avanade

Case Study

PageGroup

What matters to PageGroup is changing people's lives through expertise and innovation

Do what matters

Inspiring change:

Setting the stage for "AI by our SIDE"

The team at PageGroup is dedicated to changing lives for the better. Recognized as a worldwide leader in specialist recruitment by its clients, candidates and employees, the company takes the stress out of finding the right job for the right candidate. Its values of earning trust, growing connections and making a difference are reflected in everything its people do around the world every day.

According to PageGroup leaders, the key to its sustained success has been achieving organic growth by region and discipline, with a focus on the development of home-grown expertise and innovation. This, of course, includes a constant eye on how to embrace the latest breakthrough technologies.

"When it comes to where we're going next from a technology perspective, one of the areas we've really zeroed in on is the power of generative AI," explains Alex Bates, PageGroup's Managing Director of Group Data, Insights and Activation. "We've been working with Avanade and Databricks as our partners over the past few years to get ourselves ready and into the right place to take full advantage of that. Rather than just looking at off-the-shelf AI solutions, we've been focused on building tools and applications that drive differentiation."

To realize the benefits of generative AI for its clients, candidates and employees, PageGroup implements these new tools and applications only when they fit into a specific business objective. This targeted system allows them to ensure they are focused on introducing changes that will positively impact the business, and not just for the sake of it. They call this system "AI by our SIDE", representing these key priorities:

- **Sourcing** the best candidate and client opportunities

- **Informing** the business by providing the most insightful, accurate and of-the-moment data

- **Discovering** new growth opportunities, allowing the business to operate faster, better

- **Empowering** consultants to do what they do best, without having to do the "heavy lifting"

"Each one of these key areas has a KPI associated with it, and by operationalizing our goals, we can really drive adoption around the tools we're developing," explains Bates.

After rolling out initial bespoke solutions – including an AI-powered job posting generator that has already created 20,000 postings and saved employees more than 7,000 hours to date and counting – leaders wanted to ensure they had the right data platform that would enable access for all users with the right governance in place.

Company Name:	PageGroup
Country:	UK
Company Size:	~7,300 employees
Industry:	Professional Services
Solution:	Databricks, Generative AI

"What we wanted was an innovative, agile data platform that will allow us to accelerate when new technologies and new solutions become available without building up technical debt," says Bates. "In an environment where technology is moving a million miles an hour, we knew we needed a strong data foundation on Azure Databricks to be the enabler of everything we wanted to do."

Driving innovation:
Building a future-proof platform

To achieve these goals, PageGroup once again turned to the team of Avanade and Databricks. The first phase of this project involved enabling the company's existing data estate to leverage Databricks Unity Catalog. Unity Catalog is the industry's only unified and open governance solution for data and AI, built into the Databricks Data Intelligence Platform, which PageGroup was already using. The solution allows PageGroup to seamlessly govern and access both structured and unstructured data in any format, as well as machine learning models, notebooks, dashboards and files across the company's multi-cloud environments. Not only does this enable access to data for search and discovery for relevant users, it also centralizes access control and data security. This allows for vertical and horizontal governance to ensure only the right people can access certain data. Unity Catalog serves as the foundation for modernizing data governance and enabling advanced capabilities, such as fine-grained access controls, lineage tracking, and simplified multi-cloud management.

"Having our data in a safe, secure environment is extremely important. Part of the reason we have chosen to work with Avanade and Databricks is because they bring a level of trust and security that you wouldn't necessarily get elsewhere. Everything we build going forward starts with security, and having that regulatory compliance in place future-proofs us for longevity."

– Alex Bates
Managing Director of Group Data, Insights and Activation PageGroup

Having a holistic solution like Unity Catalog ensuring data is organized is a critical foundation to make further AI innovations possible. Now that the estate has migrated, we are implementing Mosaic AI Gateway and other generative AI functionalities. AI Gateway provides governance over Model Serving endpoints, ensuring secure and compliant data-handling through APIs. It includes features like AI guardrails to prevent unwanted and unsafe data in requests and responses, and fine-grained permissions to control access. The AI Gateway includes usage tracking and payload logging, which help monitor operational usage and associated costs. This data is logged into delta tables in Unity Catalog, allowing for detailed auditing and debugging. It also supports all model types served through Model Serving, including custom models, external models, and foundation models. This unified governance layer simplifies the management of diverse AI workloads.

"Unity Catalog gives us a clear understanding of the data we have, and that's critical for making AI useable. So, Unity Catalog and AI Gateway working together will really help accelerate things for us. It allows us to be more agnostic in terms of which AI models we can use, and effectively allows us to move where it makes sense as the landscape evolves."

– Alex Bates
Managing Director of Group Data, Insights and Activation
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With these features in place, PageGroup has also invested in bringing its Azure SQL databases into the same platform to take advantage of a unified governance layer. Databricks SQL uses DatabricksIQ, the data intelligence engine, to provide natural language experiences and predictive optimizations for infrastructure, enhancing efficiency and performance without requiring manual intervention. The team is already using the embedded AI within Databricks, achieving both time savings and improved quality during this migration. This SQL estate will run on Databricks SQL Serverless, which offers instant, elastic computing that scales automatically, reducing infrastructure costs and management overhead while improving performance and reliability. Following the first migrations for marketing and HR data, one of the immediate benefits is that the marketing model now takes 90 minutes to refresh – less than half the 4+ hours this previously took.

Achieving what matters: Efficiency and intelligence for improved experiences

By ensuring it has the right data foundations in place, PageGroup is poised to take full advantage of the opportunities that AI will unlock. "In truth, we're right at the cutting edge," says Bates. The company has laid out the benefits that this technology offers, including efficiency, real-time intelligence and insights, all adding up to an improved experience for clients, candidates and employees. Security and enforcing good data governance are critical for leveraging AI intelligence, and both of these elements have been put in place.

"We've really chosen the right foundations to accelerate. Knowing that things will continue to evolve and that we'll be ready to evolve with them, and quickly – that will be a competitive advantage for our people and our business."

– Alex Bates
Managing Director of Group Data, Insights and Activation
PageGroup

By harnessing AI technology today while being ready for what's around the corner, PageGroup can look forward to a bright future of changing lives.

About PageGroup

Established in the UK in 1976, PageGroup has grown to become one of the world's best-known and most respected recruitment consultancies. The Group now employs over 7,400 people in 36 countries. The four core PageGroup brands are made up of specialised recruitment teams that operate across 25 disciplines from actuarial to technology. Page Executive is the executive search division of the Group specialising in search, selection and talent management of senior professionals on a permanent or interim basis. The Michael Page team specialise in the recruitment of temporary, contract and permanent roles typically at second and third job level upwards. Page Personnel is a recruitment partner for businesses requiring clerical support. Page Outsourcing harnesses the power of the PageGroup brands and offers a recruitment outsourcing solution to help grow client businesses.

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North America
Seattle
Phone +1 206 239 5600
America@avanade.com

South America
Sao Paulo
AvanadeBrasil@avanade.com

Asia-Pacific
Australia
Phone +61 2 9005 5900
AsiaPac@avanade.com

Europe
London
Phone +44 0 20 7025 1000
Europe@avanade.com

About Avanade
Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital, cloud and advisory services, industry solutions and design-led experiences across the Microsoft ecosystem. Every day, our 60,000 professionals in 26 countries make a genuine human impact for our clients, their employees and their customers. Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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