours. Since Interject had already expedited the consumption of data and helped build workflow to improve data quality, the data was ready for tools like Tableau or Power BI. The switch from data exploring and analysis with Interject to data storytelling with visualizations was seamless. The engineers' analysis was transformed into a revelatory visualization that greatly pleased the executives. Powell appreciates the speed at which HP can now build visualizations, because he never knows when he will receive the next urgent executive request.

Making Data Champions

Interject benefits companies where data and spreadsheets are integral to their processes, and they value greater freedom and control. "End users still have the freedom to do their own side analysis and explore their own ideas without negatively affecting anybody else's work, because Interject lives within their spreadsheets," Honsowetz said. "The core of the platform is still protected for the IT developers, just like any web application, so it's the best of both worlds."

Powell believes that numerous industries could benefit from Interject if they use copious amounts of spreadsheets, especially those where their formal training on the front end involves Excel. He clearly sees engineering and R&D programs needing it, as well as education, healthcare, and the financial sector. "Really, it's for anyone using Excel heavily to perform any sort of data exploration or analysis," he said. He believes it should be included in educational curricula, too.

Honsowetz said, "Interject is a catalyst to bridge gaps in your existing enterprise-scale software investments, so you can better leverage what you have."

Agility and Nimblity

When it comes to data management, it's incredibly important that the data analysis is accurate, organized, and reported in the most efficient way possible, but more importantly that the professionals find it easy to use every day. Interject Data Systems is an essential tool for companies like HP that want to avoid spending needless time sifting through mountains of spreadsheets. Interject truly helped create an agile and nimble environment.

Of course, data is rarely perfect, but Interject's efficiency and ability to be nimble makes all the difference. As HP's Pierre Kaiser put it, "Speed is king in product development. The common industry tools are either too slow, technical or too expensive. Interject was a refreshing light and nimble approach to getting things done now. "

