Simpson Associates spurs justice for at-risk communities with Azure AI

Simpson Associates, a 2024 Microsoft Partner of the Year Award winner, unlocks the power of data and AI to drive positive social impact.

Behind every strong community is a network of organizations supporting its foundation. From healthcare and emergency response to education and local government, organizations in these sectors provide critical services—but they can only be as effective and efficient as the data they're working with. Between the high-pressure work and massive amounts of data being used, these organizations don't always have the bandwidth, resources, or skills to leverage their data to optimize, innovate, and better serve their communities.

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2024 Microsoft Partner of the Year

Simpson Associates, **winner of the 2024 Microsoft Partner of the Year Award** for Community Response in the Social Impact category, is on a mission to change that. Based in the United Kingdom, they provide a full range of services—from advisory support and data strategy to AI-powered platform implementations and managed services—to help purpose-led organizations in the public and private sectors turn their data into actionable insights and drive positive change in the world.

Siloed data, slowed investigations

For law enforcement agencies, organized exploitation is a complex landscape to navigate. Given the considerable scale and geographical scope of these types of offenses, investigating and pursuing criminal groups requires extensive time and resources. Officers have to manually search multiple datasets—which can result in inconsistencies from human error—to build the intelligence they need to inform their decisions. Siloed data is also difficult to share across multiple police forces and agencies, slowing down investigations and leaving vulnerable communities at a higher risk of being targeted.

The Tackling Organised Exploitation Programme (TOEX), a UK-wide initiative, provides dedicated intelligence and analytical expertise to support the forces that investigate organized exploitation—including modern slavery, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

To deliver a more efficient and effective response to exploitation crimes, TOEX needed a solution that could combine the data from their national and regional teams to provide a holistic view of the threats.

Given Simpson Associates' industry knowledge and experience building on Microsoft Azure—backed by three Solutions Partner designations and two specializations—TOEX worked with them to develop the TOEX Data Platform (TOEXDP). "The opportunity to bring together information and data onto a single data platform is revolutionary. This is the first time in UK policing that this has been delivered," said Kate Thacker, Detective Chief Superintendent at TOEX.

TACKLING ORGANISED EXPLOITATION PROGRAMME

Empowering officers with centralized data and AI

Thanks to a history of working with UK police forces, Simpson Associates was primed for the task of bringing data together for key national systems. The centralized data solution includes two components:

- An Azure data platform to combine local, regional, and national datasets from multiple UK law enforcement agencies into a central repository

- A data analytics portal built with Microsoft Power BI to visualize the data, providing a holistic view of threats

"Working with the Azure platform gives us significant agility to react to the ever-changing needs of organizations, while providing a robust and scalable platform," said Giles Horwood, Managing Director at Simpson Associates. "The advanced AI capabilities, comprehensive security features, and seamless integration with existing tools empower us to innovate and transform business processes efficiently."

Once it was implemented, the TOEXDP consolidated data from nine police forces into one secure cloud environment—and as of November 2023, TOEX was able to identify 21 organized crime groups.

But that's just the beginning. With Azure, Simpson Associates can build the solution's infrastructure as a code, allowing them to swiftly deploy in different environments and keep infrastructure consistent. This scalable architecture also gives the solution room to grow with TOEX, so it can accommodate new datasets and additional police forces. "Power BI has transformed the jobs of police officers—data is now at their fingertips, providing clear reports of the crime research they require," said Thacker.

A borderless solution for a borderless crime

Simpson Associates and TOEX also developed the TOEX Capabilities Environment—an Azure-powered cloud platform with AI tools that officers can use to streamline investigations. The first tools hosted in the environment include the TOEX Translation application, which helps tackle the geographical scope of organized exploitation by translating data from multiple languages; and the TOEX Transcription service, which uses AI to rapidly transcribe audio files, replacing a manual and time-consuming process and ensuring the information is received—and acted on—more quickly.

"Working with TOEX on the AI tools within the Capabilities Environment has enabled us to make a positive impact on the work that takes place within criminal investigations," said Horwood. "The power of AI has enhanced what the police forces can achieve, speeding up the ability to solve cases, ensuring justice is served and the communities protected."

Using Microsoft Azure AI Services, the application can bulk translate text files—including mobile device extractions and social media archives—with AI. As of January 2024, the TOEX Translation application had been used more than 340 times and had successfully translated more than 290 million characters.

"What that's going to enable in the future for policing is huge," said Ross Gibson, Account Executive, Policing at Microsoft. "Crime, as we all know, is borderless—and now we're starting to get a borderless solution, too."

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Unlocking data for meaningful impact

Between the TOEXDP and TOEX Capabilities Environment, Simpson Associates and TOEX have developed powerful Azure-based solutions that overcome geographical boundaries, centralize critical datasets, and provide a holistic view of organized exploitation. Now there's a viable opportunity for a national implementation for all 43 UK police forces in a single data model.

"The ambition is to be national, so the choice of technologies is really important for how we architect and how we structure it," said Richard Mashford, Practice Manager at Simpson Associates. "In particular, using components such as Delta Lake within Azure and Synapse Analytics gives us the confidence that we can meet those requirements when it does need to go national."

But for Simpson Associates, their mission goes far beyond data analytics and management—it's about the people they're impacting. "Our work with the team at TOEX has been a true partnership," Horwood said. "I take pride in knowing it's having such a positive impact on tackling crime and making a real difference to communities."

Next Steps…

To learn more about how we can help transform your data into actionable insights, book a consultation with us today.

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