GOCARDLESS

Accelerating global growth with Looker

How the leader in recurring payments banks on Looker to deliver data-driven results.

looker

GoCardless offers an innovative, rapidly growing payment platform for businesses that have recurring revenues or accept one-off payments. As Head of Business Intelligence Jon Palmer describes it, the company's mission is to "take the pain out of getting paid." GoCardless helps businesses focus on what they do best and helps consumers easily and safely set up payments to merchants. With a growing global team, the company is on an accelerated expansion path, experiencing 50% year-over-year growth with big plans for the near future.

Prior to Looker

- Access to data was limited behind a technical barrier that required knowledge of SQL

- Metrics connecting platform success, product usage, and revenue were siloed in different tools that lacked a single view of the business to quickly identify trends and inform strategy

- The data team spent their time running ad hoc requests instead of analyzing and supporting strategic growth initiatives

Wins with Looker

- With 95% corporate adoption, teams gain confidence and efficiency with a universal set of metrics and data access

- Merchant onboarding has streamlined, accelerating global platform expansion

- Features most important to customers gain more attention with product usage data guiding the roadmap and go-to-market strategy

- The finance team spots performance and market trends immediately with access to revenue figures in minutes

- The data team focuses on complex, more rewarding projects rather than responding to analytics tickets

The Old Way Won't Work Anymore

In the midst of its growth spurt, GoCardless realized that its business units were losing valuable time looking for accurate and reliable data. To operate and expand at global scale, the organization needed clear visibility into company operations to leverage business data for identifying new opportunities, streamlining merchant onboarding, and maintaining product quality and innovation. The GoCardless executive team recognized the importance of quick access to universally consistent and up-to-date data, with the ability to easily and flexibly use it across the organization.

Before deploying Looker, the company used a combination of traditional internally developed business intelligence tools

and third-party SQL clients that required manual queries. Non-technical business owners submitted tickets to the analytics team, who wrote code to extract insights.

As Chief Product Officer Duncan Barrigan explains, "If you didn't know SQL, you didn't have any data." This process meant the finance team spent four days at the end of each month running revenue numbers, which delayed critical visibility into revenue trends and frustrated executives. The product team also lacked easy and rapid access to product usage data that could help drive a roadmap for accelerated company growth.

Efficiency Gains and Unified Insights With Looker

GoCardless decision makers evaluated a number of data solutions in the marketplace. They identified the three primary requirements, as articulated by Palmer: "Our first requirement was to drive efficiency and clarity of how we execute across all functions, providing integrated insights across all teams and data sources. Second, we needed to get the data semantically correct across the whole business, so we could articulate the truth without diluting the quality of the data. And finally, the solution had to flow data and insights to applications as well as to people—serving up insights to our merchants and internal customers—and also serving data up into tools like Salesforce and Zendesk."

Looker fulfills all these requirements and plays a key role in fueling the organization's accelerated growth. GoCardless has built a core data model in Looker based on a variety of key performance indicators (KPIs) and data sources. Anyone in the company can access, view, and query trusted and secure data to make better decisions.

"What we're trying to do with our data infrastructure—and with Looker on top of that—is to pull together as many different types of data as we can, so we can do whatever we need to understand the problem that we're trying to solve," says Barrigan.

He explains that Looker enables GoCardless to bring together data from different sources into one place. Business data about payments, merchants, and merchants' customers is brought together through the core infrastructure in the database. In addition, the data model includes a range of operational information about how GoCardless conducts business—from support tickets in Zendesk to Salesforce account records.

Looker consolidates and presents data in a unified way, providing a rich, universal source that anyone in the company can access or share at any time. Now, 95 percent of GoCardless employees have a Looker account and use it regularly to leverage needed insights to get their jobs done and help advance company goals and growth.

From Barrigan's personal point of view, Looker has boosted his own efficiency and understanding of the current state and direction of the company. "Looker helps me have a broad understanding of things that are going on at GoCardless. I think of it as a data superpower. That means I can appear to know all sorts of things about what's going on without having to spend my life running queries and looking at data. It all just gets delivered in my inbox," he remarks.

> "Looker's been a benefit to me as a BI team lead, because I can see my team working on products they're really passionate about and driving insight into the business rather than just trying to keep their heads above water servicing the multiple requests we were getting every day."
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> —Jon Palmer
> Head of BI

Understanding Product Use to Drive a Strategic Roadmap

The GoCardless product team uses Looker to track the impact of product features and releases. By using Looker to gain a better understanding of the sales funnel and identify revenue drivers, the product team is able to learn how customers are using the product in relation to business success. The ability to track real-time data led to some surprising insights and discoveries that the company now leverages for growth.

"We realized we were making a number of assumptions about our merchants' behavior that weren't quite right. When we actually looked into the data, we could see the

exact speed and frequency with which merchants were able to use tools to react to payment failures. Using these very precise answers, we were able to improve the quality of the product," says Product Manager Michael Bridgeman. These insights help GoCardless rapidly identify and respond to needs that hadn't been addressed, and develop new features and improvements to ensure customer satisfaction.

Saving Time While Spotting Revenue Trends

"Before we had Looker, monthly revenue reporting involved pulling information from several different sources, which meant it took my team up to four days to effectively get a revenue number," says Chief Financial Officer Catherine Birkett. "It was frustrating for senior management to wait that long for the revenue figure. With Looker, we are able to do the job in close to real-time."

Looker now fully automates data analysis and reporting. This significantly frees up both the finance and the data analysis teams, who previously supported revenue reporting efforts. Birkett's team can respond to revenue trends immediately, and the verification process for merchants has accelerated, which increases customer satisfaction and speeds up the platform's expansion.

> "
> Looker provides a huge amount of flexibility and presents data in a user-friendly format, which really helps me step back and immediately see trends that are going on in underlying revenue data.
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> — Catherine Birkett
> CFO

Data Self-Service

Weekly analytics requests submitted to the data team have decreased by 90 percent—increasing the time for deep analysis and contributing to product growth. "We were

spending about two-thirds of the team's time each week simply keeping up with requests from the business—and often not really keeping up. Nowadays, the vast majority of the work that my team does is focused on building out new products and looking at covering more areas of the business," Palmer notes.

The data team focuses on improving the Looker model by adding additional data sources like Salesforce, Zendesk, and risk and fraud data. They recently added DevOps data to analyze how development practices and tooling are working across the product development team. With the rest of the organization now empowered to access Looker autonomously, the data team can be instrumental in the success of GoCardless and identify areas for growth and scale. The team also enjoys greater job satisfaction by contributing in more creative ways to company success.

"Looker's been a benefit to me as a BI team lead, because I can see my team working on products they're really passionate about and driving insight into the business, rather than just trying to keep their heads above water servicing the multiple requests we were getting every day," Palmer says. Equally important, Looker has helped everyone at the company work more strategically together as a team.

Supporting Rapid Company Growth With a Data Culture

The aggressive growth targets that GoCardless is setting are upheld by the business insights and data culture Looker enables. Looker helps the entire company focus on strategy, as well as identify and rapidly respond to customer trends and demands. Confidence in a universal set of metrics and access to data allows GoCardless to execute efficiently and with greater certainty in areas of expansion.

The GoCardless team uses Looker to measure and respond to customer feedback. This helps them set a strategic roadmap that supports rapid growth. "As we take products to market, Looker is essential in helping us understand the adoption rates and the usability of the products, so we can scale those products and make sure they're useful for everyone across our merchant base," says Bridgeman.

The internal Looker team at GoCardless helps onboard and train new employees to facilitate a self-help data culture. This fits with the GoCardless culture of autonomy that provides every team and every individual easy access to reliable, robust data. Employees can more rapidly make decisions and answer their own questions effectively.

Looker and GoCardless are growing rapidly—together. As Birkett sums it up, "Data at GoCardless helps us gain a competitive edge in a couple of different ways. In particular, it allows us to spot our customers' pain points and the extent of those pain points. Looker allows us to build the right solutions faster and make the value proposition that is much better for our customers."

> " Looker has made my data life at GoCardless infinitely easier. Previously, I had issues with duplicating work that others had done, not knowing where to find the data I needed, not knowing how to get the data out in the format that was required, and asking questions that couldn't be answered by the data I had. Looker took away all those problems. It allows me to find the data easily. I know it's reliable, and, if a particular question has been answered before, I can easily find it in the dashboard, with just one click."

— Michael Bridgeman
Group Product Manager

About GoCardless

GoCardless is a global leader in recurring payments. GoCardless' global payments network and technology platform take the pain out of getting paid for businesses with recurring revenue. More than 45,000 businesses worldwide, from multinational corporations to SMBs, transact through GoCardless each month, and the business processes $10 billion of payments each year. GoCardless is headquartered in London and has offices in France, Australia, Germany and the US.
For more information, please visit gocardless.com.

About Looker

Looker is a unified data platform that delivers actionable business insights to employees at the point of decision. Looker integrates data into the daily workflows of users to allow organizations to extract value from data at web scale. Over 2000 industry-leading and innovative companies such as Sony, Amazon, The Economist, IBM, Etsy, Lyft and Kickstarter have trusted Looker to power their data-driven cultures. Looker joined Google Cloud in February 2020. For more information, connect with us on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube or visit looker.com.